

North Country Gardeners

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

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Greetings

A feast for the senses is what you are sure to experience when you attend the Twilight Garden Tour at the Spooner Area Research Station (SARS) on Tuesday, August 20, from 4 p.m. until dusk.

New this year at the Twilight Tour in the sound division will be the Second Wind String Band playing throughout the tour time.

While you are listening to the music from the string band perhaps you will be tasting some of the juicy tomatoes or grilled peppers from the SARS gardens. Perhaps you'll have a chance to taste an herb-flavored drink while smelling the roses in the perennial garden.

We hope that you will feel the sturdy trap rock beneath your feet as you pick up tips on adaptive tools and structures in the new adaptive garden site. This new garden is a work in progress, and we hope that you will watch it develop through the years.

As you look over the All-America Selections (AAS) display gardens you can see that the late-winter weather we were experiencing last April really didn't compromise the beauty of these annuals. And while you are at it, be sure to check out how the perennial gardens fared through the longer-than-normal winter.

We are looking forward to seeing you. Bring all five of your senses to the Twilight Garden Tour and join the celebration of a great season of growing and learning at the SARS.

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

Nancy Reis
President
North Country Master Gardeners Assn.



Roses and gaillardia at the Spooner Area Research Station Demonstration Garden.

Photos by Kevin Schoessow

15th annual Twilight Garden Tour promises fun, learning, taste treats

BY MEGAN SMITH,
GARDEN ASSISTANT

The 15th annual Twilight Garden Tour will be held on Tuesday, August 20, at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station (SARS) Teaching and Display Garden. This year's event will be bigger than ever before, so bring your friends and family for an evening of fun. Activities will commence at the garden at 4 p.m. and last until dusk. The tour is free, and people of all ages are welcome.

The Teaching and Display Garden has many distinct areas including a perennial display, an All-America Selections annual display, vegetable gardens, a berry patch, orchard, an ornamental plant display, an adaptive gardening display, and a wine and table grape trial.

To celebrate 15 years as a public garden, the UW-Extension North Country Master Gardener Volunteers (NCMGV) is sponsoring live music performed by Second Wind String Band, a local group fond of gatherings and known to get the crowd dancing.

Invited guests include organic production scientist Erin Silva from UW-Madison's Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, Brian Smith, UW-Extension fruit and vegetable specialist from UW-River Falls, and certified soil scientist Randy Gilbertson. These specialists, along with Kevin Schoessow, area agriculture development agent, and local UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteers will be on hand to lead discussions and answer questions on a wide range of horticulture and gardening topics.

An introduction of guests and speakers will be at 5 p.m. followed by short presentations on organic gardening, small fruits, and the importance of soil quality.

A popular event brought back from last year, SARS will host hayride tours of the crop fields surrounding

the Display Garden. The Silent Auction fundraiser is back and will include items from local area businesses and donors. Several tasting tables will feature fresh salsa, fresh-grilled vegetables, solar oven-baked vegetables and other garden-related foods as well as a table with over 25 varieties of tomatoes!

Another new event this year will be wine tasting. Two small batches of wine were made from wine grapes harvested from the Display Garden in 2011 and 2012. Both of these tasty wines will be available and are sure to suit all palates.

The demonstration garden is a joint effort between the Spooner Agriculture Research Station, UW-Extension, and North Country Master Gardener Volunteers Association. The garden is open to the public at no charge throughout the growing season for self-guided tours. Guided tours are available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The display garden is located a half mile west of the Hwy. 53 and Hwy. 70 intersection, and a quarter-mile north on Orchard Lane. Signs will be posted.



(Above) Hot weather and a long season made for lots of colorful peppers at last year's Twilight Garden Tour. (Below) Learning in a beautiful setting at last year's tour.

Photos by Sue Reinardy

Additional information

For more information contact Kevin Schoessow, 715-635-3506, or go online at <http://ars.wisc.edu/spooner/garden.php>.



Alternative garden is in place

BY RUSS PARKER

In the May newsletter there appeared an article entitled "New Garden in the works." This garden is a demonstration to show visitors options for gardening as we age. This is a follow-up of the progress of that garden space at the Spooner Ag Research Teaching and Display Garden.

When staking out the proposed garden area, it became evident that the fall garlic planting fell within the NE corner of the alternative garden plot. This was a case of not planning ahead, but the decision was made to leave it in place for the season and reclaim this area next spring.

Phase One of the project entailed sod removal, spreading, and compaction of the trap rock aggregate. With the sod cutter in our possession, a rented piece of equipment, we removed the sod from the entire 35-by-96-foot area. We had to deal with the depression in the location of the alterna-

tive garden section. We decided to remove the topsoil from this 24-by-35-foot block and use it in the adjacent beds to the south. Sand was used as a fill to bring this area up to grade. This surface was compacted, and interlock edgers were placed on three sides before spreading the trap rock aggregate. Approximately 16,000 lbs. were spread and compacted in two loads; the first load was a donation from Larry Axelson and Carlson Excavating in Lewis. The second load, purchased from Cemstone, was used to "crown" the surface to help with water run-off and to provide for a trap rock center alley dividing the beds to the south.

The trap rock has been in place for about six weeks, during which time we have discovered that the ants like the sand fill below the trap rock layer, evidenced by the characteristic little "mountains" of sand that have appeared. It will be interesting to see how much of a problem these



critters will present for us in the future.

The second stage was to get the fixtures built and placed. The first fixtures to be brought to the garden were two beautiful Leopold benches built and donated by NCMG members Larry and Nancy Axelson. The raised cedar beds were constructed and set. The tiered planter was built and is at the garden site. We have two cattle panel arbors to be placed and two other small-space beds in need of construction and placement. Phase Two may be close to completion by the

time of the Twilight Tour, with the exception of the espalier trellis which will be added next spring.

Phase Three, which entails the planting of this alternative garden space, will not take place until next spring.

The beds to the south of the alternative garden were prepped and planted with various vegetable varieties. This area will also see at least one change next year with the addition of a planter in the diamond-shaped bed at the south end.



Obtaining seed donations

BY TOM BLUMENBERG

The Hayward Community School Garden project begins each year with seed-starting classes in the primary school. Depending on the year, up to 90 students participate in growing mesclun, other greens, and flowers. Many seeds are needed to accomplish this, and our budget is limited.

This year I noticed in "The Wisconsin Master Gardener" newsletter the fact that the Charles Hart seed company (www.Hartseed.com) advertises a donation program on its website. I brought up the home page, clicked on the "About Us" tab, then the "Donations" tab.

It is apparent the company gets many requests for seeds, and because of that it has developed a donations department. The one-page description of the program describes the goal as distributing these seeds to deserving organizations or



individuals for just the cost of shipping and handling. They list qualified organizations which include teachers looking for seeds for classroom projects or school gardens.

The qualifying requirements include sending them a description of the project, how the seed will be utilized, and how produce is used upon harvest. In addition they wanted

our opinion on how the people receiving the seed will benefit, not just from the immediate donation, but how it will help them improve their standard of living in the future.

Due to the short turnaround needed for our school project, I called the

donations department. It was obvious that they were willing to work with me, and I emailed them the required information. I was allowed to customize the types of seeds we received and paid using a credit card. The processing cost was \$14.95 for the first box of 100 seed packs and additional sets were \$5 for each 100 seed packs.

We followed up with thank you notes that were created by a group of second-grade students. In addition I sent a couple of photo images of the students sowing seeds in starting trays.

If you have a project that incorporates student teaching or if you are involved in a garden that grows produce that is donated to low-income people, you might consider contacting the Charles Hart Seed Co.

They were a pleasure to work with, and the seeds we received from them will be put to good use.



WORKSFORUS

A TIP FROM NANCY REIS

My Karl Forester grass needed vertical support as the summer progressed. A salvaged coil of copper tubing filled the need. It was placed around the immature growth and the coil was gently raised as the grass grew. This supported the growth through the growing season. I'm looking forward to the patina as the copper ages.



Photo by Nancy Reis

Containers make gardens possible

BY BOB DREIS*

We are all gardeners because we love plants, wild places with their growing things, and the contentment that comes with a well-tended garden. It can be big or little, but it is a fact that, as gardeners, we have assisted nature in all its beauty by growing our own food or just in relaxing in the shade of a tree we planted so many years ago! Our garden plot, big or little, is our retreat from a busy mechanical world.

As time goes by, many of us may, due to circumstances beyond our control, be forced to “downsize” or “cut back.” So, some of us say goodbye to the old garden plot, to the “back 40” or to the greenhouse.

What can we do if our only spot to grow something is rather small, such as only having a balcony or a 10-by10- foot lawn?

There is an alternative to giving up and just remi-

niscing about the past, and that alternative is “container gardening.”

What is it? What is it all about and what exactly do I mean by a “container”? Probably everyone reading this has already done some container gardening only you haven’t called it that.

So let’s start with a definition: A container is anything that will hold soil — the growing medium for plants. It can be made of anything: plastic, wood, metal, or ceramics (like in flower pots). I know you all have had plants in pots, so all of you already have experienced container gardening. So look around and pick what part of your domain will be your container garden — what corner of your little lot, your porch or your balcony.

The size and shape of the containers are up to you and depend largely on what you want to grow. (As I write this I have three

dwarf citrus trees in gallon pots in my living room.) I do not recommend any container larger than 5 gallons, which is the size you want if you plan on raising tomatoes. Place these where there will be plenty of sun — you do not want to be in a position where you have to move a 5-gallon container full of soil and a couple of thriving tomato plants. With a little imagination, you can place all your pots and then fill them with soil.

The soil you will use should be potting soil. It comes in 20-pound bags and has been sterilized. This is a good way to go — you can be assured that it is disease-free and properly fertilized.

Last year, I had my best year ever growing six tomato plants. My tomatoes were great! I am getting ahead of myself, but I get all enthused just thinking of them.

Back to the containers. It is essential that you drill several drainage holes in the bottom or a good hard rain will drown out your plants. The opposite can also happen. Don’t let the soil in your container dry out. Water them copiously every day that it doesn’t rain. With the proper drain holes, you do not have to worry about over-watering.

And so, we are ready to garden. Our plants will start out in a disease-free, properly watered environment that is easy to weed and with soil that is easily fertilized. Container gardening is great for us older (or lazy) folks. We can create our own little wilderness even if we have a very small backyard — or no backyard.

**Master Gardener Volunteer Bob Dreis passed away in 2011. In his honor we are sharing this article.*

Trash can become treasures in your garden

BY TERRIE STRAND
AND BARB BOATMAN

Don’t throw anything away. Visit thrift shops and find various objects to use as planters. Things that some have used are old teapots, jello molds, tin cans or anything that grabs your imagination. Make decorative accents to put in your pots or garden such as flowers made from sandbakkel tins, plates, buttons, or cups and saucers mounted on spray-painted PVC piping. Use old silverware for labeling plants or making windchimes.



Keeping your trees healthy

BY SUSAN ARMSTRONG,
UWEX HORTICULTURE
UWASSISTANT

"I THINK that I shall
never see, a poem lovely as
a tree ..." (*Excerpt from a
Joyce Kilmer poem*)

Trees provide us food, fuel, shelter, shade, cleaner air, and the raw material for everything from paper to homes. Beyond their practical uses, trees provide beauty in our yards and landscapes and we become attached to them. And so, it's upsetting when a favorite tree begins showing signs of distress.

This summer has brought many "tree" calls into the UW-Extension Ag Agents Office. As a horticulture assistant, tree problems tend to be my least favorite cases to research and respond to. Clients are sometimes emotional, there are an endless amount of variables to take into consideration, and the inquiry seldom has a cut-and-dried response.

Ag Agent and mentor, Kevin Schoessow has taught me to try and approach each case as a crime scene investigator. As such, I need to know the type of tree and its requirements; its age; how long it has been planted in the current location; did the caller plant it; proximity to buildings (N, E, S, W); amount of sunlight it gets; the surrounding



Photo by Julie Hustvet

plants/trees; irrigation; soil conditions; mulch; trunk, branch or bark irregularities; date symptoms were first noticed; presence or indication of pests; have there been chemicals in the area (spray or drench); precipitation levels of the last two to three years; possible winter damage ... oy vey! It will be a while before I earn my "Special Agent" tags, but by eavesdropping on Kevin's conversations with distressed homeowners, I'm slowly developing some successful research strategies.

A healthy tree is a happy tree! It turns out that trees are not so very different from you and me. If healthy, they're more resilient and more able to overcome those little curves that life throws us all. If they're stressed for any reason, even by something so simple as a lack of moisture, trees become less resilient and more likely to succumb to bugs and dis-

ease. Like any other plant that was chosen and placed in your landscape, a tree needs to be tended. Simple things you can do to keep your trees healthy and beautiful:

Planting space: Make sure the planting site matches the tree's requirements (zone, sun, moisture) and that there is sufficient room for it to achieve mature stature overhead and also down below for a good unobstructed root system (about the width of the canopy).

Water: It may seem strange to water your trees, but especially during the high heat of summer months, trees require A LOT of water to keep healthy! If a week goes by with high heat and without rain, you should provide 1 inch of water around your trees (about the width of the canopy).

Mulch: Mulch around the base of your trees will

help them retain water much better and also provide key nutrients for your tree to stay healthy. Mulch also eliminates grasses that compete for available moisture and nutrients and helps protect shallow roots from damaging sunlight and temperatures.

Inspect your trees for bugs: During the summer months, the bugs and insects that can damage your trees are out there. Check your trees every now and again for bugs, strange spots, and growths.

The good news is that while your tree may suffer a setback by any of these suggested maladies, if healthy, most often the issue will be of a cosmetic nature. The tree may not look its best this season, but care for it now and look to the future.

Kilmer ended her poem by saying: "Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree."

Pinch and prune for better plants

BY SUE REINARDY

We use “pinch and prune” to mean a variety of techniques. They can include pruning, deadheading, pinching stems or buds, or cutting back leggy plants to shape, form, and trim. It is usually species-specific and based on common sense and experience – don’t worry about hurting your plants by experimenting.

Some tools that you will need are by-pass pruners, pruning scissors, and hand-held shears. Avoid anvil-type pruners that can crush stems (they are used more for trimming dead wood). Different techniques call for specific tools; find the one that works for you.

Techniques

Deadheading is the removal of old or spent flowers and is beneficial to most herbaceous ornamentals. Seed production can drain a plant’s energy and cause foliage to deteriorate. Deadheading can promote vegetative and root growth rather than seed production. By deadheading you can prolong bloom periods, initiate a second smaller bloom, improve overall appearance, and prevent self-seeding. Some examples of species that benefit from deadheading are: daylilies, hostas, lady’s mantle, and lambs ear.

Cutting back refers to pruning a plant to renew its appearance or encourage a new flush of growth or flowering, and control its height or flowering time. Pinching can accomplish the same objective. If you travel for several weeks, you can cut certain plants by one-third to delay bloom time until you get back home. Examples: dianthus, candy tuft, moss phlox, catmint, geranium, am-



Both Mondarda (Bee Balm) and Joe Pye Weed benefit from cutting back in late spring to reduce height. Bee Balm also benefits from thinning to help prevent powdery mildew.

sonia, baptisia, achillea, aster, mums, sedum, Joe Pye weed.

Pinching allows for experimentation and usually involves removing only the growing tips. Generally do this early in the growing season because it will delay bloom time. Examples: sedum, shasta daisy, Joe Pye weed, aster, artemisia.

Thinning can prevent disease, create sturdier stems, and increase the size of flowers. It can often help to increase air circulation to help prevent powdery mildew. Use this on: aster, delphinium, mondarda, phlox, bulgweed, lambs ear, and lady’s mantle.

Disbudding involves removing side

buds so that the plant’s terminal bud produces larger flowers on a longer stem. Removing the terminal bud will cause the side buds to produce smaller but more flowers; it can also eliminate the need for staking. Examples: mums, carnations, pinks, dahlias, peonies.

Deadleafing removes individual dead leaves to improve appearance. Examples: Elijah Blue grass in spring, lady’s mantle in summer, and hellebores (lenten rose) in the spring.

A great source of information on all these techniques is “The Well-Tended Perennial Garden” by Tracy DiSabato-Aust.

Shasta daisies should be cut back to the basal leaves after blooming for a neater appearance.





Great plants to force: (From left) Hyacinths and tulips; foam flower, coral bell, and sea thrift; Papewhite 'Galilee' with the (smaller) one on the left fed with a water/alcohol mixture and the one on the right plain water (author prefers the more controlled non-floppy habit).

Photos by Sue Reinardy

'Forcing' plants bring spring inside

BY SUE REINARDY

Late summer is the ideal time to plan for your early-spring forcing. Most of us are familiar with forcing spring bulbs such as paperwhites, tulips, and daffodils. But what about forcing rhubarb, foam flower, and forsythia? Enjoy the joys of gardening before the snow melts next March ... or April ... or May!

Spring Bulbs Most spring bulbs need a 12- to 15-week chilling period. Try dwarf species or hybrids for the best results. I plant mine in potting soil in nursery pots and put them in the vegetable crisper covered with plastic to keep in the moisture. Be sure to label with the date and species. Paperwhites are the exception, needing no chilling period. I keep those bulbs in the fridge unpotted. When you are ready for some blooms, bring them out. You can repot in an attractive container and water. Don't water again until growth begins. I water with 7 parts water and 1 part alcohol (I use an old bottle of vodka) to keep them from flopping.

Rhubarb You can freeze stems for use during the fall and winter. But if you forgot and need to divide

your rhubarb, now is an excellent time to not only divide but get rhubarb next spring--weeks before it is ready in the garden. According to Rhubarb-Central.Com (<http://www.rhubarb-central.com/forcing-rhubarb.html>), "the cultivation methods for forcing rhubarb were developed as early as the 1800s. Commercial growers of rhubarb use special forcing sheds, or hot houses, but the home gardener can successfully force rhubarb in a home cellar, a garage, or another outbuilding. Forcing rhubarb can also be done outdoors, in the garden." The process is a bit involved, and I recommend that you do some research before proceeding.

Perennials According to To-vah Martin in *The Unexpected Houseplant*, "Foam flowers (*Tiarella cordifolia*) are disarmingly easy to grow indoors. They often blossom a month or more before their leaves begin to emerge outside and they stay in bloom for a long duration of fulfillment." Now is the time to dig up and pot some to bring indoors. They like indirect light and just enough moisture so they don't dry out. Other perennials that make good winter houseplants are coral

bells (*Heuchera*) and sea thrift (*Armeria maritima*). If you plan to travel south this winter, plan to stop at a nursery on your way home and pick up a perennial that you can enjoy in the house early and then plant in the garden later. Try bleeding heart (*Dicentra Spectabilis*), and lenten rose (*Helleborus*) for a good-looking plant that blooms and makes a fine temporary houseplant.

Trees and Shrubs We are familiar with gathering pussy willows in the spring and watching them bloom. You can do the same with a number of spring-blooming shrubs and trees. Many ornamental trees and shrubs set their flower buds during the previous growing season and need a period of dormancy of about 6 weeks. The buds usually open about 2 to 3 weeks after being exposed to warmth and moisture. If you are pruning in later winter, pick a day when the temperature is above freezing to help the branch make the transition to indoor temperatures. If you force a branch without success, try again a few weeks later. Forsythia, witch hazel, cherry, lilac, rhododendron, serviceberry, birch, red maple, and willow can all be forced.

Master Gardener Volunteers: Honoring their hours (and hours) of service

BY SUE REINARDY

Washburn, Sawyer, and Burnett counties are fortunate to have dedicated, trained volunteers supporting the UW-Extension and its service to our communities in Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Each year Master Gardener Volunteers donate at least 24 hours of service in horticulture-related youth education, adult education or community service and commit to 10 hours of continuing education.

According to Kevin Schoessow, UW-Extension area agriculture development agent, "volunteering takes time and commitment, and without the help of Master Gardener Volunteers the program would not be successful or have the impacts that it does."

He concludes all his correspondence with this quote: "*A volunteer's time is the true example of selfless giving.*"

People have busy schedules, and all volunteered time and efforts are appreciated. Here we honor these volunteers who have met these signifi-

cant, cumulative milestones in the hours they have donated to the Master Gardener program. They have helped people in our communities better understand horticulture and their environment.

We thank them for their service.

150 Hours

Barbara Boatman, Julie Hustvet

250 Hours

Larry Axelson, Nancy Axelson,
Tom Blumenberg, Mary Burnham,
Jim Cargill, Katie Childs,
Terrie Strand, Deborah Studley,
Victoria Zalatoris

500 Hours

Kristie Henning

750 Hours

Michelle LaBarbera, Nancy Reis,
Chris Weyh

1000 Hours

Carol Alcoe, Sharon Tarras

NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL

To help reduce mailing and publishing costs, newsletters are being 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 email 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?

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

Timesheet: Let your volunteer work count

Timesheets are due September 16

BY SUE REINARDY

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 2013 timesheet and send it to the Spooner office.

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, plus 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 or email the completed timesheet by September 16 to: Kevin Schoessow, Spooner Agriculture Research Station, W6646 Hwy 70, Spooner, WI 54801.

Our volunteerism counts

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.

According to Wisconsin Master Garden Program Coordinator Susan Mahr: "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."

In 2012 we had 35 active MGVs in Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn counties, with 33 certified for 2013. In 2012 we volunteered 383 hours in youth education, 253 hours in community education, 1,699 hours in support service, and participated in 645 hours in continuing ed.

Applying wood ashes to garden soil:

What is wood ash good for and how much should I apply?

BY KEVIN SCHOESSOW,
SPOONER AREA
AGRICULTURE AGENT,
UW-EXTENSION

Wood ash is a common amendment to add to soil. It is both a liming agent and fertilizer source.

Calcium is the most predominant plant nutrient found in wood ash; it can be found in concentrations over 20%. Potassium (or "potash") concentrations in wood ash can be up to 5%. Other nutrients such as magnesium, phosphorus, and sulfur can be found in concentrations up to 2%. Iron, aluminum, manganese, zinc, boron, and other trace nutrients are also found in wood ash.

Only ash collected from naturally grown trees should be used. Avoid using ash from trees grown near industrial sites or from trees grown in soils that may be contaminated. Ash from the burning of treated wood, waste oil, plastics or garbage should not be collected and used on garden soil.

Ashes from naturally harvested trees may contain small amounts of heavy metals, such as cadmium and lead. However,

under "normal" or recommended application rates of ash, the concentrations of these metals should not pose a threat to plants or garden soil.

Another benefit of wood ash is its ability to neutralize soil acidity. When wood is burned, the resulting ash contains a high amount of carbonates. These carbonates react with the acid in the soil and cause the soil pH to increase. The amount of carbonates and the neutralizing index varies depending on the type of wood and the burning process. In general, wood ashes have about 50% less neutralizing ability as commercially available sources such as pelletized lime or aglime.

Wood ash is of particular value to gardeners who have acidic soils. For this reason the primary reason to apply wood ash is for its liming qualities. Approximately 4 cups of wood ash can be substituted for each pound of agricultural limestone. Apply any liming product like wood ash only if it's recommended on your soil test report. Wood ash applications are generally limited to 15 to 20 pounds or approximately a 5-gallon pail per 1,000 square feet per year. Liming effectiveness improves



Approximately 2 lbs. of wood ash spread on a 7-by 12-foot (84 ft²) garden plot.

Photos by Kevin Schoessow

if the ash is mixed into the soil. If applying ash, the best approach is to spread the ash evenly over the ground during the winter and work it into the soil in early spring.

An alternative to applying wood ash to garden soil is to sprinkle it around trees, shrubs or other perennial plants, or on lawns. In these non-tilled surface applications you may want to sift the ash to remove any large charcoal pieces, and of course make sure the ash does not contain any embers. Ash particles are very fine and can be blown easily by the wind. Precaution should be taken to avoid exposure to ash dust.

Wood ash is an excellent soil amendment if applied based on soil test recommendations. If wood ash is applied at larger than rec-

ommended rates, there is the risk of toxicity problems or nutrient deficiencies developing in your plants. The best way to monitor your soil and to make sure you are not over-applying wood ash is to have your soil tested.

A soil test information kit is available at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station on the demonstration garden page at <http://www.cals.wisc.edu/ars/spooner/garden.php>. Information also can be found through the UW-Extension Soil and Forage Analysis Lab.

References

Using industrial wood ash as a soil amendment, UW- Extension pub. A3635

Wood ashes can benefit gardens and lawns, Oregon State Univ. Extension



About 2 lbs. of wood ash (in pot) has been sifted through half-inch screen and spread on 3-by-30-foot bed which will be lightly tilled and planted to a cover crop of buckwheat.