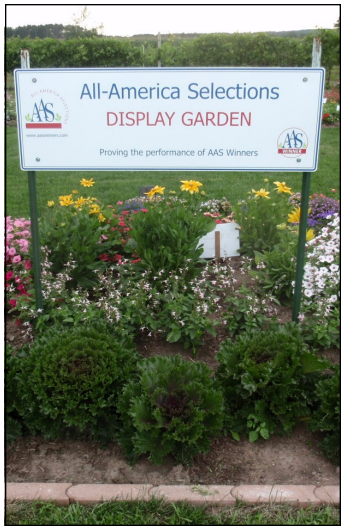
North Country Gardeners

UW-Extension Cooperative Extension Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn counties Issue 25 August 2012



In this issue

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Greetings

What a growing season it has been. We have been blessed with timely rains, plenty of heat and sunshine, and no major storms. From what I have seen and heard most gardeners and farmers are pleased. Don't get me wrong, there are still challenges. I have seen plenty of insect and diseases in my own and in others' gardens. Our horticulture help desk has taken dozens of calls and looked at dozens of samples already this season. This is an indication of just how eager gardeners are to learn and understand how to care for plants.

In this issue you will find articles and information that hopefully will help you become better gardeners, or at least more informed gardeners. We invite everyone to come out to our Annual Twilight Garden Tour at the Spooner Ag Research Station on Tuesday, August 21, from 4 p.m. until dusk. The teaching and display gardens are looking spectacular. We have renovated our All America Selection flower display, moved our raised bed gardens, added new plants to our perennial display, and with the help of our Mini Master Gardener participants we have a bean garden complete with tepees, arbors, and several varieties.

No season is exactly like the last, and even the most experienced gardener learns something new each season. Gardening is like a sprout that continues to grow and nourish us with lifelong learning. We hope you find this newsletter sprouting with useful information that is grounded in university-based research.

Kevin Schoessow
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Mary Burnham
President
North Country Master Gardeners Association

Rain barrel workshop offered for MGVs

North Country Master Gardeners Association is offering a make-and-take rain barrel workshop for all active Master Gardener Volunteers. This workshop will include a 50-gallon blue plastic barrel and the "kit" for collecting and dispensing rain water from a downspout. The workshop will include a short presentation on the benefits of rain barrels and a demonstration on how to fit the barrels with the parts from the kit.

The workshop will be help on Thursday, September 27, following the regularly scheduled NCMG business meeting. The business meeting starts at 6 p.m. with the rain barrel workshop to follow at or near 7 p.m.

The meeting is tentatively scheduled to be at the Spooner Ag Research Station. All active NCMGs will be given priority to register. To be considered active you must have submitted volunteer hours last fall to the UW-Extension office. Inactive MGVs and the general public are welcome to register and be put on a waiting list. Active MGVs have until August 31 to pre-register. If there are still materials available after the August 31 deadline, inactive MGVs and the general public will be taken on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is limited space and materials.

To register your intentions, please email Lorraine Toman at lltoman@wisc.edu.

The workshop is free if you are an active NCMGA volunteer or $10 if you are an in-active MGV.

One rain barrel and kit per person.

Annual Twilight Tour set for August 21

By Kevin Schoessow

This summer marks the 14th year that the Spooner Ag Research Station, UW-Extension, and the North Country Master Gardener Volunteers have teamed up to provide the region's premier outdoor gardening educational event. This year's activities will start at 4 pm, with guest speakers, displays, and demonstrations available until dusk.

The guest speakers this year are Phil Pellitteri and Brian Smith. Phil is an entomologist from UW-Madison and is extremely knowledgably on both "good" and "bad" garden critters. Brian is a UW-Extension fruit and vegetable specialist from UW-River Falls, and he will discuss topics related to both fruit and vegetables. Participates are asked to bring their garden questions and plant, insect or disease specimens with them.

Master Gardener Volunteers will have several displays and demonstrations on composting, vermicomposting, lasagna gardening, rain barrels, and others.

A new attraction will be short haywagon rides around portions of the Station property to view the crops

and sheep research facilities. These short tours will be scheduled throughout the evening and will be led by Phil Holman, manager of the Spooner Ag Research Station

We will have tasting of tomatoes and other ripe produce, fresh salsa, grilled vegetables, and roasted peppers. The grapes might even be ripe this year.

Visitors will see several changes in the garden. Perhaps the most notable will be the re-designed All America Selection annual flower display. This landscaped display includes seven raised beds that radiate out from a center circle. Each bed was designed to highlight color, shape, and textures of dozens of diverse annual flowers. Visitors can view the beds from all sides while strolling on newly laid grass sod.

In addition to the popular pepper and tomato variety trials, which includes 34 pepper varieties and 36 tomato varieties, visitors can see our display of beans, including pole, bush, and even lima beans. The perennial display underwent some renovations, including adding some hosta varieties, a Golden Spirit Smokebush, and some new shrub roses.

As in the past there is no charge for this educational event; however, Master Gardener Volunteers are asking for non-perishable food item donations for local food shelves.

Mark your calendars, invite your friends, neighbors, and relatives, and make the drive to Spooner on Tuesday, August 21, to visit from 4 p.m. until dusk. It's worth it!

The tour will be at the Teaching and Display Gardens on Orchard Lane, just east of Spooner on Hwy. 70. Watch for Garden Tour signs.

For more information contact me, 715-635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914, or visit http://ars.wisc.edu/spooner/garden.php.

New group studying many uses of herbs

By Mary Burnham and Julie Hustvet

The first meeting of the newly developed "Herbal Group" was held at the Spooner Ag Research Station on June 21. The meetings are open to both the public and all MGVs. It was very well-attended, and ideas were flowing like wine!

Most of us seem to have a strong interest in medicinal herbs, along with all other uses of herbs. Growing, drying, and using medicinal herbs in tinctures and salves are particular topics the group wants to study, and at the July meeting, presentations were made on making oils, salves, tinctures, and infusions

People agree that they would like to learn which herbs grow easily in our climate and don't require a lot of specialized treatment. Among the other topics we'll look at are using locally grown edible herbs to enhance the flavors of everyday foods; proper methods to dry, freeze, and preserve these herbs; the best pairings of herbs to achieve the satisfaction of taste or the medicinal cure that we are looking for; identification of local wild herbs; global herbal uses; and much more.

We'll explore the topics through discussion, research, seminars, and hands-on practice.

The group intends to meet once a month on the third Thursday of the month, at 6 p.m. Information will be posted on the NCMGA website.

Our next meeting will be on a different date, Wednesday, August 15, to accommodate our speaker and a wild-herb identification walk at Hunt Hill at 6 p.m.

Everyone is invited to attend.

WorksForUs

Tips from Bonnie Hofer

Some recycling ideas:

Clean out empty laundry detergent bottles, the kind with a spout, and use it in greenhouse for water container. You can add a little Miracle-Gro, too.

Windmill (but no Don Quixote) at garden

By Russ Parker

Having been responsible for educating the public about drip irrigation and the watering system at the Spooner Ag Research station display gardens at several of the garden events, I have been asked numerous times about the operation of the windmill that is a prominent feature at this location.

This "windmill," with a 10-foot diameter rotor, sits on top of a 22-foot tower and is manufactured by Airlift Technologies out of Redlands, California. It doesn't function like the old familiar pump-jack windmills of yesteryear which drives a reciprocating piston in a well casing. Instead the rotor of the Airlift system drives a four-cylinder air compressor. The rotor will start turning in an eight-mph wind, and at startup you can hear the familiar "wheezing" of the air intake valves characteristic of an air compressor head.

The compressed air is delivered to the well via a half-inch plastic line which is installed in the tower mast. The tubing exits out the base in a buried run to the wood timber tower, which is the location of the drilled well. The compressed air line is installed down in the well casing along side of the water discharge pipe. The air is injected into the "pump" section (no moving parts), which is suspended above the bottom of the 90-foot well. The compressed air, being lighter than water and under pressure from the overlying water column, expands as it "lifts" the water up the plastic piping and fills the 500-gallon tank 15 feet above the ground.

When the compressor is working and watering is in progress, the water can be seen to be "bubbly" due to the entrained compressed air.

When there hasn't been adequate rainfall, this wind power stored water provides drip irrigation for the perennial garden, the grapevines, and the fruit tree plantings. It is also a source for spot watering of other plant materials as needed. The water supply at a 15-foot height provides low (6.5 psi) pressure water as compared to a conventional (40 to 60 psi) home system.

This Airlift system is not necessarily for the homeowner but can be a worthwhile investment for providing water or aeration in remote areas that are far off the electrical grid. The display gardens remain off the grid, and the Airlift system, while providing water, was also chosen to be part of the garden demonstration and is an educational experience that comes along with a tour of these gardens.

If anyone is interested in learning more about this Airlift Technologies equipment, go to their site at http://airliftech.com/. To experience the Airlift system firsthand you are encouraged to tour the display gardens on Orchard Lane and join us for the Twilight Tour to be held on Tuesday, August 21.

State MG conference will be in Ashland

The annual Wisconsin Master Gardener Association Conference will be held in Ashland this year, the first time it has been this far north, and the North County Master Gardeners is one of the sponsors. Dates are September 14-15, plus an Apostle Island tour on the 16th.

Plenty of learning and just plain fun activities are planned. There will be a bus tour of Bayfield area orchards, perennial growers, etc., on Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., leaving from the Ashland High School (also the conference site). Registration is 5 to 7 p.m. Melinda Myers will be the keynote speaker at 7:30 p.m., speaking about water wise, rain barrels and rain gardens, solar-powered accessories, and gardening techniques that save time and money. Her talk will be followed by a social hour.

Twelve breakout sessions will be held Saturday along with a keynote presentation by Tia Nelson, daughter of Gaylord Nelson. The sessions include: fall and winter gardening; invasive plants; history of the cottage garden; sharing your knowledge in stress-free gardening presentations; bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds; vertical gardening; American vineyard romances in film and fiction; growing cacti and succulents; horticultural therapy; tropical treasurers – Costa Rica; companion planting; and local mushrooms and fungi.

More information including registration can be found online at www.wimastergardener.org.

Gone are the straight lines:

AAS Display is transformed in a make-over

By Sharon Tarras

The Spooner Research Station's All America Selections Garden has undergone some major changes this year.

Traditionally, our layout has been one long 168-by-6-foot row. In the last few years, we have tried to bring it down to a manageable scale by grouping plants in 12-foot sections in the same overall space. This year we have changed our layout to reflect the way a backyard garden may be planted, a theme similar to our Perennial Display Garden. Each bed was designed to stand alone more in scale with a home planting.

All together, they form a striking impression.

The following is a timeline for this project:

Early spring: Master Gardener Volunteers start seeds and care for the new plants that eventually will be planted in the AAS garden.

April 25: NCMG meeting – new layout for AAS garden is proposed and approved. A 50-by-50-foot space is planned, with wide paths between eight irregularly shaped beds and grouped around an oval central meeting space.

May 1 (approximately): Glyphosate applied by station staff to kill the grass and weeds. After a couple weeks, the area is dead and tilling is completed.

May 22: Central area and paths measured and staked out. Areas are raked to begin prep for lawn. Clods of dead grass and stones are tossed into the center of the future plant beds. Over the next two weeks, extra topsoil is brought in to build up the plant beds into low, tapering berms – about 1 foot at the highest point. Plant beds are bermed to help with drainage and to get away from a completely flat look.

May 30: Original date for design session – postponed because we don't have the plants yet.

May 31: Plants arrive from West Madison. All available AAS garden plants are inventoried.

June 3: List of plants is divided for volunteers to use in designing individual plant beds. They are each assigned a short description of color, height and width.

June 4: Volunteers meet for a design session. Each designer is assigned a plant bed and given a group of plants to work with. They go to work with rulers, paper, and pencil to

sketch out their plans. This exercise is a new experience for most of them. Each designer's style is a little different. Check this out when you visit the garden.

June 5: Plants are laid out according to plans and planted.

June 17: Bullet-shaped edgers are purchased from Menards.

June 18: Edgers are installed around perimeter of garden.

June 19: Original date for sod installation – postponed due to heavy rains.

June 26: Sod is picked up from Weegman's and installed. Rain from the previous week is long gone. It is hot, dry, and windy with no rain in the immediate forecast. Water we normally use for drip irrigation doesn't seem to be enough.

June 27: Large, farm irrigation pipe is laid to give the sod enough water. The plan is to water twice a day using the high pressure pipe, until sod is established.

A note should be made about the material used in the central space and paths of this garden. Decisions like this really affect the outcome of the finished project. Originally, we were going to use mulch as we did in the perennial display garden. We decided on grass because it forms a neat green backdrop for the stars of the show: the flowers. Once we decided on grass, the decision was to use seed or sod. Sod came as 100 percent Kentucky Bluegrass. This grass is relatively high maintenance, requiring fertilizer, water, regular cutting and trimming. We considered seeding because it afforded us the option of using specific types of seed that would be lower maintenance.

In the end we decided on sod partly for the good looks and partly for the instant results it gave, and partly for how well it stands up to foot traffic.

Time goes on, and as of one month later, the grass looks green and the plants have grown beautifully. As usual, weeding and watering continue ... and the big irrigation pipe has been removed!

A big "THANK YOU" goes out to all participating MGVs and summer interns Megan Smith and Sam Claire for their efforts to install this project.

Irresistible pansies add charm and beauty

By Sherri Roman

Who can resist the face of a pansy? Imagine these hardy little flowers of cheer littering your front yard!

Well, naturally I had this very thought in mind when I planted my first pot in the spring of 2011. Considered a perennial, pansies are hardy in Zones 4-8. Since Trego is considered Zone 3, I still took the chance that the pansies I planted would fare well. I planted four pots of pansies, and when they showed their bearded faces for the first time, I was tickled … purple, yellow, and white! All three colors graced the area by my front steps that year.

As the summer progressed, I knew I had to find those aphid-loving flowers a new place in the yard so I could transplant them to come up the following year. I found the right spot where the soil was well-drained and they would get at least partial sun in a day, and moved all four pots.

As summer gave way to autumn and I saw that the pansies had been happy in their new site, I began transplanting them one by one. I knew they had to be established well before the harsh winter of the Northwoods set in.

Winter came and went, and gave rise to spring once again. The tulips popped up when the snow was still on the ground. Not long afterwards came my beloved little bearded friends … the ones I longed to see. My pansies all came up to greet me in their purple, yellow, and white expressions of beauty!

Hoecherl devoted many hours to MG

By Terrie Strand

Sandy Hoecherl was an active member of the North Country Master Gardener Association until the end of 2011 when she decided to take a leave in order to spend more time with her family and to pursue other interests. Her husband, Harry, also gave up his participation in the Lion's Club so they both could spend more time with each other and more time tending their vegetable garden at the family farm.

Sandy met Harry while attending college at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. They married while she was still in college. They lived in Bayfield while she finished her college education; she and Harry considered that their honeymoon time.

Harry was drafted into the Army and was stationed in Germany. He played in the Army band. Sandy and Harry lived in Germany for a while, and when they returned to the States they lived and taught in Appleton, Wisconsin.

Sandy taught speech and debate as well as coached the Appleton High School Debate team. There is a debate tournament named after Sandy, the Alexandra Hoecherl Challenge, which is also a national qualifying debate tournament. I understand there is also a scholarship in memory of her, the Alexandra Hoecherl scholarship.

Harry was an orchestra teacher for the grade school up to the high school. He ended up teaching orchestra in the elementary school and middle school. Harry was also a violinist. They have two children who are professional violinists. Their son is a jazz violinist, and their daughter teaches at Savannah College of Art and Design. Their daughter started out playing violin with the Savannah Orchestra and then was asked to teach at the Savannah College, where she now teaches subjects from violin to film composition.

Sandy and Harry have two grandchildren. Their granddaughter lives in Madison and plays violin; their grandson lives in Florida and has five children.

When Harry and Sandy retired they moved up to Shell Lake. Harry inherited his father's farm east of Spooner where they have continued to maintain a vegetable garden. Harry did some marketing gardening and participated in the Shell Lake farmers market. Since Sandy and Harry have more time now they have devoted some of that time to the vegetable garden.

Sandy told me they have planted almost every vegetable you can name. They have planted four varieties of beans, several different tomatoes, four varieties of potatoes, peas, lettuces, cucumbers, melons, squash, peppers, cabbages, Kale, chard, and many more. Some of her vegetables are the Mooregold squash (winter squash developed by Professor James Moore from UW-Madison) and the Fanfare cucumber.

Sandy and Harry loved to sail. They had a sailboat and sailed on Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. They once spent six weeks on the sailboat, sailing from Sturgeon Bay to Frankfurt, Michigan. On Lake Superior, they sailed to Bayfield, Madeline Island, Ashland, and Greenfield.

Sandy loved gardening, and when she moved to Shell Lake from Appleton, she knew she was in a different zone for raising plants. She investigated where to take UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteer classes so she could be a better gardener in this zone. She took her MGV class around 1996 in Barron County. She became an active MGV with the Barron County MGVs and also became active with the NCMGA when that program began.

Eventually she chose to become active in only one of the programs, which was the NCMGA. It was a hard decision for her to make as she loved both of the programs.

Sandy became an active member with the NCMGA in 2000. As a member Sandy has volunteered hundreds of hours. She has served as officer in the group in a number of capacities including president, vice president, and secretary. She has also served on numerous committees as well as chaired many committees. She was the chair of the newsletter committee, and she has been very happy to see the newsletter has continued in her absence.

Sandy also wrote a gardening column for the *Washburn County Register* for four or five years. She has always been willing to share her gardening knowledge by speaking publically on various subjects such as seed starting and shade gardening. Sandy was always helpful with the plant sale, starting seedlings, and transplanting them. She is often mentioned while we label plants for the plant sale. If you bought a tomato plant from the sale a few years ago labeled Hugo Pink instead of Yugo Pink, it was because that was what Sandy thought she heard the name of the plant was!

Sandy was one of the MGV that novice MGVs identified as a mentor. She always shared advice for both vegetable gardening and flower gar-

dening. I know many NCMGA members that I consider mentors thought of her as a mentor also. She always gave out little tidbits of information, such as stringing a fish line around your garden to keep deer away, what vegetable were good to raise, watering your seedlings from the bottom, etc.

She also shared recipes for numerous vegetables, such as beets, parsnips, and Swiss chard.

Sandy's years of service to the NCMGA have been much appreciated. Her happy smiley face at meetings and her words of wisdom are sorely missed.

She misses the members of the NCMGA and wanted them to know she was very impressed with the new All America Selections display. She thought the whole display garden was beautiful!

Students spend time in summer gardens

By Amy Young

The end of June brought us two weeks of summer school classes with the youth of Spooner Area School District. Some of the highlights for students (and staff) included nature walks with plant identification, games (both indoors and out), field trips to the Spooner Ag Station garden, and healthy fun snacks.

Student got the chance to spend time in both school gardens weeding, watering, journaling, and having fun. We looked for bugs and ate tasty plants like lettuce, radishes, various herbs, nasturtiums, and violas.

After summer school we started our summer watering schedule, when a new family comes each week to take on garden maintenance, and for the last several weeks we have been delivering foods to the Indianhead Community Action Agency food pantry including Swiss chard, lettuce, beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, ground cherries, dill, spinach, snap peas, and radishes.

Recently we harvested the garlic from both schools to be saved for fall planting and delivery to the school kitchen.

If you have questions about the gardens or are interested in helping, contact Amy Young, 635-9551 or aimyoun013@yahoo.com, or Robin Heier heierr@spooner.k12.wi.us.

Questions raised on wasps, rust, strawberries

By Susan Armstrong

It has been an unusual weather season. The early warmth and extra moisture brought us an abundance of fungal diseases, and the weather was also very favorable for bugs. Big, small, and lots of them!

Here are three requests for information that I received as Spooner's UW-Extension horticultural assistant this summer.

Ichneumon Wasps

A large family of nuisance parasitic wasps, adults range in size from 1/8 to 1 1/2 inches with long, many-segmented antennae and long, slender bodies. The female's "stinger" is actually an ovipositor (egg-laying tube). Each variety of Ichneumon parasitizes its larvae host insect.

Parasitic wasps are normally not a problem in and around the home. Some are attracted to lights, and others may enter through windows, doors, and other small openings. Be sure to caulk and seal any cracks and openings into the home.

Live individuals can be collected by broom and dustpan and relocated outdoors far from the house since they are beneficial to agriculture.

Hollyhock Rust

Rust is a fungal disease that invades hollyhock leaves and stems. It's extremely common throughout Wisconsin, especially in wet years. Fortunately, the disease does not usually destroy the host, though the foliage may become unattractive.

Lower leaves are the first to show symptoms of yellow spots. The spots continue to grow, and on the underside of leaves, swellings or blisters emerge. Within a few days, the swellings release masses of reddish brown spores, which cover the entire undersurface of the leaf. Cultural methods probably will not completely control rust. Use disease-free seed, and place them some distance from infected stock in a dry, sunny location. Maintain the plants in a vigorous growing condition by use of a good fertility program and water during drought. Remove first infected leaves as they appear. Remove old plant material and plow under, burn or compost at the end of the flowering season.

Post-harvest strawberries

Although strawberry plants are considered perennial, they are most productive in their first through fifth years. The best way to keep a strawberry bed going is by post-harvest renovation.

After harvest: Weed the bed. Mow with deck set high enough so the leaves are clipped, but the crowns are untouched. Cultivate or till between the rows of strawberry plants, so that the rows are thinned or reduced to about 12 inches wide. Thin the remaining plants so there is 4 to 6 inches between each plant. The remaining plants will send out runners that will develop into new, more productive plants. Side dress with a complete fertilizer and a half- to 1-inch layer of soil.

Water thoroughly and make sure the bed gets at least 1 inch of water each week afterward. Be patient – the bed will become lush in no time.

Growing beans

By Nancy Reis and Russ Parker

This year we decided to try something different in youth education. If you visit the display gardens that are located north of Hwy. 70 on Orchard Lane across the road from the sheep barn, you will see some trellises in the bed near the road. This space has been planted with AAS (All America Selections) materials for several years, but because the new AAS planting has been developed into a very interesting display garden just south of the perennial display, we decided to use part of the original space for the Mini Master Gardener bean garden planting.

This planting was done in the second session of the Mini Master Gardener Program held at this location on June 2. The youth gardeners were instructed on how to read a seed packet for information about bean culture, seed sowing depth, seed and row spacing, days to harvest, and growth habit.

They also had first-hand experience in sowing several rows of beans.

The youth gardeners were encouraged to return to the garden during the summer to observe how well the plants were developing and to maintain a journal of their findings. They were also encouraged to help out with maintaining the planting, weeding, etc., and to be present for our annual Twilight Tour in August to provide an overview of their bean garden planting and what they learned, and to answer any questions.

A note about the trellising in the bean garden: The hoop trellises are purchased cattle panels which are 50 inches wide by 16 feet long and can be purchased locally from several sources. The teepee type of trellis structure was made from (1 1/2 inches square by 8 foot) cedar poles, lashed together at the top and staked. These fixtures may give some gardeners a different idea in trellising options for their home planting.

We encourage MGVs to view the Mini Master Gardener bean planting at the Spooner Ag Research Garden.

Varieties planted

Pole Habit (Indeterminate)

- Rattlesnake Bean – source: saved seed (a Master Gardener favorite)
- Kentucky Wonder Wax – source: Pinetree Gardens
- Kentucky Blue – source: Pinetree Gardens
- Blue Lake FM1 – source: Lake Valley Seeds
- Mayflower – source: Baker Creek (The Mayflower Pole Bean is said to have come to America with the Pilgrims in 1620. This bean is 100 days; it will be interesting to see if it will have time to mature here in Northwest Wisconsin.)

Bush Habit (Determinate)

- Greencrop – source: Stokes
- Golden Rod – source: Jungs
- Blue Lake 274 – source: Stokes
- Jackson Wonder (Bush Lima Bean) – source: Baker Creek
- Brown Dutch (used as a dry bean) – source: saved seed

What to do when mystery malady strikes:

Send a sample to the Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic

By Sue Reinardy

There were three white spruces (*Picea glauca*) that lined the lot line between us and our neighbors. This had been the second time we planted spruces in this spot and the second time they started to look stressed from some attack. So I followed the steps we learned in our Master Gardener classes.

Here is the story, steps, and timeline that I experienced.

I did some research on my own on the websites of Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota Extension that made me suspect Sudden Needle Drop. Although there is not much known about this, the only recommendation advised by the sites was to apply a chlorothalonil-based fungicide when new needles emerge.

I then contacted our Extension agent, Kevin Schoessow, by email, attaching pictures and a detailed description of the problem. He advised me to contact the Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic.

I followed the directions at http://www.plantpath.wisc.edu/pddc/ for a submission of a sample. I filled out the form, took a sample of each tree (both a branch and some root), labeled each sample so I knew which tree it was taken from, and sent the package to the clinic.

Two weeks later I received a detailed letter from Brian Hudelson, senior outreach specialist at the clinic. In his letter he told me that he had analyzed each sample by incubating the branches in a moist chamber for several days and used isolation techniques in an effort to recover pathogens from the roots.

The good news: No evidence of pathogens in any of the roots.

The bad news: All three trees had fruiting bodies of the fungus *Rhizosphaera kalkhoffii* and *Setomelanomma holmii* (a fungus implicated in a disorder called Spruce Needle Drop). And on one tree a third fungus, *Leucocytospora kunzei*. Mr. Hudelson included two fact sheets: "Cytospora Canker" and "Rhizosphaera Needle Cast."

The cost was $25 per sample.

I found the analysis well worth the cost. In fact, I wish I had done this when spruce trees in this location had failed the first time. I would have avoided the cost of a second planting and the three years of growing season when a tree more disease resistant for that location could have been growing.

We decided not to try to save two of the trees; the third one has received several applications of a fungicide containing chlorothalonil, and we have followed Mr. Hudelson's advice to carefully monitor water for the tree during the growing season. This tree appears to be responding.

Advice in the UW Garden Fact sheets include avoiding planting Colorado Blue Spruce, which are especially prone to these diseases.

For established spruces judiciously prune branches to open the trees' canopy, prevent water stress, make sure there is good drainage, mulch to moderate moisture levels, and fertilize all conifers every three to five years.

... Or research the problem online using these tips

By Sue Reinardy

The Internet is a great way to get current information on almost any topic, but how do you sort through all the information and find a reliable source? Here are a few tips to limit your searches that will do the sorting for you. This example gives you the results using the various methods in Google for "**green bean rust**."

Typing in **green bean rust** into Google resulted in 8,540,000 results!

Typing **green bean rust university extension** reduced the search to 4,540,000 results and ordered the university Extension sites from around the country to the top of the results.

Typing **green bean rust Wisconsin** narrowed those results to 2,730,000.

By putting quotes around **"green bean rust"** the search was reduced to 48,100 and the results included both commercial and academic sites, including opinions and blogs of many gardeners.

Typing **green bean rust Wisconsin site:edu** further reduced those results to 21,300. By including **"site:edu"** those results are limited to all sites that are educational; sites with a domain of .**com** are excluded. If you wanted to limit your search to only commercial products, you might want to limit your search by including **site:com** in your search. By searching **green bean rust Wisconsin site:com** 2,120,000 results were returned.

Finally, if you want to limit to a particular site type **green bean rust site:uwex.edu**. That returned 92 results. The "**site:uwex.edu**" limited this search to the UW-Extension website materials. This can work for any website domain.

Long-term outcome

When doing research for my gardens I now almost always include the words "university extension" along with the subject of my search or one of the above techniques to limit the returns to reliable university information.

Creating sustainable lawns

By Sue Reinardy

Fall is an important time of year for lawns. It is the ideal time for reseeding and fertilizing. There are a number of excellent University of Wisconsin Extension Bulletins and Fact Sheets (see box) that will give you all the information you need to know to help your lawn flourish.

Mowing

According to David Bayer from UWEX Outagamie County, the most important cultural practice associated with turf care is proper mowing. Mow high (3 inches) during the spring and summer months when grass reaches 4 inches. Continue mowing in the fall until the grass stops growing. Mow shorter in the last few mowings. For the last mowing set the mower at 1 inch to prevent snow mold in spring and to discourage moles, voles, and mice from burrowing in your lawn all winter.

Fertilizer

A fertilizer program is recommended based on your personal preference. A minimum maintenance program is to apply a winterizer fertilizer (26-0-12) in early to mid-October. If you prefer a more lush lawn, fertilizer can be applied two times; add an early June application to the mid-October application. For our area a maximum application of three times is recommended; for a high maintenance lawn apply fertilizer in early June, early September, and early to mid-October. These are the active grass growing periods in Wisconsin. Never apply fertilizer during dormant periods.

Seeding

The best time to establish a new lawn or reseed is between August 15 and September 20; mid-May is also a good time. It pays to buy quality seed; it will contain less weed seed and better grass varieties. According to the University Extension, "the only way to evaluate the quality of a mix is to read and understand the label."

Extension recommends paying attention to these points when checking out labels:

Avoid mixes that contain annual ryegrass (*Lolium multiforum*) because it dies after a year and may prevent desirable grass species from becoming established.

Do not purchase seed with any noxious weed seed or if the seed is labeled as "VNS" or "Variety Not Stated" as you cannot be sure what species of grass you are purchasing.

Purchase and use certified seed within 12 months of the date tested.

For sunny area the grass blend should come close to 65 percent Kentucky Blue Grass, 20 percent Fine Fescue, and 15 percent Perennial Rye Grass.

For shady areas look for a blend close to a mix of 40 percent Kentucky Blue Grass, 50 percent Fine Fescue, and 15 percent Perennial Rye Grass.

Why a mix?

Each grass has positive and negative characteristics that may be important for success in your lawn. According to UW-Extension the best low -maintenance grass species for lawns includes a mix of tall fescue, fine fescues (Chewings, hard, or red) and common − not improved − varieties of Kentucky Blue Grass.

Kentucky Blue Grass is one of the most popular grasses in Wisconsin. It is winter hardy, grows by rhizomes, is soft to touch, and mows well. However, it goes into summer dormancy, does not tolerate heat well, is shade intolerant, and has high fertilizer needs. Most sod is Kentucky Blue Grass.

Perennial Rye Grass is quick to germinate but is not very winter hardy and is intolerant of summer stress of heat or drought. It is usually put into seed mixtures because it is quick to germinate and helps with early erosion control.

Fine Fescues (Hard, Red, or Chewings) have low fertilizer needs, are slow growing (less mowing), can be grown in shade or sun, and have some drought tolerance. However, they are susceptible to disease in high-traffic areas and can get summer patch and snow mold. It is good to have a mix of Fine Fescues to help offset the negatives.

The type of seed will determine the number of fertilizer applications needed and how much you want to mow. For example, a mix with a high percentage of Kentucky Blue Grass may not do well if you plan to fertilize once per year. Each seed type has its advantages and disadvantages.

None are perfect for every situation.

For more information:

UW Extension Bulletins

These bulletins and more can be viewed and downloaded as a PDF file or purchased from www.learningstore.uwex.edu/

Do-It-Yourself Alternative Lawn Care (A3964)
Calibrating and Using Lawn Fertilizer and Lime Spreaders (A2306)
Lawn Establishment and Renovation (A3434)
Lawn Fertilization (A2303)
Lawn Maintenance (A3435)

MG Volunteer timesheets due Sept. 15

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered this gardening season. There is one more clean-up activity for all Master Gardener Volunteers to complete: fill out your 2012 timesheet and send it to the Spooner office.

Here are the steps:

• Download a copy of the current timesheet from: http://wimastergardener.org/?q=Timesheets.

• List your volunteer activities and continuing education hours. Master Gardeners will be recertified who have completed at least 24 hours of youth education, adult education or community service, and 10 hours of continuing education. Even if you miss a year you can recertify if you complete the hours the next year.

The volunteer year is October 1 through September 30. However, since we need to submit reports before September 30 – you can either anticipate or report them the following year.

• Send the completed timesheet by September 15 to:

Kevin Schoessow
Spooner Area UW-Extension
Spooner Ag Research Station
W6646 Hwy 70
Spooner, WI 54801

Our contributions are important to our communities, and as government resources continue to be stretched, accounting for these services helps the Master Gardener Program be accountable to decision makers. Wisconsin Master Garden Program Coordinator Susan Mahr said, "This is a government-funded program, with UW-Extension, and as with any other public-funded program we have to show taxpayers how their money is being spent and any returns on their investment. All of the contributions of MGVs throughout the state are compiled annually in an annual accomplishment report that documents the contributions of MGVs in their communities and the value of that service to the public. The more accurately we can portray the program, the better."

Grasses, much more collected at arboretum

By Sue Reinardy

The Minnesota Landscape Arboretum is the closest public garden and arboretum to Northwest Wisconsin and has similar growing conditions to this part of our state. If you have not been to the Arboretum, you will find the trip well worth the drive. If you have been there before, you might want to put another visit on your to-do list as there is always more to see and do each season at the arboretum.

The arboretum features:

• 1,137 acres of beautiful public gardens designed to inspire ideas for visitors' own backyards.

• 32 display and specialty gardens such as annuals, dahlias, daylilies, home demonstration, lilacs, hostas, perennials, and roses.

• 48 plant collections including hedges, ornamental grasses, trees, shrubs, and prairie plants.

• More than 5,000 plant species and varieties.

Although the display gardens are inspirational and beautiful, it is the collections that are especially helpful for gardeners. Plants are well-tagged in both the display gardens and collections, making it a wonderful place to increase your plant identification skills. The collections are grouped by each species to help make comparisons among mature specimens that are prominently labeled. For example, there are separate groves for each tree collection – all 52 specimens of oaks in one grove; all 46 specimens of lindens in another. There are 268 specimens of crabapples and an entire hillside collection of hedges where you could find just the right one for your yard. There are 50 varieties of dahlias and 102 varieties of lilies in the trial gardens.

This is just a sampling of the collections to be found at the arboretum.

One highlight is the Ornamental Grass Collection that is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year with a series of open houses. The dates for the remainder of the year are: Tuesday, August 21, 1-4 p.m.; Tuesday, September 18, 3-6 p.m.; and Wednesday, October 10, 1-6 p.m. On these special days, the public is invited to the collection and visit with Mary Meyer, professor and manager of the collection, and others. Vote for your favorite grass, get ideas for using grasses in your own gardens, and receive a free poster on native grasses.

The arboretum has a five-year plan that will make it even more interactive and useful to gardeners and as a destination for all visitors. These plans include a sculpture garden, Chinese garden, tree canopy walk, a performance center, and a farm garden. The farm garden will include food production areas, an outdoor teaching kitchen, bee discovery and pollinator center, and a creativity area.

So plan an annual trip to check out the new features as they are added.

For more information on the gardens, collections, hours, and how to get there, go to the arboretum's website at www.arboretum.umn.edu.

WorksForUs

Tips from Tom Blumennberg

Something I learned at one of the New Ventures Gardening Seminars: Plant tangutica or other clematis near a tree. I did this, and it grew rapidly into a mountain ash and provided late-season color. In addition, the seedheads are long lasting into the winter and add a unique winter view.

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