

North Country Gardeners

UW-EXTENSION COOPERATIVE EXTENSION – BURNETT, SAWYER, AND WASHBURN COUNTIES ISSUE 26 / MAY 2013



A publication for
gardening enthusiasts
from the
tri-county area
of Burnett, Sawyer,
& Washburn

In this issue

Greetings
Plant sale
"Enabled" garden
Spooner School garden
"WorksForUs"
"Unexpected House-
plant"
Intensive gardening
Going to the fair
Limiting pain
Apple tree pruning
Geranium propagation
Garden walks
Going vertical
Sharing your knowledge
Growing for food pantry
Lavender
Small-garden crop
rotation
Burnett Garden Club
Milkweed
Plants for butterflies



Area Agricultural Agents
Office
Spooner Ag Research Station
W6646 Highway 70
Spooner, Wisconsin 54801
715/635-3506 or toll-free
800/528-1914

Greetings

April, someone once said, is the cruelest month, unless, of course, you love to cross-country ski, snowshoe, ice fish or otherwise enjoy cold, wet weather. This April has been cruel for many, especially gardeners who are anxiously awaiting the arrival of just about anything green!

What a difference a year makes in Northern Wisconsin weather. Last spring was unusual – record-breaking heat in March, followed by devastating frost to tender flowers and plants that broke dormancy early. While one can never predict what additional surprises Mother Nature may have in store, it will be interesting to see how this year's prolonged winter affects gardening going forward.

Speaking of gardening – last year the All-America Selections (AAS) display garden at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station (SARS) underwent some major changes in the way AAS annuals were planted. We hope that you enjoyed the beautiful new design and lively plant combinations.

This year an additional area will be developed just south of that AAS annual garden. We are excited about the prospect of developing and sharing new ideas in a lovely garden setting. More on that on page 3.

We feel fortunate to have this space (at the SARS location) to bring current and innovative horticultural ideas to the public.

Come join us at the garden – you may find an idea that would change the way you approach gardening in the future. Most of all, come and enjoy the space, plantings, and people working there.

Even though the ground is covered with snow and ice as we write this, we know it won't be long before we are outside tending our gardens and planting. Speaking of planting, the North Country Master Gardener Association is having its annual Plant Sale on Saturday, May 18, at the Spooner Ag Research Station. See you there.

Kevin Schoessow
UW-Extension Ag Development Agent
kevin.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu

Nancy Reis
President
North Country Master Gardeners Assn.

Renowned plant sale is May 18

In what will come as no surprise to anyone, this late spring has kept plants hunkered down. Because of that, the North Country Master Gardener volunteers have had to change their annual plant sale plans slightly.

The sale – traditionally held the third Saturday of May – will be on May 18 from 8 a.m. until the plants are gone.

And, since at this writing the perennials are still snow-covered or barely set free, the MGs do not expect to have perennials at the sale.

But they are not ruling out having

some surprises there!

The NCMGA website will provide details on all the plants for the sale at <http://wimastergardener.org/?q=NorthCountry>.

Included as appropriate are name, description, color, taste, growing conditions, and days to maturity. The site will be updated as the date gets closer – so check often.

Bring your plant list with you to the sale or if you can't make the sale, you might consider sending your order with a friend using the lists found on the site.

Where all those tomatoes come from

BY RUSS PARKER

The annual spring plant sale has been our major fundraiser for educational projects for many years. This sale has been well-received by the public with increasing numbers of return customers looking for specific heirloom tomatoes that have become their favorites. Heirloom and open-pollinated varieties make up the majority of the tomatoes and peppers that we offer. The heirloom tomatoes offer a unique variety of colors, shapes, and flavors, and gardeners who are so inclined can save seeds from these to start their own in subsequent years.

So how does the plant sale come together? This year we reviewed our sales over the last three years and the varieties that we offered, what sold and what didn't, along with consideration of past requests from our customers and fellow Master Gardener volunteers. We decided on the varieties to offer and set a target quantity of each. Then we perform a seed inventory, saved seed from past years and individual seed stashes. If the seed is older, we perform germination tests on those. If the germination rate is off we either sow those heavier or opt for new seed and then place orders to suppliers such as TomatoFest, Seed Savers Exchange, Pinetree Gardens, Johnny's, and others. The next item of business is to gather, inventory, clean, and sanitize the cells and trays. Most of the plastic cells and trays that we use are recycled from members of our group.

The past few years we have asked for volunteers among members of the North Country MGVS to assist in seed starting. This year there are 10 of us involved in the germination start for the plant sale. To make it convenient for those volunteers I put together the seed-starting supplies in "kit" form that included a soilless starting mix (one bag per flat), a cleaned tray with cells, a plastic dome for moisture retention, and the seeds.

Peppers were started ahead of the tomatoes, around March 22, because of a typically little longer germination period and a little slower rate of growth. The tomatoes were started about April 1. With the seedlings up and wanting actual sunlight, they were relocated into the Spooner Ag Research greenhouse.

The greenhouse benches are filling up with the various starts including several All-American Selection (AAS) plant varieties that we elected to germinate ourselves. We send several AAS flower seed packets to Madison that require earlier starting. This year the Burpee's Seed Company offered a "Welcome Home Garden" seed-starting packet honoring returning veterans and their families. Kevin Schoessow received 100 of those packets, many of which were then dispersed through the local veteran's office, and several sent to support school gardens. The packets included seeds for a typical vegetable garden. We decided to start a flat of each of peppers, tomatoes, and onions included in the packets and disperse to appropriate recipients as transplants at a later date.



The MGV-grown tomatoes and peppers sell out quickly at the plant sale.

Photo by Kevin Schoessow

Watering the seedlings is an everyday task, and volunteers are always needed. As the weather warms and the plants put on growth, the daily watering expands to twice a day. **If you have a desire to help with this activity, there is a sign-up sheet in the greenhouse. You can sign up to water in the morning or afternoon of your choice.**

As the seedlings grow they eventually need to be transplanted into larger pots. We use a square container manufactured by Belden that is purchased from BFG supply out of St. Paul, Minnesota. The last three years we have used topsoil purchased from Rock N' Top out of Stone Lake. This was delivered last fall to keep from dealing with the spring road bans and having to haul the soil ourselves. This topsoil is a blended mix of various soil types from the area that is pulverized and screened. The potting sessions will be announced via e-mail. We always need help with this activity.

This year has been a really different winter, one that took its time to get a grip on us, and now it just can't seem to warm up here in the north. Finally the temperatures are warming, the sun is out, and the seedlings are on their way. We will be offering about 400 pepper plants (mainly bell types with a couple varieties packing a little heat) and 800 tomatoes. We don't expect to have the 800 perennials we planned.

We will keep you posted.

New garden in the works

A new “enabled” or “alternative” garden will be installed at the Demonstration Garden this year.

The purpose is twofold: 1) Highlight several handicap or “enabling” garden raised beds and show visitors options to make gardening less physically demanding; 2) Demonstrate alternative gardening methods such as small-space, combination (mixing perennial, fruit or annual flowers with veggies), wide-row, mounded raised beds, square foot, and lasagna gardening.

Display space will be dedicated to permanent or semi-permanent structures and open display space for creative gardening methods that can change from season to season.

MGV and garden designer Sharon Tarras, working with some preliminary information from the NCMGA, developed alternate versions, and the MGVS at the April 25 meeting selected the version shown here for the approximately 96-by-35-foot rectangular bed, which will replace some of the present, traditional long beds.

Phase One of the project will be to remove the sod from the adaptive gardening area and prep it for crushed trap rock, which will allow wheelchair accessibility. A sod cutter will be rented to avoid using Round-Up and to hopefully speed up the process. The walkways will be covered with donated crushed trap rock with the use

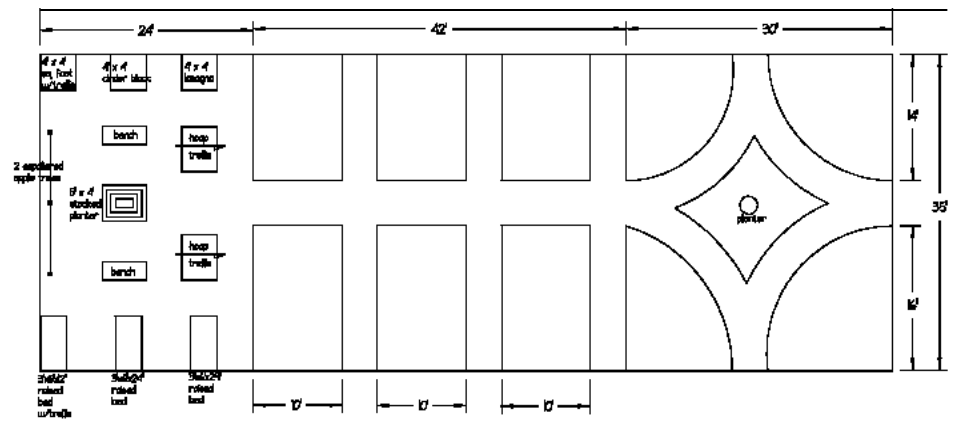
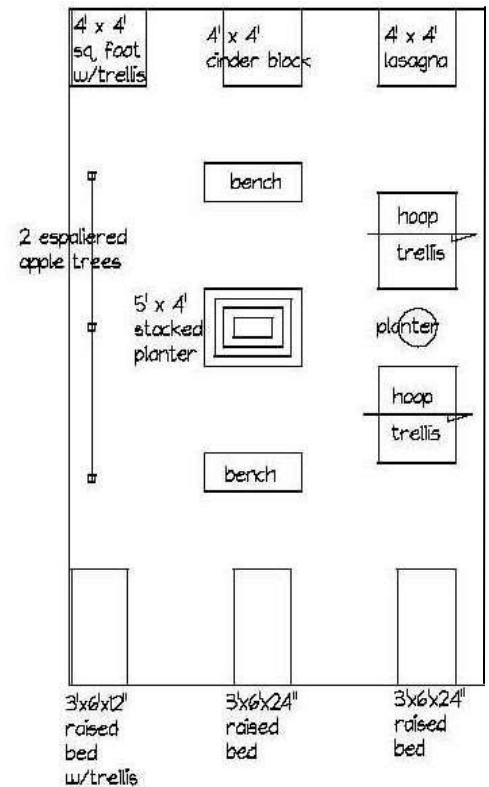
of a compactor/vibrator machine.

Phase Two will be to install the benches, planters, raised beds, and trellis.

Phase Three will be to get everything planted.

Depending on how the sod removal goes, the sod in the southern part of the design area may also be removed, and the rectangle beds will be laid out and then the curved beds. The paths between the vegetable beds will be mulched with an organic mulch initially, but there was some talk about demonstrating other hard surfaces in sections between the vegetable gardens.

As the weather and soil conditions allow, work will begin, and many volunteers will be needed to create the new spaces.



Thinking spring ... it is spring, isn't it?

BY AMY YOUNG

At the Spooner School Gardens we're hoping spring is here! While there isn't a whole lot going on outside on top of the snow, there's a whole lot going on inside at both the elementary and middle schools.

In February MGVS Robin Heier, Chris Wyeh, and Nancy Reis started lettuce seeds with the first-grade classes in our grow cart. They enjoyed tasty salads in March just in time to clean out the cart and get it

ready for the next set of seeds to get growing. So we started peppers in March and more recently tomatoes in both sixth- and third-grade classes.

Then we geared up for “Green Week” at SES. It is a week that we kick off with a “harvest of the month” presentation – this year on honey and local pollinators.

We ended the week with an Arbor Day Celebration and a half-day of global youth service. Students participated in grade-level activities:

Kindergarteners sorted out the worm bins and talked about vermicompost; first-graders planted marigolds with the Spooner Garden Club; second-graders learned about compost and recycling; third-graders prepped the garden and did some planting, trash collecting, and school grounds clean-up; and fourth graders participated in an Arbor Day Program with a proclamation by the mayor and a special Department of Natural Resources speaker.

Book Report: The Unexpected Houseplant

BY SUE REINARDY

Tovah Martin knows her houseplants. She actually grows in her own home every one of the 220 plants profiled in *The Unexpected Houseplant*. It sounds like a place we would love to visit. She gives useful, practical advice that is grounded in expertise and years of experience. The book reads like a novel for those of us who love plants.

Martin gives encouragement on how to take care of houseplants in less-than-ideal environments that our homes represent to many plants. Each entry has a personal experience essay included along with a beautiful picture, description, attributes, size,

exposure, water requirements, optimum temperatures, soil type, and fertilizing requirements. Plus she adds tips on how to provide the right light, selecting a container, soil mixes, pruning, and grooming.

The book is organized by season with a short agenda on the tasks at hand and the plants that are outstanding during that time period. You'll get information that is useful at this very moment on plants that may be struggling at your house. I know it caused me to move my Christmas cacti (*Schlumbergera specios*) to a different location, and within weeks they were doing much better.



Long rows are not the only way to plant

BY SUE REINARDY

There is an increased interest in intensive gardening techniques with the popularity of such books as *All New Square Foot Gardening* and *Lasagna Gardening*. But what technique is the best for your location? Here is a comparison of the techniques and a description of each to

help you choose.

These techniques share some advantages over planting in larger spaces such as a smaller up-front investment, new areas fill in faster, requires less maintenance, can be re-worked, and vegetables and annuals do especially well using these techniques.

Technique	Attributes
Raised Beds	Basic unit of intensive gardening, concentrates soil in a small area "raised" above normal soil level, usually 3-4 feet wide and long; compaction avoided by not stepping on soil.
Square Foot	Based on Mel Bartholomew's book by that name, a unique system for growing using 20% of the space, 10% of the water, 5% of the seeds, and 2% of the work of conventional gardens. Check out www.squarefootgardening.com for detailed information.
Lasagna	Based on Patricia Lanza's book <i>Lasagna Gardening</i> , organic, layering method to create better soil, close planting, and generous mulching. For more information check out www.lasagnagardening.com .
Straw Bale	A version of hydroponic gardening, bales are the growing medium; add water and high-nitrogen fertilizer to get it started; best for growing short plants.
Succession Planting	Planting after spots are vacated by spent plants; variation is multiple plantings of one crop to provide continuous harvest. Cool-season crops are followed by warm-season crops, then by another cool-season crop (if the growing season is long enough!).
Interplanting	Growing two or more types of vegetables in the same space; needs careful planning on factors of growth pattern, nutrition and water needs, and length of growing periods.
Containers	Anything can be grown in a container. Drainage, irrigation, and fertilizer must be carefully monitored for best growing conditions; consider dwarf varieties.

Going to the fair – it's not just for the youths

BY SUE REINARDY

County fairs are not just for the kids. The open divisions allow adults to enjoy the fair experience and some friendly competition. By exhibiting you can share your success and maybe even get bragging rights over your neighbor. There may also be premiums that are awarded for each ribbon placement.

To get started, check-out the county-specific information listed below. For gardeners, you may be especially interested in the agricultural divisions of Plant & Soil Science or Flowers & House Plants. Go to the University Extension Learning Store (<http://learningstore.uwex.edu>) and either download a free copy or purchase Bulletin #A3306 "Exhibiting and Judging Vegetables" and/or #A2935 "Evaluating and Judging Flowers and Indoor Plants" for guidance and helpful tips.

As you might guess, entries are judged on freshness, uniformity, and quality. Entries should be precisely the number and type listed in the Exhibitor's Handbook for each fair. An entry form is required by a due date specified for each fair. Fair books with the entry forms will be available soon online and at UW-Extension Offices, some feed mills, groceries, and banks. Some counties have "junior fairs" (such as Rusk County, for example) and no longer have open classes.



(Above) Dale Pederson's first-place entry in Vegetable Display, Sawyer County Fair. (Below) Floral Arrangement – Best of Show, Sawyer County Fair, by Master Gardener Volunteer Carol Alcoe.

Central Burnett County Fair - Webster

<http://centralburnettcountyfair.org/>
August 1-3

Burnett County Fair - Grantsburg

<http://grantsburgfair.com/>
August 22-25

Pick up (or download) a free Fair Book (it is the same one

for both fairs) at Burnett County banks; Burnett County Library in Webster; UW-Extension office in Siren; Burnett County Sentinel, Grantsburg Public Library, and Kozy Kitchen in Grantsburg.

Entry form must be submitted by the due date specified in the fair book.

Exhibitors must either reside or own property in Burnett County.

Sawyer County - Hayward

<http://sawyercountyfair.org/>
August 15-18

There is a single entry fee of \$6 for as many items as you wish to exhibit. A fair entry form must be submitted by the due date specified in the fair book. All exhibitors get the benefit of a fair exhibitor pass with their entry.

Washburn County - Spooner

<http://washburncountyfair.com/>
July 25-28

Open class non-animal entries will be accepted through entry day, but it is suggested exhibitors enter early.

Seniors: Learn how to garden with less pain

The Senior Resource Center of Sawyer County will offer monthly educational presentations as a part of the EBS outreach program. Each presentation will take place in Hayward at the Sawyer Community Senior Center from 10:30 a.m. to noon.

A wonderful lunch will then be served, with a suggested donation of only \$3.75. Since seating is limited, it is requested that attendees send in the registration form or call 715/634-3000 to reserve a spot for the presentation and/or lunch.

"TIPS FOR GARDENING WITH EASE"

Wednesday, May 22 – 10:30 a.m. to noon

Sue Reinardy, Master Gardener volunteer, will present strategies for gardening in spite of aches, pains, and chronic conditions that may otherwise limit outdoor activities.

The interactive program will provide tips for modifying practices and tools to help you continue gardening whether you have a simple pulled muscle or a more serious health condition.



(At left)
Umbrella tree (same one below) getting pruned.
Note: Lots and lots of vertical water sprouts that need to be pruned out every year.

(Below)
Umbrella-shaped tree, easy -to-pick apples, can mow underneath tree, and has good air and light penetration.

Photos by Kevin Schoessow

Why train and prune apple trees?

BY KEVIN SCHOESSOW

Late winter or early spring is an ideal time to train and prune apple trees, as well other fruit trees, grapes, and other woody perennials.

When contemplating training and pruning, the first question one has to ask is why? There are many apple trees growing in backyards, along roadsides, or in old pastures that have never been influenced by humans much less seen a pruning shears. To the casual observer they seem to be doing just fine, thank you. They have a nice shape and may even bear plenty of fruit.

So, why bother pruning? Good question. My response is it's your choice. You can let the tree do it own thing and accept the consequences or you can nurture it. I learned many years ago that growing, training, and pruning apple trees is a lot like raising kids. Like children, there are no two trees alike, they each have their own personality, they each respond differently to their care and culture, and there is no one universal way to prune or train them.

Trees can be left on their own to survive, but they will not have any special qualities or attributes you can be proud of. Left untrained and un-

pruned, trees will pick up bad habits, their branches may get crossed or get led astray. They many develop multiple trunks and have poorly attached branches and limbs. It's also fairly well-known that trees that are pruned and trained at a young age grow up to be stronger, healthy, more mature, and are less likely to be binge producers. Well-pruned trees are also better at withstanding the negative influences of their environment and have a lower incidence of insect, disease, and weather-related problems.

As with a child, you can train and prune a tree to be something you are



proud of. It may take many years to see your influences, but you can't lose sight of the end result. I've seen some very formal well-manicured and sculpted trees and others that are free flowing but still well-behaved, each one still having the qualities we like to see in a tree: strong well-attached limbs, open to air circulation and sunlight, no broken or diseased

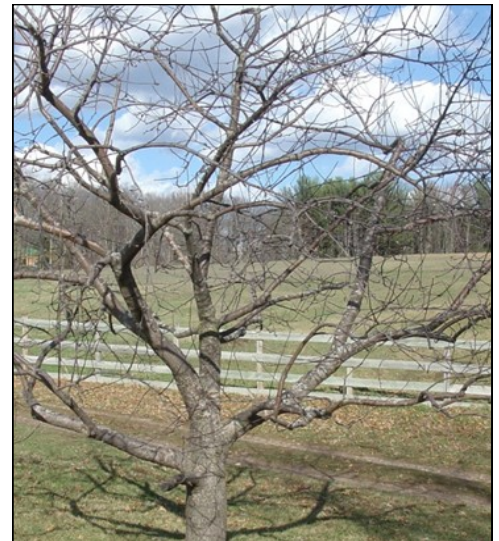
branches, branches that are growing out and up, no water sprouts or suckers, and cuts made near the branch collar.

My final analogy for pruning and training trees is don't completely ignore them once they have grown up. You will still need to have a relationship with your apple tree. If left on their own, they will develop bad habits and fall into disrepair. Always keep an eye out for broken branches, water sprouts, branches growing into the interior or drooping down, and don't be afraid to keep the tree to its proper height.

The choice to prune is yours. It's never too late to get started. To learn more see UW-Extension publication, A1959 "Training and Pruning Apple Trees" or go online and search the same topic. I also encourage parents of apple trees to talk with other experienced apple growers, visit an orchard or attend a pruning workshop to see the many ways training and pruning can be done.



(At left) Young plum tree late summer after pruning central leader out. (At right) This older tree is being managed as a modified center leader. There are several larger interior limbs each with their own scaffold branches. This tree is also being managed as a climbing tree for kids.



Fancy geraniums easily propagated with cuttings

BY CAROL ALCOE

I learned this technique 40 years ago from a Chicago-area commercial grower of scented and fancy-leaved geraniums.

To propagate, take cuttings from the "mother" plant as follows: Cuttings should be newer, green growth about the width of a pencil and 6 inches long. Some varieties have more slender, shorter stems, but the same "rules" apply.

Remove all lower leaves, flowers, and buds, leaving a sprig of three or four small leaves on top. Carefully remove the tight little coverings that were at each leaf base. Shorten cutting to about 4 inches.

Prepare a bath of water. To a half-gallon of water add one teaspoon bleach and two or three drops of dish detergent. Swish each cutting thoroughly and set aside on a paper towel. Do not rinse. Let cuttings dry overnight or at least several hours to set a callous at the cut end. The bath and callous help insure that the cutting will not develop rot.

Plant the cutting half its length in damp potting soil. You could use a community pot (group some together) – give each a couple of inches of space, maybe four to a 4-inch pot. Bagged, commercial potting soil is fine, not the seed-starting type and not the kind with added fertilizer.

They don't like the soil to be too rich. But if straight perlite is used, use very dilute fertilizer in the water once rooting has started.

Place in good light and water lightly when needed. Timing is hard to judge – warmth and light vary so much. Don't overwater – just dampen and allow to dry somewhat before watering again.

Check progress by GENTLY tugging on the cutting. If you feel some resistance, rooting has started.

I have used this technique for many years and have original plants of 'Skeleton Rose' and others from this grower.

Visit us on the Web!

This newsletter (in color) and much more information are at:

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

<http://wimastergardener.org/?q=NorthCountry>

<https://www.facebook.com/spoonerag>

"Meet Me at the Garden" Walks

Free informal guided tours and discussions in the display garden will be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. during the growing season. Topics to be announced.

Going Vertical

BY SUE REINARDY

Need more space or want to add interest to your garden? Consider going vertical. Living walls are a new trend. Trellis, espalier, stacked pots, and inverted gardening are all techniques that will add vertical space to your garden.

Living walls

There are a number of commercial products that allow plants to cover a wall or you can make one yourself out of a pallet (a web search on “pallet gardening” will get you started.) Living walls require a strong wall, a mounting system, moisture barrier, openings for plants, and an irrigation system. As you can imagine, this will require an investment of time and money.

Trellises

Almost anything vertical can be turned into a plant support, including a fence, a tree or shrub, a frame with grids, or a pole. Trellises allow more leaves to have access to the sun, increasing production and reducing space requirements. Vining crops, including cucumbers, melons, pole beans, peas, and tomatoes, all will do well on a trellis. Try growing plants like lettuce that benefit from a bit of shade at the foot of the trellis to grow even more in a small space.

Espalier (ess-PAL-yer)

A technique of controlling a plant so it grows flat against a structure such as a wall, fence or trellis. An espaliered plant can be a focal point or just a space-saving technique. It can also be high maintenance – so limit the number of plants using this technique. Consider slow-growing plants to reduce pruning needs. Many vines such as climbing roses can be trained as



Stacked lettuce and herb container (above) and espaliered Honey Crisp apple (below) at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

Photos by Sue Reinardy

espalier plants. Apples, forsythia, hibiscus, juniper, and viburnum also make good plants for this technique.

Stacked pots

Gain height by stacking containers with the larger pot as the base and setting ever smaller pots on top. This can make a nice focal point.

Inverted gardens

We have all seen the advertisement for growing upside-down tomatoes. For this you need a strong hanging structure, a container such as a pail or bag, the same soil mix and fertilizer as you would use for containers, and irrigation. Some plants to try besides tomatoes are cucumbers, peppers, eggplants, and beans.

WORKSFORUS

TIPS FROM HYTHE MANN

Use sturdy stakes to stake tomato plants when planting them. It is so much easier to stake each plant when planting than after the plant is established.

In the walking paths between plants or planting beds, lay brown box cardboard down and then put mulch (wood chips) on top of that. Watering helps to keep it in place.

Amazing how it keeps the weeds out. Don't even miss pulling those weeds!



Tips for sharing your gardening knowledge

BY NANCY REIS

The 2012 Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association (WIMGA) Annual Conference was held in Ashland on September 14-15 at the Ashland Public High School.

It was a great destination for the conference titled "Green and Pristine." Ashland is on the shores of pristine Lake Superior. Ashland's history is recorded in murals painted on large city buildings throughout the business district. We enjoyed the many gardens and plantings on our walks enjoying the murals.

The conference committee did a tremendous job of arranging for fresh, real food for conference participants and brought interesting, knowledgeable presenters to each session as well (Tony Webber, NCMGV, served on this committee).

One of those presenters was NCMGV Sue Reinardy. She is an

experienced presenter, and I along with the packed library filled with eager attendees followed her through her no-nonsense presentation titled "No Fear – Share your Knowledge – 10 Steps for Stress-Free Gardening Presentations."

I thoroughly enjoyed her genuine manner of delivery: Her confidence in what she said, her examples backing up her statements, and her warm, good sense of humor kept us involved throughout. She truly practices what she preaches.

The following is a brief summary of the 10 steps.

1. Select a Topic – Fit the time-frame, audience; research or experience.

2. Research the topic – Reliable, interesting; add pictures, experiment.

3. Prepare outline – Goals, objectives of presentation, organize

research by group and topic, etc.

4. Putting it together – PowerPoint pictures, visual aids, tools, plants, etc.

5. Checklist to go – Put everything together in container, area. Visit site, check audio/visual needs, practice delivery, prepare handouts, confirm.

6. Game plan for presentation – Make notes work, put in binder. Involve audience. Create natural break (every 50 minutes).

7. Post-presentation – Evaluation of session, get ideas from participants, get e-mail addresses from participants for next class, store your materials for future use.

8. Examples – Graphs, questionnaires, tip sheets, etc.

9. Where to go – Local libraries, Extension referrals, garden clubs, etc.

10. Bonus – CD.

Volunteers needed for food pantry garden

BY ICAA

Indianhead Community Action Agency (ICAA) will be partnering again this year with an area farmer on our Community Connections Garden project. Individuals or families volunteer to assist with routine tasks of gardening and receive a generous amount of produce for their

work. You will also be helping ICAA because we receive the excess produce for distribution to others.

Routine tasks will be assisting in the pre-planting process, like laying plastic mulch or setting water lines.

The planting process will include planting crops like tomatoes, peppers, and potatoes. The maintenance of the garden includes hoeing and helping with the watering and finally the harvesting of products for yourselves and others served at ICAA Food Pantry. Most of the work is not physically demanding, and hours required will be kept to a minimum (about three hours per week).

You don't need to know anything about gardening as there are others participating in the program that will be able to teach you. So, if you would like to learn a bit about gardening, this would be a great opportunity for you.

The crops planned are cabbage, broccoli, green and yellow beans, lettuce, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, potatoes, beets, cucumbers, summer and winter squash, onions, peas, dill, cilantro, parsley, and pickling cucumbers.

Our garden was a great success last year. We donated over 6,000 pounds to our food pantry, and volunteers received an abundance of fresh produce.

WORKSFORUS

TIP FROM BONNIE HOFFER

A great tip I saw in a magazine, I haven't tried it yet but I'm going to, is to plant under trees with big roots, sink old one-gallon nursery pots in the soil between roots. Then plant colorful annuals or ferns in another one-gallon pot and just place them in the sunken pots! You can change them out each year or even seasonally.



Growing and using English lavender

BY KATHRYN SCHIEDERMAYER

Lavandula angustifolia **English Lavender**

What herb garden would be complete without lavender? What other scent is as popular or as nostalgic as lavender? The terms woody, sweet, pungent, clean, citrus, and floral have all been used to describe the unique scent of lavender. Its scent has long been a favorite because of its soothing effect on the spirit and its ability to relieve tension and anxiety. Lavender is the quintessential garden herb.

The word lavender is derived from the Latin word “lavare” or “to wash.” The plant is believed to have originated in the Mediterranean and Northern Africa and made its way to North America by way of the pilgrims in the 1600s. One of lavender’s earliest known uses was as a preservative for Egyptian mummies. It was also used by the Romans and Greeks to scent soaps and bathwater, a tradition that is still with us today.

Historically lavender was commonly used as a “strewing” herb and was popular for both its insect-repelling properties and its long-lasting fragrance. It was used liberally to mask household smells and stinking streets. Until as recently as 1915 lavender was used to disinfect wounds.

Lavender is a genus of about 25 species of perennial aromatic evergreen shrubs and sub-shrubs. The English lavender, *L. angustifolia*, is more fragrant and hardy than the French lavender, *L. stoechas*. Most varieties of lavender are suitable for Zones 8-9, however, a few are hardy and will do quite well in our Wisconsin climate. The two hardiest varieties are ‘Munstead’ and ‘Hidcote’.

‘Munstead’ will grow to a height of 18 inches, a diameter of 24 inches, and will produce blue-purple flowers. ‘Hidcote’ will grow to a height of 24

inches, a diameter of 30 inches, and will produce dark purple flowers.

Growing your own lavender is relatively easy. To get started, you can buy lavender plants, start plants from seed, take a cutting from an existing plant, or by root division of



By Marvin Schiedermayer

plants over three years old. The easiest means of propagation is from cuttings; however, I have grown a number of lavender plants from seed with a high success rate and very good results. It is highly recommended to start your plants indoors in early spring and transplant outside in late spring. One just needs patience when starting lavender from seed as it often takes 14 to 28 days for the seeds to germinate.

For ideal growing conditions, lavender needs full sun (eight hours a day is recommended). It is susceptible to fungus diseases; adequate spacing with good air circulation will minimize this. Lavender prefers well drained, moderately fertile soil. It is very drought-tolerant, and mature plants should not be over-watered; however, in the first year while getting established lavender does require an ample amount of water.

Typically it will not bloom until the second year, and it may take up to three years for the plant to reach its mature size. Lavender can also be grown in containers and can be taken indoors for the winter.

You can enjoy the beauty of lavender either in your garden or the flowers can be harvested and either enjoyed fresh or dried. The best time to harvest lavender is just before the last flowers on each stalk are fully open. This is also when the essential oil content is at its highest. After the plant flowers cut or pinch it back to encourage new growth. For maintenance, an established lavender plant should be cut back a third in early spring. Do not prune late in the season because it will stimulate growth and can result in winter-kill.

Although lavender does not have widespread culinary applications, lavender buds can be used to make some interesting and tasty cookies, puddings, cakes, and ice creams. It can also be infused into vinegar. The darker the color of the flower, the more intense the flavor will be.

Enjoy your lavender!

Lavender Bud Cookies

- 1/2 c. unsalted butter
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 tsp. dried lavender flowers, finely chopped (or 1 tbs. fresh)
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a medium bowl, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, vanilla, and lavender, and mix well. Combine the flour and baking powder and add to the lavender mixture, stirring until well blended. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto an ungreased baking sheet. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned on the edges. Makes approximately 4 dozen cookies.

Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Legumes (Pea family) *Peas, beans	Root Crops (Carrot and onion families) *Celery, carrot, parsley, fennel, onions, garlic, leeks, chives, dill	Heavy Feeders (Nightshade family) *Peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, potato	Cabbage (Mustard family) *Rutabaga, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, turnip, radish

Rotating's possible in small garden

BY SUE REINARDY

We all have the tendency to repeat our placement of plants in our gardens, and when you have a small garden sometimes you have no choice. Growing vegetables and annual flowers from the same botanical family that have the same nutritional requirements and attract the same diseases or insects may lead to a decline in soil fertility and a higher incidence of certain pests and diseases.

By rotating the location of plants from the same family on a cycle, you potentially can avoid some of those problems. The ideal cycle is to allow at least four years between planting of the same family on the same plot.

This idea has been translated from farm crops to the home garden and may not be practical, especially for a smaller garden. Plus with just a few plants of each family, it is less likely that a home garden will have a buildup of pests and diseases compared to commercial production.

If you don't have the space to rotate on this cycle and have had disease problems, consider placing some plants in a container to complete the

cycle or not grow plants from that family for a year or two.

Here are some common families that you might rotate in four plots (see above) and then move each set of families to the next plot in a four-year cycle. Check out the UW-Extension's Garden Fact Sheet # XHT1210 "*Using Crop Rotation in the Home Vegetable Garden*" for more information.

Other families include:

Sunflower family – lettuces, sunflowers.

Goosefoot family – beets, spinach, chard.

Gourd family – melons, squashes, gourds, cucumbers.

This same concept works for annual flowers. If you are noticing that petunias that you plant in the same location each year are not thriving, try moving them to a new location.

Rotation could get complicated so a hand-drawn plan of your garden will help you keep a written record of each year's rotation. Once you have identified the families you normally grow and assigned them as a group to an area – the rotation makes planting an easier task.

NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL

To help reduce mailing costs, future newsletters may be sent by e-mail to those who have an e-mail address on file with the Area Ag Agent office in Spooner. If you would like to add your e-mail to the list, or if your address has changed, please contact Lorraine Toman, ltoman@wisc.edu or 715/635-3506.

DON'T WANT THE NEWSLETTER?

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter by mail or notice of its publication by e-mail, contact Lorraine Toman (see above).

IDEAS?

If you have an idea for a newsletter article or want to write an article for it, contact Julie Hustvet, mastergardener-vol@charter.net or 715/635-3506. The newsletter is published in the spring and late summer.

WORKSFORUS

TIP FROM KIM MCDONALD

I swear by my Contech Scarecrow Motion Activated Sprinkler for keeping deer and rabbits away from my gardens.

In the spotlight: Burnett Garden Club

[The first in a series spotlighting area groups and organizations that further gardening and may interest MGVS.]

BY KRIS HENNING

The Burnett Garden Club's stated purpose is to promote education and enthusiasm about gardening in and around our homes and communities, to energize our members, and to get the creative juices flowing. The club is a non-profit entity and is affiliated with the Minnesota State Horticultural Society and has been in existence since 1988 (our 25th anniversary

is this year). We meet in Burnett County at 6:30 p.m., usually in the Grantsburg High School Science Room, on the second Thursday of each month from September to May. We host speakers or have workshops each month, all free and open to the public. We have a potluck Christmas Party in December.

During the summer months, we go on tours and nursery trips, have an annual potluck picnic with light-hearted container and bouquet competitions, and host our annual Plant

Sale. The Plant Sale is the club's only fundraiser and will be held June 8 (a week later this year) from 8 until noon in front of the mini-mall on Highway 70 in Grantsburg. We also maintain a garden at the entrance sign to Grantsburg on Highway 70 and take turns with upkeep.

We welcome new members to our club and encourage anyone with questions to call our 2013-14 president, Pamela Davies, at 715/463-4289. Dues are \$5/year. Our blogspot is burnettgardenclub.blogspot.com.

Milkweed's one weed you should let stay

BY SHERRI ROMAN

Most of us, when planting our vegetable gardens, vie for enough space against those nasty weeds that creep in year after year after year. Weeds have been given many names by the home gardener over time. They are the gruesome terror that demands our presence in battle week after week after week. Is it possible that any of them may possess redeeming qualities or value? I would like to introduce you to one: the milkweed plant.

The milkweed is an important nectar source for bees and other nectar-seeking insects. They also provide our monarch butterfly caterpillars their only food supply. I made a grave mistake of pulling out half of the milkweed plants that were growing up in my garden last year. As a result, there were not enough milkweed for those tiny creature to feast on.

The only remedy I could conjure was to move some of the caterpillars from the garden onto the milkweed that was growing elsewhere. I carefully transported at least 20 of them to the milkweed that was growing in my flowerbeds near the house in my front yard. Whew!

I realized that in my enthusiasm of preparing my



Photo by Sherri Roman, in her vegetable garden

vegetable garden for the family's produce this year, I could have wiped out dozens of monarch butterflies that are important to our ecosystem.

In addition, milkweed is known to repel wireworms which are a serious agricultural pest. The worm travels from one plant to another, injuring their root systems.

Milkweed sap is a natural remedy for poison ivy, and if applied to warts several times a day, may cause them to fall off.

Certain plants draw butterflies to your garden

BY SUE REINARDY

As gardeners we can be a big help to offset habitat loss, pesticide use and disease that take a toll on the butterflies and other creatures that pollinate our flowers and crops.

To encourage butterflies and other pollinators, plant in groups to increase pollination efficiency; they can visit the same type of flower over and over without relearning how to enter the flower. Plant a diversity of plants with the bloom season in mind; plan to provide food from early spring to late fall. Many herbs and annuals, although not native, are very good for butterflies. Recognize that weeds might be a good source of food. For example, dandelions provide nectar in the early spring before other flowers open. And minimize or eliminate the use of pesticides.

Some great nectar sources by season are: in spring – Lupine, Golden Alexander, in summer – Milkweed, Butterfly Weed, Purple Coneflower, Blazing Stars, Black-eyed Susan; and in fall – Aster, Joe Pye Weed.

Do you want to attract a particular kind of butterfly into your gardens?

Perennial Favorites

Bee Balm, Shasta Daisy, Coreopsis, Verbena, Phlox, Aster, Coneflower, Yarrow, Butterfly Weed

Annual Favorites

Zinnia, Cosmos, Petunia, Cleome, Goldenrod, Morning Glory, Dill, Sweet Alyssum, Marigold

Host Plants

Borage, Snapdragon, Nasturtium, Parsley, Fennel, Dill, Butterfly Weed, Violet, Milkweed, Hollyhock

There are a number of plants that are host to a specific species. Here are some plants to consider according to *A Guide to Natural Gardening* by Jim Knopf, et.al.

New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*) – All asters attract butterflies, as they are among the few nectar sources available so late in the season. Among those that visit: tiger swallowtails, common sulfurs, and monarchs.

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*

hirta) – Attracts butterflies and is a food plant for the larvae of a small orange and black butterfly called the silvery checkerspot.

Violets (*Viola spp.*) – A group of butterflies called fritillaries uses violets exclusively as host plants.

Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) – The hoary elfin butterfly lays its eggs on the foliage.

Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea stolonifera*) – The larvae of the small, blue spring azure feed on its leaves.

Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) – The shrub is one of only two known hosts of the spicebush swallowtail.

Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*) – Hosts the larvae of the spring azure and Henry's elfin.

Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) – The larvae of the gray comma, an angelwing butterfly, feed on the foliage. So do the Compton tortoiseshell, the mourning cloak, and the Canadian tiger swallowtail.

Pin Cherry (*Prunus pensylvanica*) serves as the host plant for larvae of coral hairstreak, spring azure, and white admiral butterflies.