

North Country Gardeners

UW-EXTENSION-COOPERATIVE EXTENSION BURNETT, SAWYER, AND WASHBURN COUNTIES ISSUE 31 AUGUST 2015



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

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Greetings, gardeners:

Summer in northern Wisconsin is in full swing. As one surveys the many gardens in the countryside, no doubt the harvest has begun in earnest – the raspberries need picking, the lettuce is bolting, and we've all had our first BLT of the season by now. It also means the annual Twilight Tour held at the Teaching and Display Garden at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station (SARS) is just days away.

On Tuesday, August 18, from 4 p.m. until dusk, the North Country Master Gardener Volunteers (NCMGV) and the University of Wisconsin-Extension host a grand "affair" of a different kind. While the county and state fairs are great for exhibitors, our "gardens are on exhibit" for you. Check out the new varieties and cultivars that are flourishing – or failing – in the numerous test plots. Families, come one and all, to experience first-hand a plethora of garden activities, from taste testing the best of our heirloom tomato crop to meandering through the AAS gardens with "geometric" floral designs, the theme for this year's National Contest. (Did you know the "Down on the Farm" theme took first place over 14 other entries last year?)

And there is so much more, vendors and guest speakers. We have four excellent guest speakers invited including Brian Smith and Dave Zlesak, both horticulture professors from UW-Rivers Falls; Beth Hanna from the Wisconsin School Garden Initiative; and Cora Lund Preston from the University of Minnesota Monarch Lab.

These guests and Master Gardener Volunteers will be on hand to answer your garden questions. So be sure to bring along any insect, disease or plant samples for our on-site plant doctors. Also, a special exhibit will highlight the NCMGV support of the Monarch Joint Venture (MJV), whose mission is to promote conservation and preservation of the monarch's habitat throughout North America, particularly the 3,500-mile corridor from their wintering home in Sierra Madre Mountains of central Mexico to northern Wisconsin. Guest speaker Cora Lund Preston will provide a brief overview of their flight and plight and how we as individuals can help by planting milkweed seed!

Once again, it will be our pleasure to greet familiar faces and welcome new ones at this most festive of gardening events in our area. See you at the gardens on Tuesday, August 18.

Happy Gardening,

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

Katie Childs
President
North Country Master Gardeners
Volunteers Association



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

Visit us on the Web!

This newsletter and other useful information are online at:

<http://www.cals.wisc.edu/ars/spooner>
<http://wimastergardener.org/?q=NorthCountry>
<https://www.facebook.com/spoonerag>

Pollinators need help to survive

BY DEB STUDLEY

Pollinators are vital for both wildflowers and crops. Without them, about 85 percent of plants would be unavailable to produce seeds or fruit. Without pollinators there would be no apples, pumpkins, blueberries, tomatoes, pecans, or many other fruits and vegetables. Only wind-pollinated crops such as corn, rice, and wheat would remain. Consider for a moment that approximately one in three mouthfuls of food and beverages require the presence of a pollinator. The United States grows more than 100 crop plants that need pollinators.

Pollinators, which include bees, bugs, and birds, are struggling. Last year beekeepers in the United States lost almost half of their honeybees, and over the past 20 years, the North American monarch population has been decimated, dropping from 1-2 billion to less than 60 million, mainly due to loss of habitat and pollution from pesticides.

The decline is particularly scary because pollinators are not just important for biodiversity. Honeybees alone add \$18 billion to the agriculture sector each year. If pollinators don't survive, we don't eat.

Changes in our landscapes have contributed to declines in both managed honey bees and wild native bees. As pollinators disappear, the effect on the health and viability of crops and native plant communities can be disastrous. It is imperative that we take immediate steps to help pollinator populations thrive. The beauty of the situation is that by supporting pollinators' need for habitat, we support our own needs for food and support diversity in the natural world.

You can make a difference by understanding the vegetation patterns on the farm, forest, or neighbor's yard adjacent to yours and by making planting choices that support the pollinators' need for food and shelter as they move through the landscape.



Photo by Sue Reinardy

In June, 2015, a Pollinator Health Task Force that includes government agencies from the Federal Highway Association to Fish and Wildlife Service as well as non-governmental partners, released a plan to protect pollinator habitat and curb pollution from pesticides. The plan calls for research into why pollinator populations are declining, public education, increasing and improving habitat, and forming public-private partnerships to execute these goals. Many of the priority projects will focus on the I-35 corridor from Texas to Minnesota that provides spring and summer breeding habitats in the monarch's key migration path.

The monarch's migration path runs through the heart of the corn belt, once a wide stretch of former tall-grass prairie that is now predominantly mono-culture farm land. The first step to making the corridor more habitable is seeding. The plan is to put in plants that monarchs depend on, such as milkweed, along the roadways. Sprinkling seeds might seem trivial, but loss of food supply, which has happened in a lot of places due to large-scale farming, has had a huge impact on the butterflies.

The National Wildlife Foundation is spearheading the effort, along with Fish and Wildlife Service, and they have collectively kicked in \$3.2 million and are working with partners, including state transportation departments.

In addition to losing habitat, pollinators are impacted by pesticides. The next step in the federal policy is a change in pesticide use and a more integrated pest management plan.

Three things you can do to help pollinators is to protect, enhance, and/or provide habitat. Whether you tend a small flower box in the city or maintain a large rural garden, there are practical steps you can take to improve the health, abundance, and diversity of your local pollinators.

Create a diversity of bloom.

Bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects need abundant nectar and pollen sources throughout the growing season. Select native plants whenever possible. Cultivate a landscape with diverse flower colors, shapes, and bloom times. Try to provide blooming plants from early spring to fall with at least three species of flower in bloom each season.

SEE GARDENERS, PAGE 3

Monarch Mission: Plant milkweed - save a monarch

BY KATIE CHILDS

A sketch of a perfect summer day ... blue sky with billowy clouds, flowers gently swaying in the breeze, a monarch or two floating by. Wait – there are no monarchs. Yes, indeed, the beautiful monarch we may have taken for granted in the past is a rare sight, not a common one.

In recent years, the nightly news was riddled with the flight and plight of the monarchs. Studies have determined the decline of the monarch has reached epic proportions. According to the Monarch Joint Venture (MJV), a partnership of federal and state agencies, non-governmental agencies, and academic programs, the monarch populations has decreased to alarming levels – from 2 billion to some 50 million to 60 million.

Researchers with MJV and other concerned agencies throughout the country have been looking at all facets of their existence and life cycle. Herein lies the problem – the food source and habitat, the common milkweed and other nectar plants, where they lay their eggs and munch on the leaves, is also in great decline.

Through this groundswell effort by MJV, the milkweed conservation program is underway and needs everyone's help. The North Country Master Gardeners Volunteer Association



Milkweed, a favorite for pollinators. Photo by Julie Hustvet

has committed to help promote this effort through education conservation programs and distribution of milkweed seeds and/or plants. Please join us at the annual Twilight Tour at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station (SARS) at 4 p.m. on August 18 where a “Save the Monarchs” exhibit along with MJV guest speaker Cora Lund Preston will give us a current “monarch” overview and will be avail-

able for Q & A.

Never before have all the pollinators been so threatened, therefore affecting our food sources and resulting in overall permanent changes on our planet.

Once again, mark the Twilight Tour, Tuesday, August 18, at 4 p.m. on your calendar to enjoy a remarkable evening to learn what we as individuals can do to spread the word in

Gardeners can help pollinators thrive

FROM PAGE 2

Note that some ornamental plants have been selected for traits that are attractive to people, rather than pollinators. Avoid pollenless cultivars and double-petaled varieties of ornamental flowers.

Protect nests and egg-laying sites. Native bees use untidy areas of the garden to nest such as open sandy ground, brush piles, and old tree stumps and snags. Consider leaving some of these for wildlife

habitat. Butterflies often need specific host plants to feed on during their caterpillar stage. The caterpillars of monarch butterflies feed exclusively on the leaves of various milkweeds. Protect or plant the host plants of butterflies native to your area.

Don't use pesticides. Keep in mind that even “organic-approved” insecticides can harm pollinators and other wildlife. Herbicides, while usually not directly lethal to insects, can reduce plant diversity, including the diversity of weedy, non-invasive

wildflowers that provide essential pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Systemic insecticides, like neonicotinoids, can damage the central nervous system of insects.

More information can be found from these organizations: www.xerces.org, www.pollinator.org, www.wildones.org, and www.monarchwatch.org.

Twilight Garden Tour set for August 18

This summer marks the 17th year that the Spooner Ag Research Station, University of Wisconsin-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 p.m. on August 18, with guest speakers, displays, and demonstrations available until dusk.

The guest speakers this year are Brian Smith, Dave Zlesak, Cora Lund Preston, and Beth Hanna.

Smith is a UW-Extension fruit and vegetable specialist from UW-River Falls. He will discuss topics related to both fruit and vegetables with emphasis on winter hardiness issues in fruit. Zlesak is associate professor of horticulture at UW-River Falls, and he will discuss roses and woody ornamentals with an emphasis on "Earth-Kind Landscaping." Preston is assistant coordinator of the University of Minnesota Monarch Joint Venture, a collaborative project to protect the monarch migration in the United States. Hanna is the training and outreach specialist for the Wisconsin School Garden Initiative, and she will discuss how schools can develop sustainable

youth gardening projects.

Guest speakers and Master Gardener Volunteers will be available to answer questions, so bring any garden questions and plant, insect or disease specimens. Pressure cooker gauge test-checks also will be offered.

Master Gardener Volunteers will have several displays and demonstrations including composting, vermicomposting, miniature gardens, landscape design, drip irrigation and rain barrels, and others.

The popular hay wagon rides around portions of the Station property to view the crops and sheep research facilities will be available. The short tours will be scheduled throughout the evening and will be led by Phil Holman, manager of the Spooner Ag Research Station.

There will be tasting of tomatoes and other ripe produce, fresh tomato and fruit salsa, and grilled vegetables.

The Spooner Ag Research Station Teaching & Display Garden is an official All-America Selections (AAS) display garden and was awarded a first-place finish in a National Landscape Design contest sponsored by AAS in 2014. The contest theme for

2015 is "garden geometry." Stop on out and see if you can identify the geometric shapes in our flower display. The AAS display includes both award-winning flowers and vegetables.

Organic vegetable gardening methods including a UW-Madison-sponsored organic tomato and pepper trial will be featured. The techniques include using mulches, cover crops, trellising, garden compost, composed manure, and integrated pest management. Several themed vegetable garden beds are in the garden in addition to more than 25 varieties of heirloom tomatoes.

As in the past there is no charge for this educational event.

Mark your calendars, invite your friends, neighbors, and relatives, and make the drive to Spooner on Tuesday, August 18, from 4 p.m. until dusk. It's worth it!

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

For more information contact Kevin Schoessow at 715/635-3506 or 800/528-1914, or online at <http://ars.wisc.edu/spooner/garden.php>.

What went well (or not) in the garden this year?

BY SUE REINARDY

**Meet Me in the Garden –
Plenty to Pick Seminar
Saturday, September 12
10 to noon**

The final Meet Me in the Garden Seminar will be "Plenty to Pick" at the Spooner Research Station Teaching and Display Garden. The garden will be at its peak, and the seminar will explore what has gone well, not so well, and why for the 2015 growing season.

It also will focus on how to harvest and store both vegetables and flow-

ers, including tips on putting the garden to bed for the season. Master Gardener Volunteers and University of Wisconsin-Extension staff will be available to answer questions.

Remember to bring your own lawn chair. All sessions are free and open to the public.

The Teaching and Display Garden is across from the Sheep Research Facility on Orchard Lane, Spooner. Orchard Lane is located 1.5 miles east of Spooner on Hwy. 70 or a half-mile west of the Hwy. 70/53 interchange.

It will be held rain or shine but will be cancelled in case of severe weather.



New insect pest impacts soft-fleshed fruit

BY KEVIN SCHOESSOW,
UW-EXTENSION, BURNETT, SAWYER
AND WASHBURN COUNTIES

If you have never heard of Spotted Winged Drosophila or SWD, you are not alone. SWD is an invasive vinegar fly (fruit fly) native to Southeast Asia that was first found in California in 2008 and has quickly spread throughout the United States.

Wisconsin first reported SWD in 2010, and in 2012 breeding populations and fruit infestations were confirmed in fall-bearing raspberry.

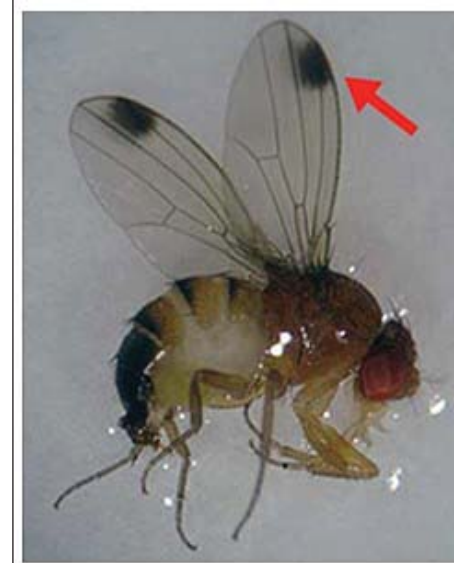
Although SWD infestations have not been confirmed in every county in Wisconsin, it is very likely they can be found statewide.

We have been trapping and monitoring for SWD at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station and at a Washburn raspberry grower site for several years. We typically see our first flies and infected fruit (raspberry) the second week in July. Our high-tunnel fall raspberry planting will have peak SWD populations in mid-September with significant infestation of larvae in fruit for most of the fall picking season.

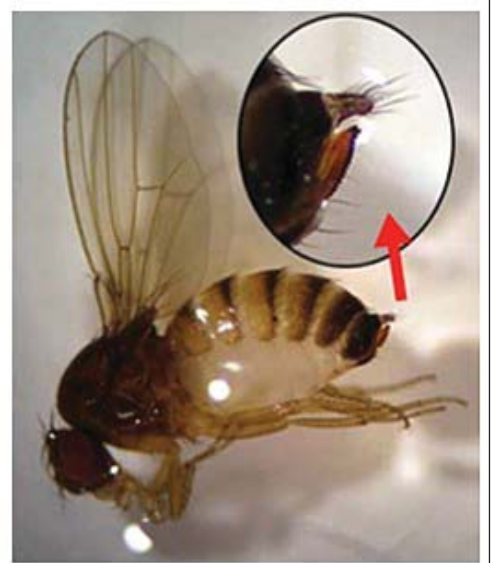
Brambles (blackberries and raspberries) are the most likely fruits to be impacted, although strawberry, blueberry, and currants are also preferred hosts. Cherries, plums, and grapes are susceptible to SWD as well. To date nearly all confirmed SWD infestations in Washburn and Burnett counties have been on summer raspberry, blueberry or fall-bearing raspberry.

Because of population dynamics of SWD, mid-summer and early-fall soft-skinned fruit crops are most at risk.

Management of this new pest can and will be a challenge. Cultural controls are the most important. At present, spraying an insecticide appears to be our best strategy for keeping populations of SWD in check. There are both organic certified and non-organic insecticides labeled for SWD; unfortunately, both need to be applied during the harvest season and are harmful to bees and other polli-



SWD Male – note the characteristic dark spot near the tip of each wing.



SWD Female – note the saw-like egg-laying structure (insert); lacks wing spots.

nators.

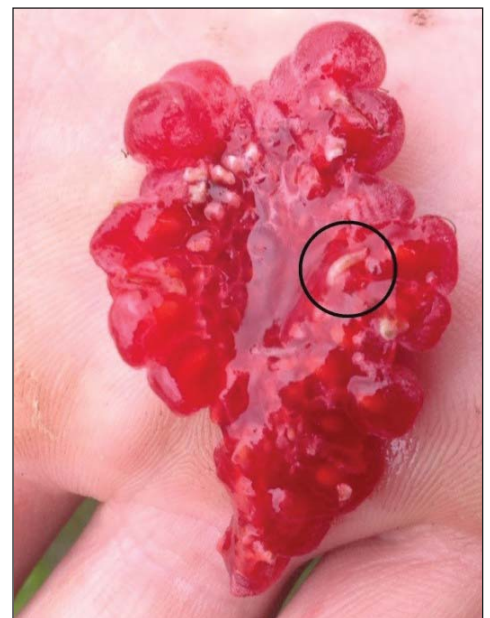
So what can be done? First, monitor your fruit for signs of infection and be on the lookout for tiny white maggots in fruit. When picking fruit it may be best to pick slightly under-ripe fruit and avoid harvesting fruit that is soft or shows any sign of infection. Once harvested cool fruit immediately and keep it in the refrigerator. If fruit will not be consumed fresh in a few days, freeze the fruit. If possible, pick your plant clean of nearly ripe and over-ripe fruit. Destroy all inedible fruit by placing it in a plastic bag and solarizing it in the sun.

If you do choose to spray, be prepared to spray your crop several times during the harvest period and read and follow label directions.

As with other non-native pests, it will take time for their populations to normalize and for alternative pest management strategies to be developed. In the meantime, we will have to learn to live with yet another non-native pest.

You can find additional infor-

mation on the SWD in Wisconsin at <http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/swd/> and on the Michigan State and University of Minnesota website at http://www.ipm.msu.edu/invasive_species/spotted_wing_drosophila.



SWD larvae in summer raspberry. Photos submitted

Gardening, education merge in events



Proceeds from the NCMGA Plant Sale (above) support horticulture outreach & education. Pictured are programs for children and adults alike, as well as design and maintenance of the Teaching & Display Garden.
Photos by Kevin Schoessow, KD Childs, & Vicki Gee-Treft



Exploring gardening



Awards honor work for Demonstration Garden, seminar

Kevin Schoessow and Julie Hustvet received awards from the Wisconsin Garden Club Federation at its annual statewide conference in Superior, Wisconsin, in May.

Kevin Schoessow

The Wisconsin Garden Club Federation presented Schoessow with its Bronze Award, an is presented to a nonmember for exceptional and outstanding accomplishments in any field that advances the federation's objectives.

Schoessow is the area agricultural development agent for University of Wisconsin-Extension in Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn counties. He is charged with providing information and education to area farmers and in home and commercial agriculture, coordinating the Master Gardener Volunteer Program for the three counties, and organizing field days and workshops. It is his management of the Teaching and Display Garden at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station that led to his nomination for the Bronze Award.

Schoessow's work with the garden meets the Bronze Award requirement for being recognized as "a definite and stimulating influence within the state." The garden is a culmi-

nation of 17 years of partnering with UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteers and the University of Wisconsin Madison's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Spooner Agriculture Research Station to develop and manage the site. The gardens are a living demonstration of what perennials and annuals are suitable for growing in Zone 3. A portion of the area also houses a test garden for All-America Selections (AAS) plants and was named the 2014 first-place winner in the National All-America Selections Landscape Design Contest for its "Down on the Farm" garden and was the 2013 second-place winner in the landscape design contest.

More information on the garden is at <http://spooner.ars.wisc.edu/>.

The Wisconsin Garden Club Federation is a community of more than 1,100 gardeners located in 46 clubs throughout the state. Its mission of providing education, resources, and opportunities to promote and share the love of gardening, floral design, and civic and environmental responsibility is clearly embodied by Schoessow's work, the federation said.

He was nominated for the award by the Spooner Garden Club.

Julie Hustvet

The Wisconsin Garden Club Federation (WGCF) recognized Spooner Garden Club member and Master Gardener Volunteer Julie Hustvet with The Creative Horticultural Achievement Award.

Hustvet developed the New Ventures Garden Seminar held on the third Saturday of March at Northwood School in Minong each year for the past 15 years. She has coordinated the support from co-hosts Spooner Garden Club, North Country Master Gardener Volunteers, and Northwood School, along with creating the seminar programs, handling registration, emceeing, and arranging for vendors and door prizes from area businesses and expert and often well-known speakers.

The seminar has consistently brought four or five topics of interest to an average of 200 gardeners from within a 100-mile radius.

The federation said Hustvet's efforts and results exemplify the federation's mission of providing education and opportunities to share the love of gardening, floral design, and civic and environmental responsibility.

More information about the Wisconsin Garden Club Federation is at www.wisconsinclub.org.

Doolittle Park Native Plant Shoreland Demonstration Garden: Protecting lakes with plants and buffer zone

BY LINDA ZILLMER

The Birchwood Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its second annual garden walk on June 28. One of the featured gardens was the Village of Birchwood's Doolittle Park Native Plant Shoreland Demonstration Garden. That stop on the garden walk featured a tour of the demonstration garden and offered take-home materials on native plantings, private well and septic maintenance, shoreland best management practices, plant lists, and resources for information and assistance.

The demonstration garden, planted in October 2014, was a collaboration between the Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department, the Village of Birchwood, and community volunteers to demonstrate how native plants in shoreland buffer zones help protect shorelines, habitat, and water quality.

Washburn County Conservationist Brent Edlin prepared the preliminary site design, selected the materials and plant list, and was instrumental in implementing the project. Washburn County administered the

50/50 cost share agreement for the village. The village's volunteer labor hours and equipment that were used was sufficient to offset the cost of the plants and materials.

Thanks to village trustees, staff, Birchwood Public School students, and Steve Devine for all their hard work!

Village Trustee Linda Zillmer credits her Master Gardener training and the support of Kevin Schoessow, University of Wisconsin-Extension, for giving her the confidence and resources to take on the project.

The shoreland demonstration garden is located at the end of the peninsula at Doolittle Park, at the channel between Big and Little Birch lakes. On the Little Birch side of the peninsula, Mother Nature has selected the plants growing in the no-mow area. On the Big Birch side of the peninsula, the demonstration garden uses native plants and grasses to show visitors the minimum required shoreline buffer zone depth of 35 feet from the ordinary high water mark. The native plants and grasses used also would also be suitable for rain gar-

dens.

The garden used 18 native flowering plant species (456 plugs), five native grass species (192 plugs), 21 deciduous trees and shrubs, and 24 evergreen trees.

Native grasses, plants, shrubs, and trees were purchased from Dragonfly Gardens.

Spruce, white pine and balsam were purchased from John Borkenhagen, now retired.

The garden design groups like plant and grass species for easy identification. A hidden picture, Reflections, should reveal itself as the plants fully mature in the next two to three years. A pamphlet identifying the native grass, flowering plant species, and various trees, shrubs, and evergreens, as well as garden labels and signage, are in development.

The pervious paver walkway, still under construction, demonstrates a pervious surface option for high-traffic areas like driveways and parking spaces.

The 2014 planting process included roto-tilling the site, fertilizing, and installing edging and landscape fabric prior to planting. The landscape fabric will be removed in a couple of years, once the native plants are established.

Expected benefits

Shoreline erosion control – Deeper and more extensive root systems hold the soil in place

Goose control without fencing – Geese avoid tall plantings when moving from the lake to on shore

Water quality protection – Native plantings help minimize run-off and moderate rainwater temperatures.

Maintenance reduction – No mow! Habitat for a greater variety of pollinators, birds and wildlife

Education – Aesthetics – Discussion – Inspiration – Fun. Future educational opportunities will be provided in hopes that more shoreland





owners will adopt no-mow and shoreland buffer zone restorations.

Helpful resources

Contact your county Land and Water Conservation department and UW Extension office for more information on shoreline restoration ideas and programs for your property. They can also help you with ideas for rain gardens, diversion practices,

rock infiltration practices, native plantings and fish sticks.

For more information about the Doolittle project, contact Linda Zillmer, 715/354-7806.

Garden walks

Birchwood Area Chamber of Commerce has held two successful garden walks and is planning to hold a third walk in 2016. The garden tour area

includes Birchwood, Edgewater, and Cedar Lake.

If you would like to have your garden featured next year, or would like to see how the demonstration garden progresses, mark your calendar for the fourth Sunday in June 2016. Check the Birchwood Area Chamber of Commerce website for more information.



Canning lids morph into plant labels

BY SUSAN STRAND

Plant labels are a great use for old canning lids!

Drill an appropriate size hole for the diameter of rod you are using. I used braising rod (used for welding) cut into 12-inch sections with one end curled using pliers. You also can find small-diameter rod at any home improvement store. All materials are inexpensive, especially when compared to cost of plant labels on market.

I used colored Sharpies and Sharpie paint pens. The color does fade with time, so you might want to spray with a clear gloss metal paint (also readily available at hardware stores) to make a more permanent label.





Need some extra color in fall? Try these crocus

BY TOM BLUMENBERG

Like most of you I usually try a few plants to experiment with each year. A couple of years ago I decided to plant autumn blooming crocus. A garden which is viewed from our dining area usually looks pretty drab in late fall so I thought these would add some color during those short daylight hours.

These plants seem to be somewhat rare. I personally have never seen them used in fall gardens in the Hayward area. As I did a bit of research I also found that the term "Autumn Crocus" actually refers to 2 separate plants families. It all gets a bit confusing as the terminology

seems to be interchanged to some degree. Forgive me if this is confusing, but remember the reward is in the beautiful blooms.

Autumn crocus, from the genus *Colchicum*, are members of the lily (Liliaceae) family, while the spring crocus are members of the iris family (Iridaceae).

Note that all parts of the plant are toxic. In my earlier days as a pharmacist, I remember the medication, colchicine, which was used for the treatment of acute gout, a painful inflammation of the joints.

I have personally planted:

Colchicum 'Water Lily' – Double, lavender-pink flowers.

Colchicum speciosum – Pinkish purple to purple flowers.

Both of these are planted in September or early October. Full or dappled sunlight seems to be best. The flower stems are quite delicate, so I used a fence to keep squirrels, dogs, and other creatures from breaking them.

In spring, strap-like leaves develop and then die off by mid-July.

I ordered these fall-blooming bulbs online. As directed, plant the bulbs as soon as you get them. Choose a well-drained site and enjoy the blooms as they appear in your fall landscape.

Successful organic gardening starts with soil

BY BRENT ARNOLDUSSEN

Successful organic gardening starts with the soil. Many pest and disease issues can be averted by maintaining proper soil health, as plants that are stressed are more susceptible to attack by diseases and insects. The easiest and quickest way to build healthy soil is to add organic matter to the soil, decrease tillage, and never leave the soil bare. Amend the soil with plenty of garden compost or manure prior to planting. After planting, adding a thick layer of organic mulch will help retain

soil moisture and prevent weeds, and increase soil organic matter as that mulch breaks down.

When disease or pests surfaces, thoroughly assess the situation to determine the allowable threshold for the pest, and what actions can be taken to limit this population. This could be physically killing or removing the pest, secluding the pest, and applying an organic insecticide or fungicide as a last resort. This approach is known as integrated pest management and is a vital process for any organic garden.



Photo by Kevin Schoessow

Conifer hail damage shows up as brown branches

BY PAUL CIGAN,
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL
RESOURCES FOREST HEALTH
SPECIALIST

Branch browning on conifers was widespread in Sawyer and Washburn counties this spring following the late-season wind storm in 2014.

Many people across Sawyer and Washburn Counties contacted state forestry officials in the spring to report brown branches on pines, spruce, and fir trees along roadsides, forests, and yards.

A severe thunderstorm passed through the counties in September 2014, bringing high-force winds and a significant volume of hail and rain to the area. Strong winds broke main stems and branches of many trees while uprooting others, resulting in immediate visible tree damage. A more delayed impact of the storm only recently observed across the counties is branch and top mortality associated with hail injury.

"We were blown away by the amount of hail damage there was to pines, spruce, and fir along a 20-mile corridor on Hwy. 77," said Joe O'Brien, forest plant pathologist with the U.S. Forest Service out of St. Paul, Minnesota, after a recent damage survey near Hayward.

Meanwhile, Kevin Schoessow, area agriculture development agent for the University of Wisconsin-

Extension, reported his phone was "ringing off the hook" from a high call volume from concerned landowners reporting "dying conifers" from Minong down to Stone Lake.

Schoessow advised property owners with storm-damaged trees to take time to examine their trees and weigh their options before turning to the saw to cut down trees.

"The top priority is safety of people and property," he said. "The first step is to examine trees for uncharacteristic leaning, stem cracks, and broken-off branches and tops lodged in the tree crown. If you see any of these conditions, consult professionals trained in hazard tree removal."

The presence and severity of hail injury, specifically, varies by location, with some areas showing moderate to high damage levels, while others were not impacted at all. The rate of recovery and probability of survival of trees sustaining hail damage depends upon the total surface area of wounded tissue, tree species and age, and vulnerability to infection by a common fungal disease called diplodia, explained Paul Cigan, forest health specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

"A large number of wounds will cause mortality to some branches and tops, and in severe cases, entire

trees. But because symptoms can be delayed and influenced by summer weather, predicting tree survival is more accurate if trees are assessed in the fall following the damage," explained Cigan. "For young conifers – 1 to 15 years old – mortality of more than half of the branches incites significant tree stress, making trees more likely to succumb to additional stressors, such as drought or bark beetles attack. Older conifers may also survive after sustaining mortality of over half of the limbs but generally have a lower capacity for recovery than young trees."

Among the pines species with hail damage, white pines are likely to survive at higher rates than Jack and red pine – a fact partly attributable to the susceptibility of the latter two species to a diplodia. "Diplodia can exploit injured trees by invading fresh wounds created by hail, noted O'Brien. "While Diplodia infection won't outright kill trees, it will cause additional branch and top mortality, thus reducing height and diameter growth and increase overall tree stress."

For more information: Paul Cigan, plant pest and disease specialist, paul.cigan@wisconsin.gov; 715/416-4920; Jennifer Sereno, communications, 608/770-8084.



Equal access in programming

University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunity in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA requirements. If you have any special needs or require special accommodations for programming, please call the UWEX Area Agricultural Agents office at 800/528-1914 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 Ilto-man@wisc.edu or 715/635-3506.

IDEAS?

If you have an idea for a newsletter article or want to write an article for it, contact Julie Hustvet, 715/635-3506 or mastergardenvol@centurylink.net.

The newsletter is published in the spring and late summer.

Volunteer timesheets due September 15

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 2015 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 Gardener Volunteers 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:
Lorraine Toman
Spooner Area UW-Extension
Spooner Agriculture 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.

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."

Tips for bringing in houseplants

BY SUE REINARDY

Believe it or not – it is almost time to start bringing in your houseplants from the summer vacation outdoors. Many of our houseplants are from the tropics and get stressed when nighttime temperatures dip lower than 50 degrees. I start by moving the houseplants to shadier spots in the garden around the beginning of September. This gives them time to acclimate to the lower light conditions in my home.

Then I start a process of cleaning to avoid bringing any pests into the house. They all get a good spray with the hose to get rid of as many bugs as possible, and the final step is a dose of insecticidal soap. I then isolate them in the garage for about a week for one final bug inspection before reintroducing them into the house.

With the reduced light many of our houseplants will then go into a natural dormant stage and require a reduced amount of water.

Don't be too concerned if they drop a few leaves as they become dormant. However, yellow foliage is often a sign of too much water.

Good hygiene is necessary for the health of your indoor garden. According to an article by Daryl Beyers titled "Houseplant Checkup," clip any yellow or shabby foliage; it not only looks better but it reduces the chance of diseases. He also writes that "if you find any white fuzz that suggests mealy bugs, tiny brown 'helmets' on stems indicates scale, and webs and

red dots are signs of spider mites. Dab away mealybugs with rubbing alcohol-soaked cotton swabs, cut off stems infested with scale, and give plants with spider mites a cold shower."

Keep your plants well dusted so their pores (stomata) do not get clogged.

Overall houseplants are better off conserving their resources in the winter months. Too much growth can weaken a plant over the long term. Let them take the rest they need over the winter.



GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK ON THE GARDENS!

BY TERRIE STRAND

This year the North Country Master Gardener Volunteers created geometric designs in the AAS demonstration gardens. It has been a challenging and fun experience to watch the gardens grow and to see if the geometric designs indeed showed up! The gardeners have created a interactive questionnaire for visitors to find the designs. Any feedback from visitors will be appreciated. The questionnaire is located in the mailbox next to the windmill.