

North Country Gardeners

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Co.

UW-Extension Cooperative Extension

Issue 10 , August 2002

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University of Wisconsin-Extension

Area Agricultural Agents Office

Spooner Ag Research Station

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(715) 635-3506 or

Toll Free 800-528-1914

Greetings

I hope everyone is having a successful growing season. A cool wet spring; followed by a mini drought; and lately plenty of rain, heat, and humidity has challenged gardeners. Keep a close eye out for insect and disease pests, the weather seems to be favoring both this year.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and useful. There are several horticulture events highlighted in this issue. There are three field day workshops coming up. Tuesday, August 13th is the annual Garden Twilight Tour; on Wednesday, September 4th there is a Tomato Field Day; and on Tuesday, November 5th we will be having our Grape Pruning Workshop. You will also see an announcement for the General Master Gardener Training Program and updates about Master Gardener activities.

If you have any questions about upcoming workshops or trainings please give me a call at 1-800-528-1914 or 635-3506. As always I welcome comments, suggestions, and contributions to this newsletter.

Happy Gardening,

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent

Annual Garden Twilight Tour Tuesday, August 13

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent

North County Master Gardeners, UW-Extension, and the Spooner Agriculture Research Station welcome you, your friends, and neighbors to come out and see what's growing in the demonstration and research garden. Tuesday, August 13 marks the date of the annual Twilight Garden Tour. We will start the tour at 5:30 p.m. and go until dusk.

Speakers at this year's event include Dr. Helen Harrison, UW-Extension Horticulture Specialist, who will be speaking on annual flower selections and vegetables; Dr. Brian Smith, UW-Extension Fruit Specialist, who will be leading discussions on small fruit and apple production; and Dr. Bob Tomesh, UW-Extension Horticulture Specialist, who will discuss heirloom tomatoes and grape production. I will also be on hand to answer questions about the hardy shrub rose variety trail and other horticulture activities.

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The garden is looking fabulous. The annual flowers are in full bloom, as are the 176 roses. If you are interested in tomatoes, there are over 35 different varieties planted this year (see early season tomato production article page 3). There is a good demonstration planting of onions, peppers, potatoes, and some proven short season melon crops. Ever heard of Rat-tail radish? Or seen a peanut plant? There are grapes, currants, amelanchier (service berry), gooseberries, raspberries, apples, and plums. With well over 240 named plant selections in the garden, there are plenty of plant materials to see.

In addition to the speakers there will be a vegetable tasting table. All available

ripe vegetable varieties will be served (mostly tomatoes, some peppers and possibly a melon or two or some currant jelly).

Be sure to bring your plant and insect questions to the specialists and area Master Gardeners. Bring samples in plastic baggies, clearly labeled so that if they need to get back to you with an answer, they have your name and contact information.

The demonstration garden is a joint effort between North County Master Gardeners, UW-Extension, and the Spooner Agriculture Research Station. The garden is open to the public August through September during regular station hours. (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., M-F). If you can't make it to any of the field days stop by during regular

office hours and ask about the self guided tour.

The garden is located 1/2 mile north of Hwy. 70 on Orchard Lane, across from the Sheep Research Facilities at the Spooner Ag Research Station. The research station is located one mile east of Spooner on Hwy. 70. Watch for garden meeting signs.

Farmers Market Vendors Wanted!

Spooner Area Chamber of Commerce is looking for vendors to participate in a one-day Farmers Market at the Spooner Heritage Festival September 7, 2002. If you are interested in selling at this one-day event contact Bob Waggoner at 635-9351.

Volunteer opportunities for Master Gardeners

Purple Loosestrife Control

Purple loosestrife is an attractive flower found in wet habitats such as marshes, roadside ditches, riverbanks, and lakes edges that has become a significant threat to our waterways. First detected in Wisconsin in the early 1930s, it remained uncommon until the 1970s. It is now widely dispersed in the state, and has been recorded in 70 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. Low densities in most areas of the state suggest that the plant is still in the pioneering stage of establishment.

The plants spread rapidly in wet areas displacing native vegetation. The monoculture environment that results degrades wildlife habitat, displaces rare plants and animals, and can literally choke a waterway. The reproductive capacity of purple loosestrife is the most significant reason for its ability to spread so efficiently. Established plants can reach heights of two meters with 30-50 stems forming wide-topped crowns. One mature plant can produce more than two million seeds annually and with favorable growing conditions 60-70% germination can occur. It can also spread easily by root or stem segments.

Purple loosestrife lacks natural enemies in the United States, but strides have been made in culturing insects that feed on the plants. Recent insect studies have shown promise, but they are not the complete solution. Volunteers are needed to assist Department staff in finding small pockets of purple loosestrife and removing the flower spikes. We are currently at the height of the flower season and need help quickly. If you are interested in getting more information, please contact Sheri Snowbank at 715-635-4131 by August 14th.

Yellow River Shoreline Restoration Project

The Yellow River Restoration Project is looking better and better. Soon the late summer plants will be putting on quite the show. But, as with all things there have been some complaints. The most common one we hear is that we don't have the plants, trees or shrubs clearly marked. We are looking for folks that would like to hone their native identification skills and help label things. For more information call Sheri Snowbank at 715-635-4131.

Fall Master Gardener Training Facilitators

Facilitators are needed for the Fall Master Gardeners Training. Provided there are enough participants for the fall training, there will be a need for a facilitator at the Winter site to help with weekly sessions. If interested give Kevin Schoessow a call at 635-3506 or 800-528-1914.

Enjoy early season tomatoes

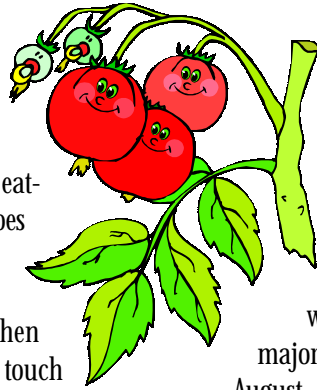
Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent

If you don't like growing, eating, or learning about tomatoes read no further. Why anyone would skip reading this article is beyond me, but then again I enjoy the smell, and touch of a healthy tomato plant and love the taste of a fresh sweet tomato plucked off the vine.

If you are like me and can't wait for the seasons first vine ripe tomato, you will thoroughly enjoy reading about the early season tomato project under way at the Spooner Ag Research Station. This project was started a couple of years ago when Dr. Jim Nienhuis, UW-Madison vegetable breeder, crossed an Italian paste tomato (known for its exceptional flavor) with a very short season paste variety. The hopes of this breeding is to develop a very short season paste tomato variety with exceptional flavor, color, and disease tolerance.

This is now year three in the project and with the help of dozens of area gardeners those initial tomato selections are being evaluated and the process of weeding out undesirable offspring is taking place in gardens across Northwestern Wisconsin. As with any plant breeding program, it takes multiple generations of growing and selection to come up with a variety.

The other part of the early season tomato project is to grow and evaluate other already established varieties for earliness, flavor, yield and disease tolerance. We started this evaluation by selecting 30 ethnic heirloom varieties and three standard short season hybrids for comparison. Most are short season, 75 days or less, and include Argentine, Bulgarian, Czechoslovakian, French, German, Hungarian, Italian,



Lebanese, Polish, Romanian, Russian and Yugoslavian plants. There are also some Euro-American varieties developed and released in the late 1800s and early to mid 1900s.

These tomatoes were planted as transplants on June 6. The first vine ripe tomatoes were picked on July 22, with the majority first ripening the beginning of August. By the end of the growing season we hope to have some general comments and recommendations about each of the varieties.

Nothing beats harvesting a great tasting early season tomato, except maybe harvesting a great tasting early season sweet corn. While we don't have much control over the weather and our shortened growing season, we do have a control over which tomato varieties we plant. If you are like me and are looking for an early season great tasting tomato, come check out the ethnic heirloom varieties growing at the Spooner Horticulture Garden.

Now is a good time for lawn establishment

Lee Daniels
Summer Horticulture Asst.

The best time to seed lawns is between August 15 and September 20. You can seed in the spring, but the fall period is recommended for a number of reasons, such as: the ground is dry and easier to work, grass seed germinates rapidly in the warmer soil, and there is less competition from weeds. Avoid seeding from June to early August since temperatures may be too high. Do not seed after September 20 since grasses seeded then may not have enough time to get established to survive the winter.

Now that the timing is set, we can move on to the actual establishment. According

to John Stier, UW-Madison turfgrass specialist, the three main reasons that newly seeded lawns fail are: 1) no mulch, 2) not enough water, and 3) cheap seed.

Mulching a newly seeded area helps to keep soil from drying out and prevents or reduces erosion. Straw is usually the best mulch available, but be sure to use clean straw that is free of weed seeds. Spread loosely so that about half of the soil surface is visible through the straw.

For watering, it is important to keep newly seeded areas moist during establishment. Water once each day for two to three weeks or until grass has uniformly germinated. Hot, dry conditions may require more watering. Following germination, water once every two to three days. Early morning watering is best.

For best seed germination, it is recommended that you only use certified seed. The "tested" date for the seed should be within the last twelve months, since germination percentages drop as seed ages. High quality seed has at least 90% purity and 75% germination. Avoid mixes that contain annual ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*) since this dies after one year and may prevent other grasses from becoming established.

For more information on reading grass seed labels, types of grass seed to use, and other lawn establishment questions, see publication A3434 "Lawn Establishment and Renovation," available at your County Extension Office. If your lawn is really shaded, you may want to get A3700, "Growing Grass in Shade" also.

If you follow the lawn establishment publication step by step, your new seeding should be successful. Also, if you bring your soil sample in for sending to the testing lab when you pick up this publication, it will save you a trip. The cost per soil sample is \$15 and it takes approximately 10 days for the results to come back.

Tomato meeting and field day September 4th

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent

All gardeners involved in the participatory tomato breeding project and all other interested gardeners are invited to attend a field day meeting on early season tomato production. This meeting will take place Wednesday, September 4th starting at 6 p.m. at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station Horticulture Garden. The focus of the meeting will be on early season heirloom tomatoes, tomato breeding, cultural practices for growing healthy tomatoes, and tomato tasting.

Dr. James Nienhuis, UW-Madison vegetable breeder, will discuss the current status of the participatory tomato breeding project and provide some entertaining insight on why store bought tomatoes tend to taste like cardboard. Dr. Nienhuis will also demonstrate how to measure the acid to sugar ratio in tomatoes and why it matters, and how to prepare fresh tomato salsa.

Dr. Bob Tomesh, UW-Extension Horticulture Specialist will talk about heirloom tomato selection and discuss preliminary results from the heirloom tomato variety trail that is being conducted at Ashland, Spooner, and West Madison.

Participatory tomato breeding project gardeners are asked to bring in 6-10 fruit from your best plant. Seed from these fruit will be saved and grown for next year's selection. If you do not have ripe fruit by September 4th or if you can not attend the field day, please drop off your 6-10 tomatoes at the Spooner Ag Research Station when they are ready.

This should be a very entertaining and informative field day, and if you like tomatoes there will be plenty of taste testing.

Pollination myths and seed saving

Carl Wilson
Horticulturist, Denver Cooperative Extension



Popular myths allow that two different vegetables can cross in the garden and produce "mutant" fruit. The vegetable that would be harvested is different than either parent.

The truth is that when plants cross, characteristics are not expressed until the seed produced by the cross, is planted and produces a new crop. When field corn and sweet corn cross, however, the kernel appearance and taste are altered the first year.

With this in mind, what vegetables will cross with what? Plants cross when pollen from one plant is moved to the flowers of another by wind or insects.

- Cucumbers do easily cross with other cucumbers. They do not cross with squash, pumpkin, watermelon or cantaloupe.
- Summer squash easily crosses with other summer squash and with pumpkin. Summer squash doesn't cross with winter squash.
- Cantaloupes do not cross with cucumbers, watermelons, pumpkins or squashes.
- Tomatoes do not cross with potatoes.

If you want to save seed from your garden, the best plants are standard varieties of beans, lettuce, endive, peas and tomatoes. Saving seed from hybrid varieties is not advised since offspring will produce quite different vegetables.

Calendar of Events

August 13, 2002 Twilight Garden Tour, 5:30 p.m. - dusk. Spooner Ag Research Station.

August 22, 2002 NCMG trip to Fort Folle Avoine. Leave Spooner at 5:30 p.m.

August 23, 2002 State Berry Growers Field Day, UW-River Falls.

August 22-25, 2002 Grantsburg Fair.

September 4, 2002 Early season tomato field day, 6 p.m. - dusk. Spooner Ag Research Station.

September 26, 2002 NCMG meeting, 7:00 p.m., DNR Fish Hatchery, Spooner.

November 5, 2002 Grape Pruning Workshop, 3:30 p.m. - dusk. Spooner Ag Research Station.

March 21-22, 2003 State Master Gardener Conference, UW-River Falls.

Spooner Garden Club meets 4th Thursday of every month. Merle Klug (715) 635-6239.

Hayward Garden Club meets 2nd Tuesday of each month. Carol Alcoe (715) 462-3213.

Burnett Garden Club meets 2nd Thursday of each month. Kris Henning (715) 463-5247.

North Country Master Gardeners meets 4th Tuesday of each month. Spooner DNR Fish Hatchery. Sue Donatell (715) 635-9676.

Wisconsin Gardener TV (5:30 p.m.)

August 25 - More Landscaping for Birds
September 29 - Putting the Garden to Bed
October 24 - TBA
November 17 - Too Cold to Garden
December 26 - TBA

North Country Master Gardeners update

Sue Donatell

President, North Country Master Gardeners

For those of you who haven't heard, there is now a local Master Gardener Association for gardeners in Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties. We were officially welcomed as the 31st local association into the Wisconsin Master Gardeners Association last fall, and since then we have been actively trying to promote our mission, which is to encourage, foster, support, and promote horticulture for all Master Gardeners and residents of Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn Counties, and to promote the UW-Extension from which we are founded.

Like most organizations, we started out small. Currently we have about 10 active members. Some of the projects and activities we have done so far include a small but very successful plant sale; helping plan, plant, and maintain the fruit, flower, and vegetable display garden at the Spooner Ag Research Station; helping plan and promote the annual state master gardener conference to be held in River Falls on March 21 & 22, 2003; helping out at the Washburn County Fair; a tour of Crex Meadows; a pot luck supper and landscape tour at a members house; and a native prairie restoration tour.

Gardening FAQ

Q. I planted some peonies two or three years ago. They look very healthy, but have never flowered. What causes this?

A. Peonies planted too deeply may never bloom; make sure the buds at the top of the roots are covered by no more than 1 inch of soil. Plant where they will get full sun—at least 6 hours per day.

We have regularly scheduled meetings on the fourth Thursday of every month. Our next meeting will be August 22 which is a trip to Fort Folle Avione, where fellow Master Gardeners from the Webster area will show us the gardens at the Fort. If you would like to come along, we will be car pooling and leaving the DNR Fish Hatchery in Spooner at 5:30 p.m. Our September meeting is on the 26th. We will be meeting in Spooner at the Fish Hatchery starting at 7 p.m. and will include a guest speaking on growing garlic.

You do not have to be a master gardener to be involved or to attend meetings. If you have any questions about North Country Master Gardeners, feel free to contact Sue Donatell at 635-9676. Come check us out—new members always welcome.

Q. My daylilies seem to be healthy with lush, green foliage so why don't they produce many flowers?

A. They may be getting insufficient sun or too much nitrogen. Daylilies need at least six hours of sunshine a day. Also, high-nitrogen fertilizer causes them to produce lots of leaves at the expense of flowers. Apply a balanced (10-10-10) fertilizer in the early summer for best blooming.

Specialized MG Training offered spring 2003

Would you like to learn more about Flowers and Houseplants? Now is your chance. Starting in spring of 2003, Specialized Master Gardener Training will be offered via fiber-optics (live two-way television). The twelve weekly sessions will begin on Tuesday, January 28 with course hours from 6-9 p.m. and finish April 15. This spring's session will focus on care and culture of flowers and houseplants.

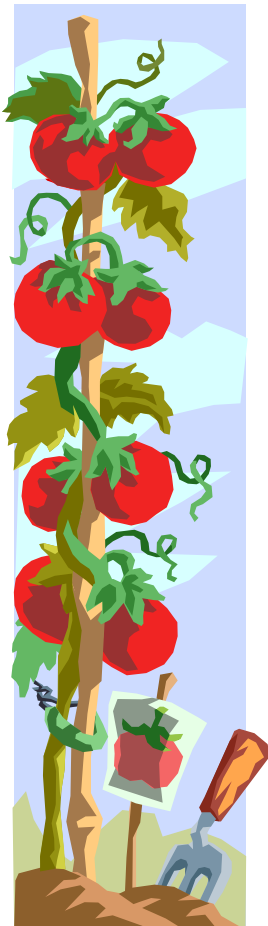
For more information or to be placed on the registration list, contact the Spooner Area UW-Extension office at 1-800-528-1914 or 635-3506.

Sign up now for Fall General Master Gardener Training!

All interested gardeners--now is your chance to participate in the UW-Extension Master Gardener Training program. Registration is now being taken for Fall 2002 classes.

Classes are scheduled to begin September 17 and will continue each Tuesday evening through December 3 from 6:00-9:00 p.m. via fiber-optics, (live two-way television). Instructors will be from the University of Wisconsin with guest instructors from the Wis. DNR and industry. Participants can choose from two sites. Training will be offered at Northwood School in Minong, and Winter School in Winter. The registration fee for the twelve weekly sessions will be \$100, which covers the cost of the Handbook for Wisconsin Gardeners and the Yellow Wisconsin Master Gardener Program Manual as well as electronic delivery costs, a one-year membership in the Wisconsin Master Gardener Association for each participant, and overhead costs.

Class size will be limited to 15 people per site. For more information and to register call the Spooner Area UW-Extension office at 1-800-528-1914 or 635-3506.



North County Gardening Newsletter

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

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<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/sars/index.htm>