

# North Country Gardeners

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Co.

UW-Extension Cooperative Extension

Issue 20, March 2010

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**University of Wisconsin-Extension  
Area Agricultural Agents Office  
Spooner Ag Research Station  
W6646 Highway 70  
Spooner, Wisconsin 54801  
(715) 635-3506 or  
Toll Free 800-528-1914**

## Greetings!

Another gardening season will soon be upon us. Winter snows will soon be yielding to patches of bare ground and smell of earth will be back in the air. This is the time of year when the green thumbs begin to throb as we think about ordering seeds and other garden supplies, starting seeds, doing some late winter pruning, and putting thoughts to paper as we plan our gardens.

Another sign of spring is the annual offering of workshops and educational seminars. The first being the New Ventures Garden Seminar on March 20 at Northwood School in Minong. For many years now Julie Hustvet has put together one of the premier spring garden seminars. This all day event is sponsored by Northwood Community Education and the Spooner Garden Club and assisted by North Country Master Gardeners. The Barron County Master Gardeners annual Garden Expo is April 17 at the WITC Conference Center, another excellent educational event.

Those looking for some hands-on spring pruning advice can attend a grape pruning workshops on April 10 or a small fruit and grape pruning workshop on April 19. Those wanting to try their hand at grafting can register for the apple grafting workshop on April 19. If you want to build your own compost bin and learn the tricks to home composting, sign up for the composting workshop at Hunt Hill on May 8. There is also rumor that there maybe a rain barrel workshop offered through 4-H in Hayward. And for those in the Hayward area there are limited spaces if you want to sit in on session or two of the Master Gardener Volunteer Training held most Tuesday nights at the Hayward Workforce Development Center.

If you are aware of any other educational events in the area please let us know and we would be happy to help promote them.

Finally we would like to thank volunteers for contributing to this newsletter. We hope you find this information interesting and useful. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

If you have any questions about any of the upcoming workshops or volunteer opportunities, please give us or any of the North Country Master Gardener Association Committee Members a call or email. As always, we thank you for your continued interest and support of UW-Extension and the UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

Happy Gardening,

Kevin Schoessow  
UW-Extension Ag Development Agent  
[kevin.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:kevin.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu)

Russ Parker  
President  
North Country Master Gardeners Association

## Watch for AAS Winners at the Spooner Display Gardens

Sandy Hoecherl  
Master Gardener Volunteer



In 2003 the Spooner Research Station became a designated All America Selections Display Garden. Each year the demonstration gardens at Spooner include this year's All America Selections as well as selections from the last 10 years. This is a good way for local gardeners to see how these selections will grow in our area before they try growing the selections themselves.

All American Selections were started in 1932 to recognize and promote newly developed varieties that display real improvements in flowers and vegetables available to the consumer. Real improvements include qualities such as earliness to bloom or harvest, disease or pest tolerance, novel colors or flavors, novel flower forms, total yield, length of flowering or harvest of overall performance. Generally, an entry needs to have at least two significantly improved qualities to be considered by the judges for AAS designation. AAS winners, past and present are often designated in catalogs with a red, white and blue logo with AAS across the label. Both vegetables and flowers can be selected but both may not be selected in a specific year. The flowers selected are generally annuals, but perennials are sometimes selected.

The organization selects winners through the use of trial gardens. Trial gardens grow the possible selections and vote on possible winners. At the end of the season, trial gardens score each of the possible selections. Wisconsin has one trial garden—the Boerner Botanical Garden which tests possible flower selections. There are no trial locations for vegetables in Wisconsin.

Display gardens are used throughout the US and Canada to help determine if

the selections will work in specific areas. There are 7 display gardens located in Wisconsin: Green Bay Botanical Gardens, Boerner Botanical Gardens in Hales Corners, Hancock Horticultural Gardens, Rotary Botanical Gardens in Janesville, Vincent High School in Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin Spooner Research Station and University of Wisconsin West Madison Research Station.

Minnesota has one trial garden and 5 AAS display gardens located at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chaska, University of Minnesota in Grand Rapids, Lyndale Park Gardens in Minneapolis, University of Minnesota in Morris and University of Minnesota Display and Trial Garden in St. Paul.

The winners are generally introduced in the fall of the year. The winners for 2010 include eight flowers and two vegetables. The selection committee has introduced these flowers:

### ***Echinacea purpurea PowWow Wild Berry***

This purple coneflower differs from all others for flower color, branching and plant size. This is a Zone 3 perennial that will bloom the first year seeds are started by the end of January. The plant reaches a height of 20 to 24 inches and blooms continually without deadheading.

### ***Marigold F1 Hybrid African Moon Song Deep Orange***

Bright orange in color, Moon Song Deep Orange is easy to grow in a 5 to 6 inch pot. The flower size from 2 ½ to 3 ½ inches is fully double. Tolerate heat and long day growing conditions. Plants will reach about 12-15 inches and have bright green foliage throughout the season.

### ***Gaillardia F1 Mesa Yellow***

Mesa Yellow is the first hybrid blanket flower with a controlled plant habit and prolific flowering. The 3-inch daisy like flowers and globe shaped seed heads offer a superior presentation of color which continues

throughout the season. Mature plants reach 20 to 22 inches and attract butterflies. If planted near the edge, plants will cascade over the container.

### ***Snapdragon F1 Twinny Peach***

A snapdragon with lovely peach tones but without the ability to snap because the flower is a double butterfly form.

### ***Viola Endurio Sky Blue Martien***

A hardy viola that will flower well after frost when planted in autumn and once again in spring after snow has melted and soil has warmed. It grows to 6 inches tall and 10-12 inches wide. It is also perfectly suited to window boxes and hanging gardens, as well as balcony and patio planters.

## An Update on Leadership Washburn County

Amber Anderson  
Master Gardener Volunteer

Since September of 2009 I've been participating in the program Leadership Washburn County.

This program is to develop current and future leaders in our community by offering a high quality training program emphasizing leadership skills and focusing on current issues facing our region.

Monthly topics include Economic Development, Education and Youth issues, Government, Health Care, and Agriculture/Forestry and Natural Resources. The sessions are very informational as well as motivating to be involved in the community.

Not only am I learning from the presenters and session planners but I'm also learning through my fellow students with 10 others participating in this program. I was lucky to be chosen by the Leadership Washburn County Board with only 11 applicants picked. The program runs for 8 months with graduation in May.

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There has been a little over 75 graduates throughout the years with the first session starting in 2002. A SPECIAL THANKS to North Country Master Gardener Volunteers for sponsoring me for this great program! If anyone is interested in applying for the 2010-2011 session, please contact Beverly Stencil, Advisor to the Board as well as the session planner @ 635-4444.

## Ornamental Grasses in Winter

*Kris Henning*  
Master Gardener Volunteer

Wintertime in the northland is pretty bleak for a gardener. We can't dig in the frozen ground, we can't smell fragrance in icicles, and there are no green leaves to look at in the white landscape. It's a long winter, too.

One thing there is to look at is Ornamental Grasses. There are many kinds that will stand up to the snowstorms and give a little relief from the white monotony, plus help out the local wildlife. They offer little havens of cover for wildlife trying to escape the blinding white spotlight all around them. They have additional food sources in their seeds for the birds that are brave enough to withstand the wintry onslaught. And they create movement in the garden by showing us how hard the snow is blowing.

*Calamagrostis* (Feather Reed Grass), both *xacutiflora* and *brachytricha*, are able to stand upright in the snow, and their flower heads look nice most of the winter. *Panicum virgatum* (Switchgrass) stays fairly upright in winter and is a valuable food source and thick cover for many birds; the Wisconsin-bred cultivar "Northwind" has a sturdy bolt upright form. *Miscanthus sinensis* named cultivars (Japanese Silver Grass) have orange fall color and showy flowerheads all winter [don't plant the species!]. *Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little Bluestem) has nice orange fall and winter color and

silvery fall flowers, too. *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian Grass) also has good fall color and upright attractive flowers in winter.

If we combine grasses with some of the sturdier perennials that will stand up in the snow, it makes for an easier time for both gardeners and wildlife during our long winters. Oh yes, and they even help you stay warm because you can measure the snowfall without going outside by just looking at how high it goes on the flower stalk!

## Wisconsin Invasive Species Identification, Classification and Control Rule – NR40

*Sue Reimardy*  
Master Gardener Volunteer

On September 1, 2009 Wisconsin's new rule on invasive species went into effect. The rule creates a science-based classification and regulatory system for invasive species.

According to the DNR Secretary Matt Frank, "... actions taken by citizens and visitors can greatly reduce their spread and impact and help to preserve our native landscapes and the traditions they support."

Along with the new rule, there is a field guide that will be especially useful for Master Gardeners and others in identifying invasive species. The guide has photos and text to describe 60 invasive species to aid in identification along with control methods. The guide and other information on Wisconsin invasives can be found at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives>.

Invasive plants are non-native species with the ability to invade natural plant communities and replace desirable native vegetation. They are considered different from 'ordinary' weeds because of this ability. It is estimated that the cost of controlling these plants, combined with economic loss to range lands, crops, waterways, and forests approaches \$137 billion in the U.S.

They are a threat to natural areas because they displace our native wildflowers and woody plants, degrade our recreational areas, and destroy habitat and food sources for animals, insects and birds. They out-compete our native plants by shading out or smothering natives, greening up earlier, producing many seeds that stay viable for years, or having aggressive roots systems.

What can we do? According to the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin, we can help prevent the spread of invasives by:

- o Learning to identify invasive species
- o Control invasives on our own property, dispose of seeds or plant material in the trash
- o Encourage and educate others
- o Plant non-invasive plants in our own gardens, use native plant species whenever possible
- o Support local groups working on invasive plant issues
- o Leave native trees and plants alone; natural landscapes offer the best defense

The field guide is available on the Wisconsin DNR website at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/UF/resources/Insider/pdf/DNRFieldGuideDraft090825.pdf>

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# North Country Master Gardeners Association

## Master Gardener Volunteers

Vol . un . teer [vol-uh n-**teer**]

-noun

1. a person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking
2. a person who performs a service willingly and without pay

For 2010 we have 41 certified or re-certified Master Gardener Volunteers. These gardeners have completed at least 24 hours of youth education, adult education or community service and 10 hours of continued education for the volunteer year (Oct-1 thru Sept 30).

Thank you to everyone volunteering in the Master Gardener program. Your efforts are appreciated. Some years getting the required number of hours to be certified can be difficult, but this need not stop you from continuing to volunteer through the Master Gardener program.

Maybe you completed your hours in 2009, but did not complete the timesheet - there is still time to do so. These hours are very important in being accountable to the three County Boards and UW-Extension on the contributions of volunteers to gardening education in our communities. State and county funding allocations are in part based on these reports.

Everyone is encouraged to submit time reports to reflect your contributions each fall. Even if you miss a year you can re-certify if you complete 24 hours of youth education, adult education or community service AND 10 hours of continued education in a future volunteer year (Oct-1 through Sept 30).

You will meet the requirements for being re-certified as a MGV and a member of NCMG.

Our contributions are important to our communities. We provide valuable information at a time when interest in garden-

ing is increasing and government resources are being stretched.

Thank you for the service you have provided and hopefully you will find the Master Gardener Program a worthwhile volunteer experience to continue.

## Milestone Volunteer Hours

The North Country Master Gardeners congratulate the following members in completing milestones in volunteer hours:

150 Hours:	Alma Karels, Carolyn Marquardt, Sue Reinardy, Mary Burnham, Dennis Schraufnagel, Victoria Zalatoris
500 Hours:	Peggy Flaws, Michelle La Barbera
750 Hours:	Sandy Hoecherl, Russ Parker

## Tour Committee Report

*Sandy Hoecherl*  
*Acting Chairman*

The Tour Committee met on February 26 to begin planning for a possible tour next summer. August 2 & 3 were scheduled as possible dates for a tour. The North Country Master Garden Volunteers and the Spooner Garden Club are going to co-sponsor this year's tour.



Lois Miller attended the meeting as representative of the Spooner Garden Club because committee member Mary Lou Gabriel was unable to attend. They will be contacting Olbrech Gardens in Madison for information on a possible tour. Mary Burnham will contact the Allen Centennial Gardens in Madison. Sandy Hoecherl will be contacting Blackhawk Express and possible hotels. Any member is welcome to join this committee.

# 2009 North Country Master Gardeners Accomplishments Summary

North Country Master Gardeners volunteered over 2,200 hours to UW-Extension and our communities in Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn Counties in 2009. This was 17% more than the previous year. Master Gardeners also participated in 785 continuing education hours to keep us actively learning and updated on horticultural practices.

Some of the highlights from 2009:

- o North Country MGA donated over 4,000 pounds of produce from the Spooner Display Garden, as well as additional produce from other area gardens.
- o Master Gardener Volunteers helped teach youth hands-on gardening with the "Got Dirt? Garden Initiative". The program uses micro-farm garden carts, container gardens and raised bed gardens in projects at Siren, Webster, Spooner, Hayward and Winter Schools.
- o A low pressure drip irrigation system was installed for the Spooner Research Garden. The system operates off an elevated storage tank, which is filled by an air lift pump operated by a windmill.
- o Volunteers team taught with UWEX nutrition educators in the Ready, Set, Grow program in Hayward giving toddlers hands-on experience planting, watering, and caring for vegetables in a container garden.
- o In partnership with Burnett Co. Health & Human Services, Catholic Charities housing authority, UWEX Nutrition Education Program and North Country MGA, a square foot raised bed garden was developed for residents of the Lake Wood Apartments in Siren. This project increased access to fresh vegetables for the residents who have mental and physical challenges.
- o Some of the Community Education events included the New Ventures Garden Seminar in Minong, Earth Day Events in Hayward and Shell Lake, Spooner Ag Research Station Twilight Garden Tour, and a Garden and Nursery Tour Bus Trip to Duluth.

For the full state 2009 Annual Accomplishment Report go to the Wisconsin Master Gardener website at: <http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/> and click on the "State Program" tab in the left hand column. On the State Program page click on "Accomplishments".

## Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities

Location:	Project	Contact	Phone
Hayward	Ready-Set-Grow	Lisa Wydra .....	715-634-4839
Hayward	School Garden Committee	Tom Blumenberg .....	715-462-4821
Hayward	Library Landscaping	Carol Alcoe .....	715-462-3213
Burnett Med. Center/Continuing Care	Patient Gardens	Linnea Seume .....	715-463-5452
Spooner Ag Research Station	Demo Garden	Kevin Schoessow .....	715-635-3506
Webster	Fort Folle Avoine Garden	Carolyn Marquardt .....	715- 349-8005
Winter	School/Community Garden	Peggy Flaws .....	715-266-6031
Spooner	Spooner Elementary Helping Hands	Diann Parker .....	715-635-9582
Shell Lake	School Garden Committee	Keri Jensen .....	715-468-7816

## Volunteer for the Committee of Your Choice

Spooner Research Garden	Sharon Tarras .....	715-635-6066	<a href="mailto:smtarras@tarrasdesign.com">smtarras@tarrasdesign.com</a>
Education and Training	Russ Parker .....	715-635-9582	<a href="mailto:jackpineflats@centurytel.net">jackpineflats@centurytel.net</a>
Plant Sale	Tony Webber .....	715-469-3411	<a href="mailto:twebb@yahoo.com">twebb@yahoo.com</a>
Garden Tours	Amber Anderson .....	715-635-8067	<a href="mailto:alanderson6@wisc.edu">alanderson6@wisc.edu</a>
Grants	Larry Axelson .....	715-653-2527	<a href="mailto:axe441@centurytel.net">axe441@centurytel.net</a>
Membership	Sue Reinardy .....	715-462-3361	<a href="mailto:sreinardy@centurytel.net">sreinardy@centurytel.net</a>
Executive Committee	Russ Parker .....	715-635-9582	<a href="mailto:jackpineflats@centurytel.net">jackpineflats@centurytel.net</a>

# Shrub and Tree Maintenance

*Sue Reinardy*

*Master Gardener Volunteer*

If you haven't been out in the yard yet, late winter is a great time to prune your shrubs and trees. And late winter is an especially hard time for trees and shrubs. Animals (think deer) are looking hard for food and the tender new shoots are tasty, plus the thaw/freeze cycles can cause cracks and stunt growth.

Let's go through the maintenance year. I have found a garden journal is very helpful in remembering when to do which chore. I use the Wisconsin Garden Journal produced by the Madison Area Master Gardeners Association to help me keep track of when to prune and fertilize. A few of the dates are slightly early for us in the Northwoods, but generally the hints are very helpful.

- o Late Winter - Prune dormant trees and summer-flowering shrubs
- o Spring - Prune non-flowering shrubs including evergreens
- o Summer - Prune spring flowering shrubs after flowers have faded
- o Late-fall - Prune oak trees, winter protect woody ornamentals

According to a research farm manager at Cornell University, regular pruning can extend the life of a tree by keeping new wood and foliage growing. Not pruning could cut the life of a tree in half. It is a good practice to prune most trees and shrubs during a dormant period when sap loss is minimized and there is less stress on the plant. There is also a lower risk of fungus infection and insect infestation because these threats tend to be dormant during this time as well. Routine pruning to remove weak, diseased or dead branches can and should take place any time. But remember, all prunes place some stress on a tree or shrub. Cut as little as possible and never prune more than 25% of the crown of a tree.

Come spring, fertilize shade trees and shrubs with high-nitrogen fertilizer when the buds swell. Prune junipers, arborvitae, yews, and hemlock any time during late spring or early summer. Pine can be pruned by cutting up to two thirds of the length of the new growth (candles).

## Resources

- o Landscape Plants of the Upper Midwest is an interactive guide that is specific to the upper Midwest United States (hardiness zones 3, 4 and 5), providing complete and accurate information on more than 600 species and varieties common to this region. [www.midwestlandscapeplants.org](http://www.midwestlandscapeplants.org)
- o UW Extension has an extensive number of publications that provide good information. An example is # A1771 "Caring for Deciduous Shrubs". <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/>

## April 30 is Arbor Day

Arbor Day has been celebrated for over 135 years. Planting trees is more important than ever as a way to improve habitat and our environment. Did you know that planting trees is one way to help reduce our carbon footprint and help combat global climate change?

The Wisconsin State Journal recently quoted DNR Chief Forester Paul Delong as saying that "a sugar maple tree with a 1-inch trunk planted at a home will reduce atmospheric carbon by 17 pounds a year." So celebrate this Arbor Day: plant a tree, walk in the woods, or just enjoy a picnic under a tree.

## Calendar of Events

**March 20, 2010:** New Ventures Gardening Seminar at Northwood School, Minong. 9:30 to 3:15. Registration and vendor sales begin at 8:45. Pre-registration is required by mailing in \$13.00 (includes lunch and snacks) with name, phone number and address to Northwood Community Ed, N14463 Hwy. 53, Minong, WI 54869.

**March 25, 2010:** NCMGV meeting at the Fish Hatchery. Russ Parker will educate us on drip irrigation.

**April 10, 2010:** Grape Pruning Demo; Eagle Branch Vineyard, Frederic, WI.

**April 17, 2010:** Barron Co. Garden Expo, Rice Lake, WI.

**April 19, 2010:** Fruit and Shrub Pruning workshop, Spooner Demo Garden 3:00 p.m. Free. Pre-registration is encouraged.

**April 19, 2010:** Apple Grafting Workshop, Spooner Research Station 6:00 p.m. \$10 - pre-registration is required.

**May 8, 2010:** Composting Workshop, Hunt Hill.

**May 15, 2010:** Barron County Master Gardener Volunteers plant sale at 8:30 a.m.

**May 22, 2010:** NCMGV plant sale, Spooner Ag Research Station

**July 20, 2010:** Barron County Master Garden Volunteers and the Rice Lake Garden Club are sponsoring a tour of Minnesota gardens.



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## Growing Forsythia in Northern Wisconsin

*Sandy Hoecherl*

*Master Gardener Volunteer*

The bright yellow show of forsythia is one of the first harbingers of spring across America. Unfortunately, most forsythia bushes are zone 4 or 5 plants. All too often in our area, we are treated to a few yellow blossoms along the ground where the bush was covered by snow most of the winter. I have had success in the area with Northern Gold, a cultivar developed in Canada. It is listed as a zone 2 or 3 plant and generally blooms successfully in spring.

Forsythia can be forced into blooming early for those who can't wait for late April. Cut off a few branches with buds that look healthy and are close together. Put them in a vase with water and wait for a couple of weeks. The golden color will cheer up any room.

These bushes can be used as a back of the border hedge or as a standalone plant in your landscape. They would be especially bright in front of evergreens. However, since early spring is the only time forsythia looks spectacular, it is wise to plant in an area where other plants will provide show later in the season.

Forsythia can grow in almost any soil, although it will do best in soil enriched with manure, peat moss or compost. Blooms will be most spectacular in full sun but it can be grown in partial shade. Plants should be fertilized with a regular fertilizer (10-10-10) each year in early spring.

Since forsythia bushes grow one to two feet a year they can become rather wild looking unless given a good pruning directly after bloom in spring. Cut approximately ¼ of the largest branches back to about four inches above the ground. This keeps the plant at a proper height and encourages a

bushy habit. If a plant has been neglected for years it may stop blooming altogether. The plant can be rejuvenated by pruning the entire bush to the ground, though it will be several years before it is blooming again.

Propagation may be done with softwood cuttings or with ground layering. If using the first method, select cuttings from new growth in spring or early summers. Cut a three to six inch branch and place the end into moist soil. Once roots are established, transfer to a pot. It can be transplanted directly into the garden when the weather is warm. Ground layering pins a tip of a branch to the ground. Keep the branch attached to the bush until

strong roots have developed. Then the branch can be cut from the bush and transplanted in the garden.

Northern Gold is the only variety I have grown in this area. However, several other varieties claim to be zone 3 plants. Meadowlark was developed by North and South Dakota state universities and the Arnold Arboretum. Weekend Forsythia is a more compact plant that was developed in France and New Hampshire Gold has red foliage in the fall.

Be sure to select a zone 3 plant and you will have years of spring beauty.

## Got Dirt? Youth Gardening Initiative Continues to Sprout

*Kevin Schoessow*

*Area Ag Development Agent*

For the last several years, the "Got Dirt?" project has been out planting seeds trying to promote and encourage gardening with youth. The primary focus has been to schools, child care facilities, head start centers or anyone else who have an interest in providing hands-on gardening education for youth. "Got Dirt?" was initiated by the Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Family Services and UW-Extension. The underlying goal of the project is to use gardening as a tool to increase students' knowledge and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Moreover, gardening offers a fun form of physical activity.

"Got Dirt?" relies heavily on local volunteers to help implement youth gardening projects. For this reason the State Master Gardener Association (WIMGA) and North Country Master Gardeners Association (NCMGA) are strong supporters of this effort. For the past several years I and other NCMG volunteers have been working to promote youth gardening through the "Got Dirt?" initiative.

This effort had a slow start initially; however in recent months there has been a dramatic increase in youth educators and community members wanting to start youth gardens. Part of this interest was due to the "Got Dirt?" training held at the Spooner Elementary School (SES) in September of 2009. This training highlighted both in class room gardening and outdoor gardening projects at SES.

This is a wonderful opportunity for MGVs, parents, and other community members to take your passion for gardening and work with our local schools. Most schools have formed gardening committees and have begun making plans; however they still need additional community support.

Volunteers are needed to assist teachers with classroom demonstrations, or help with after school gardening projects. Help is needed to build and install raised beds, and prep sites for potential planting in May and June. Donations for materials and supplies are needed as well. Any help or assistance would very much be appreciated.

If you are interested in becoming involved with a local school near you, please contact me for more information. My contact information is on the front page.

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<http://www.cals.wisc.edu/ars/spooner>

# North Country Gardeners Newsletter

A publication for gardening enthusiasts from the  
Tri-County area of Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn

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