

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties

NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2021

Volume 8, Issue 2

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Meetings: Unless announced otherwise, Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties meet on the second Thursday of every month in the Haralson Memorial Civic Center in Blairsville, 4:00 p.m. socializing, 4:30 p.m. meeting. We do not meet if inclement weather closes Union County or Towns County schools.

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Reminders

June 10, 2021– Sex Life of Ferns, Mosses and Lichens-Donna Cates

July 8, 2021-Chicken Care - Jordan Pandolph (Jacob's Intern)

August 12, 2021– TBA

Ornamental Allium growing in the garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen



Editor's Words

Summer is hot (and so far dry) weather and poison ivy and mosquitoes, but also a time to enjoy the blooms on the flowers you planted last spring—zinnias and marigolds and petunias—and the harvest of the vegetables you planted in your garden. As you go about your chores of maintaining your garden, don't forget that a garden is a place where you can be refreshed, restored and inspired.

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers have been busy with a very successful Plant Sale in early May and are continuing work in the Gold Medal Garden and Hamilton Gardens and at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. And our latest Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Class is now complete! Welcome and congratulations to our new trainees.

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Cathy Haist, please see page 3, and be sure to see pictures of her delightful front garden area renovation on pages 4-5. Barb Baumgardner has an update on her mini greenhouse and information about a new garden gadget, pages 15-16.

Happy gardening,

Jo Anne

Summer begins on June 20, 2021 at 11:32 p.m.

Dog Days of Summer

The term "Dog Days" traditionally refers to a period of particularly hot and humid weather occurring during the summer months. According to my Grier's Almanac 2021, Dog Days begin on July 28th and end on September 5th.

In ancient Greece and Rome, according to The Old Farmer's Almanac, the Dog Days were believed to be a time of drought, bad luck, and unrest, when dogs and men alike would be driven mad by the extreme heat.

They are called Dog Days because the period of sweltering weather coincides with the dawn rising of Sirius, the Dog Star. The appearance of Sirius does not actually affect seasonal weather here on Earth, but its appearance during the hottest part of summer ensures that the lore surrounding the star lives on today.

Today, thanks to air conditioning, the Dog Days are associated with the time of summer's peak temperatures and humidity.

Meet Cathy Haist

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Cathy Haist. She completed her Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training in 2009 and was certified in 2010.

Cathy grew up in Lawrenceville, Illinois. After high school she completed a 24-month hospital-based training course in Radiologic Technology and passed a National Certification Board Examination. In 1994, she studied and became a Georgia State Certified Emergency Medical Tech (EMT).

Cathy has been married to her husband, Bob, since 1975 and they currently reside in Union County. They have lived on Lake Nottely for many years, building their first house on the Lake in 1992 when they were part-timers. Then, in 2001, they built another home on the Lake and became permanent residents. Bob and Cathy had twin boys, Josh and Jeremy, who have passed away.

Before moving to Blairsville, Cathy worked at WellStar Kennestone Cardiac Cath Lab in Mariette, Georgia. After moving here, she worked at Union General Hospital in the Medical Imaging Department for 10 years.

Now retired, Cathy is very active volunteering with our Master Gardener group on various projects and also with the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center serving on the Education Committee and also on the Community Council. She also is an instructor at OASIS (Outstanding Adults Sharing in Service) where she teaches embroidery on cardstock. (And I can testify that each card is a work of art because I was once the lucky recipient of one of her cards). She also volunteers at the Castoff Pet Rescue Thrift Store.

Hobbies and passions include landscaping and designing her gardens. She is currently working on the second renovation of her gardens. She also has a passion for quilting and embroidering on cardstock and enjoys teaching the craft.

Currently, Cathy is in the third year of a complete renovation of her front garden areas as you can see in the following before and after photographs of her delightful gardens. Her goal is to make her gardens more pollinator friendly and less attractive to the herd of deer that have made their home in her neighborhood.

Favorite plants include pollinator attractors with the exception of a Foxtail Fern (a tropical plant). Landscape design and implementation are her favorite gardening activities. Favorite foods include a good home cooked beef pot roast with potatoes cooked alongside in the pot with the gravy made from the pan drippings. (Sounds yummy!)

Cathy's favorite place is right here in the North Georgia Mountains and in the nearby western North Carolina area, especially around the Smoky Mountains. She would like to visit Alaska, go to Monet's Gardens in France, see the City of Old London, and go to Cornwall, the land of Camelot and the story of King Arthur, Guenevere, Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Cathy better and hope you will too.

Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Following photographs (pages 4 and 5) are of Cathy Haist's front garden areas:



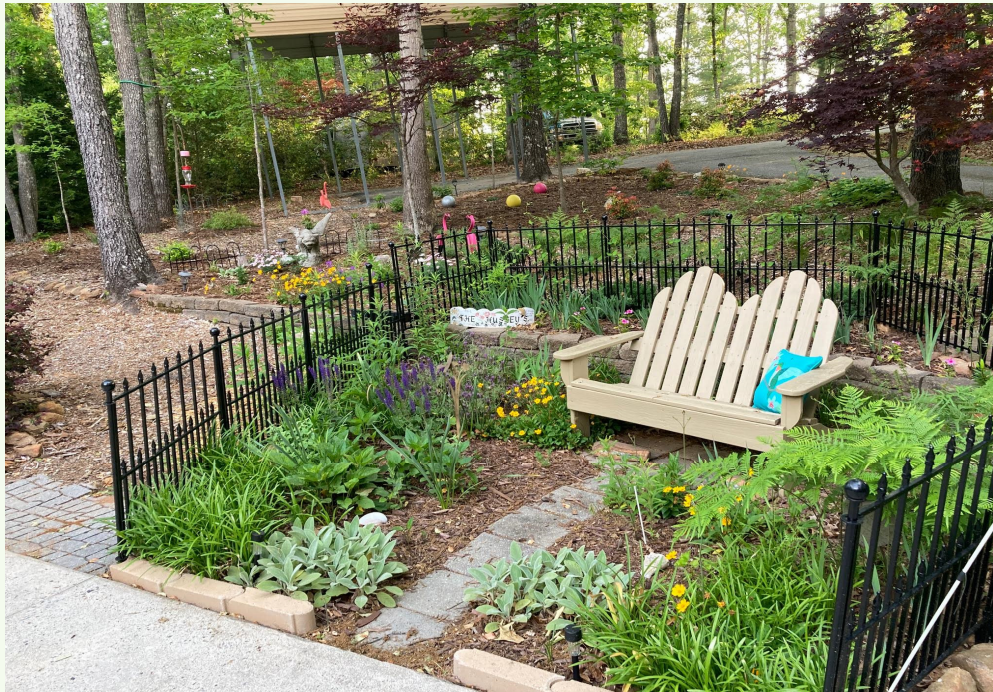
Before renovation



After renovation

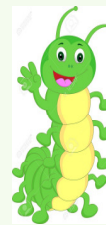


Before renovation



After renovation

June Garden Chores



Don't kill the big green caterpillars that get on your parsley or fennel. They will soon become beautiful swallowtail butterflies.

If you like the taste of homegrown tomatoes but do not have garden space, patio type tomatoes can be grown on a sunny porch (6 hours minimum sun) in a pot 24-inch or larger.

Fertilize tomato plants regularly, inspect them for signs of leaf diseases and spray with a fungicide if necessary. Always follow label directions.

Harvest vegetables regularly to prolong production and enjoy your vegetables at the peak of their freshness. One ripe vegetable on your okra or squash plant halts blooming on the entire plant. Use a knife when harvesting so you will not damage your plant.

Watch for Japanese beetles in your garden. Hand-pick them or spray with an insect killer, always following label directions. Systemic products are also on the market, but they may kill beneficial insects as well as the Japanese beetles.

Plant corn in several short rows, side by side, instead of a long single row because wind currents pollinate corn, not insects.

Plant herbs in sunny patio pots near your kitchen and you can start harvesting leaves in a few weeks. Your plants will grow best if you harvest regularly.

Container grown vegetables and flowers can dry out quickly on a patio in full sun. Daily watering may be necessary.

Be careful if you must work in your garden when the soil is too wet. When planting, the wet soil will clump together and possibly leave air pockets that will dry out your plant's roots. Water in new plantings well.

Cuttings of deciduous shrubs may be rooted in late June; root 6-inch clippings in damp sand, keeping it moist and roots may form by September.

An easy formula for creating a beautiful container garden is to use a single tall plant with a trailer that spills over the edge, along with some plants to fill in the gaps.

Mulch your vegetable garden with pine straw or wheat straw. You can use three sheets of newspaper to cover the ground around your plants, then cover the paper with straw.

One of the best things you can do for your trees and shrubs is to eliminate nutrient and water competition by removing the grass and weeds growing at the base of your plant and add about two inches of mulch.

During hot weather, raise the height of your mower to help your lawn withstand hot, dry weather.

Divide iris after they bloom.

Use soaker hoses to irrigate annuals, perennials, shrubs and vegetables.

Remove faded flowers from summer annuals to prevent a lull in blooming.

Water cucumbers regularly so they won't have a bitter taste.



Some quick growing annuals you can grow in your garden are cleome, cosmos, marigold and zinnia.

Check garden crops daily for disease and insect problems.

Harvest onions, garlic and Irish potatoes when two thirds of the plant tops have died down.

Look for seedlings under your Lenten roses and transplant them to other shady spots in your garden.

Check dahlias for spider mites and spray with an insecticide if necessary, always following label directions. Clip the faded flowers to encourage blooms through the summer.

Stake tall growing flowers like dahlias, lilies and hollyhocks.

Pull weeds from vegetable gardens and flowerbeds weekly.

Cut back chrysanthemums so they won't be too leggy later in the summer and fall when they bloom.

Prune climbing roses after blooming finishes, cutting away weak, old or woody canes.

Prune hydrangeas (if needed) when most of the flowers have faded.

Continue planting annuals for summer color and to fill in bare spots in your flower garden.

Summer blooming bulbs can still be planted.

Houseplants that have been moved outdoors may require more water during summer months.

Remove small sprouts from the base and from the trunk of tree-form crape myrtles.

Prune azaleas (if needed) after they have finished blooming and make sure they have about 2 inches of mulch.

Fertilize flowerbeds.

Divide overgrown Boston ferns.

Install a birdbath and enjoy the show.



July Garden Chores

If your annuals and perennials need to be rejuvenated, cut one-third of the existing growth, water and fertilize. In about ten days, your annuals will bloom again with a fuller, healthier appearance and in September, your perennials will be more compact and less likely to topple over or split in high winds.

It is not too late to sow seeds of quick growing annuals such as marigolds and zinnias.

If you have not planted your tomatoes, corn, beans and okra, do so by mid July to allow time for them to mature before cool weather.

Water early in the day or late in the evening for best results. Much of the water will evaporate if you water in the middle of the day. For more efficient watering, water at the root zone with soaker hoses.

Cut back by half herbs like basil and oregano to promote leaves and to prevent them from producing seed.

Cut back dahlias to half their height after they bloom for fall flowers.

Look for and remove hornworms (big green caterpillars camouflaged among the stems) on your tomato and pepper plants.

Remove standing water from flowerpot saucers and watering cans where mosquitoes can breed.

Mulch your garden to retain moisture, lower the temperature, reduce the number of weeds and prevent the soil surface from compacting.

Japanese beetles are hard to control. Hand pick if you can but you may need an insecticide. Always follow label directions.

Remove vegetable plants from your garden once they have finished bearing to prevent disease/insect buildup.



Plant pumpkin seeds now for pumpkins in October.

Remove tomato suckers (a shoot growing between the main stem and a branch) and root them for new plants. Select 5 – 6" long suckers and root in water and then plant in your garden.

Pick squash, cucumbers and okra regularly to keep the plants producing.

Divide crowded bearded iris clumps making sure each root has a healthy fan of leaves.

A big rotten spot on the end of a ripe tomato means it has blossom end rot. Purchase a product from your garden center that specifically treats this and apply lime to your garden soil in the fall to decrease susceptibility next growing season.

Extreme heat can cause tomatoes and peppers to stop setting fruit. This is a temporary condition and they will continue to set fruit once temperatures drop.

Fireflies are fun to watch and are beneficial. The larvae eat mites, snails, slugs and other soft-bodied insects.

In addition to summer annuals, coleus and caladium, two plants with beautiful foliage color, can be planted for long-lasting summer color.

Cut back tall overgrown chrysanthemums in early July for compact growth. Then allow the plant to grow for fall blooms.

Cut purple coneflower and black-eyed Susan for a nice bouquet. This will help the plants continue to bloom for a longer period and give you much pleasure.

Hanging baskets continually exposed to sun, wind and high temperatures may need to be watered every day.

Stake tall plants.

Water trees to keep them alive during the dry summer months. Water the ground at the base of the trunk and out as far as the limb canopy reaches.

Remove faded flowers from annuals and perennials to encourage more blooms.



Dig Irish potatoes and harvest garlic when the leaves turn yellow and shrivel up.

Trees and shrubs may need to be lightly trimmed in the summer months to maintain a desired shape but save all major pruning jobs for the late winter.

Avoid wetting the foliage of roses when watering them as this encourages leaf disease.

Remove water-robbing weeds from your garden. One weed that goes to seed this year makes many weeds next year.

To help keep your compost pile from drying out, make the top of your pile concave so rainfall is directed to the center.

For better health of your creeping juniper, prune out old, dead foliage underneath the plants.

Make sure your mower blades are sharp. A ragged cut causes grass to use more water.

Keep shovel blades sharp with a file or grinder. A sharp blade makes digging hard soil easier.

Treat mealy bugs on coleus and African violets with a cotton swab saturated with rubbing alcohol.



August Garden Chores

Summer heat may cause some of the blooms on your vegetable plants to drop. The plants will hold the blooms again once the weather is cooler. To reduce some of the effects of the heat, apply a three-inch layer of mulch around the plants and water regularly.

Cucumbers and squash can still be planted. It is too late for corn, lima beans, okra, pole beans, and tomatoes this season because they will not have enough time to mature before cold weather.

Plant garlic in August for harvest early next summer.

Test your soil now and you will have time to improve it, if necessary, before next spring's planting season. Your County Extension Agent has soil testing instructions.

Plan your fall vegetable garden now: collards, kale, mustard, spinach, beets, onions, turnips, broccoli, and radishes. Plant mid-to-late August.

Cut back annuals, such as begonias, petunias, impatiens, and geraniums when they get "leggy". Water them well and lightly fertilize. This will encourage compact growth and more blooms in about three weeks.

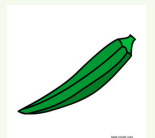
If your clematis vine has turned completely brown, do not dig it up. Prune out dead stems and leave it alone and it may sprout new growth next spring.

Water plants several hours before applying insecticides so the insecticide will not burn them. When applying insecticides, always follow label directions.

To prevent insect and disease problems in your vegetable garden, remove plants when they have finished bearing.

If your older peony plants had diminished flowers this past spring, dig, separate, and replant them.

Harvest squash, okra, and cucumbers regularly so your plants will continue producing. Use a sharp knife with a narrow blade to avoid damaging the plant.



Don't rush to plant corn. Wait until the soil has warmed up, or the seeds may rot.

Place a garden bench in a corner of your garden so you can sit and enjoy the summer evening sounds.

Prune overgrown blueberries after harvest. Shorten tall central stems to encourage more horizontal branches.

Brighten up your hanging baskets by clipping out dead leaves and flowers and fertilizing with a slow-release fertilizer. Water regularly and replace any plants that have died with new plants.

Begin planting fall blooming bulbs.

Rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias prefer acidic soils. Discarded coffee grounds and tea leaves added to the soil around these plants can provide a natural means of maintaining soil acidity.

Remove faded bedding plants from your garden and re-seed with marigolds, cosmos and zinnias to provide color during the fall months.

Fertilize chrysanthemums and fall blooming asters regularly until the buds show color.

Divide and transplant daylilies, Shasta daisies and iris.

Be on the lookout for poison ivy along the ground and climbing up trees. To control it, spray with a non-selective weed killer, always following label directions.

Remove weeds before they make seeds.



Begin propagating outdoor herb plantings for an indoor winter herb garden.

If trees and shrubs need pruning, only lightly prune them early this month so new growth will have time to mature before cold weather arrives.

Remove crape myrtle seedpods as soon as they form to encourage late summer bloom.

Collect hosta and blackberry lily seeds to save for planting next spring.

Fertilize roses with 10-10-10 fertilizer, 1 tablespoon per foot of height.

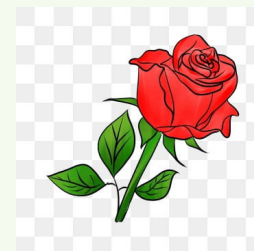
Patio plants and window boxes dry out quickly. Check their watering needs daily.

Root 4" cutting of coleus in water. After roots have formed, plant them in a pot and enjoy them indoors for the winter.

Gather wildflowers for drying.

Cut faded blooms from your roses so your plant's energy will be directed to producing new flowers instead of seeds.

Fertilize annual bedding plants that are in bloom; follow label directions.



What's Blooming Now

(or what has just finished blooming or being beautiful)

Pages 11-14 from the gardens of Tom and Jo Anne Allen



Aquilegia
Columbine



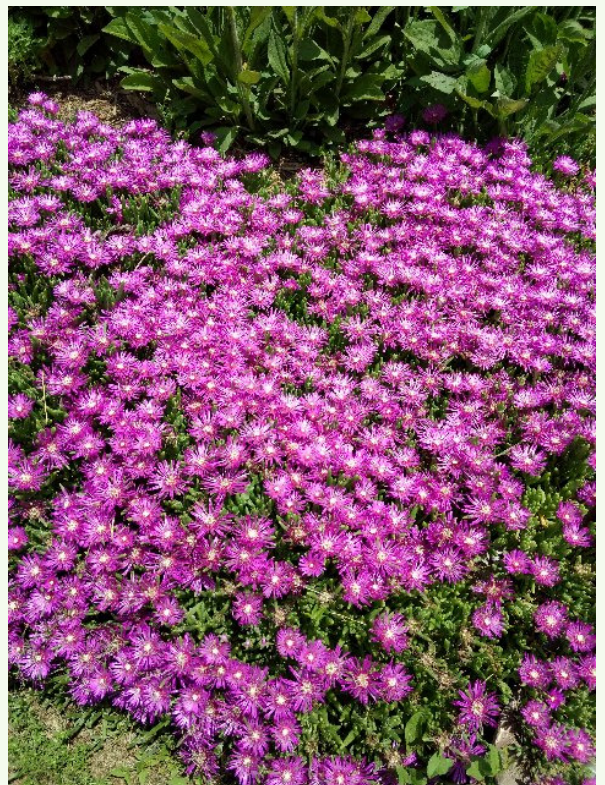
Amsonia
Blue Star Flower

What's Blooming Now
continued



Weigela florida
Weigela

Delosperma
Ice Plant

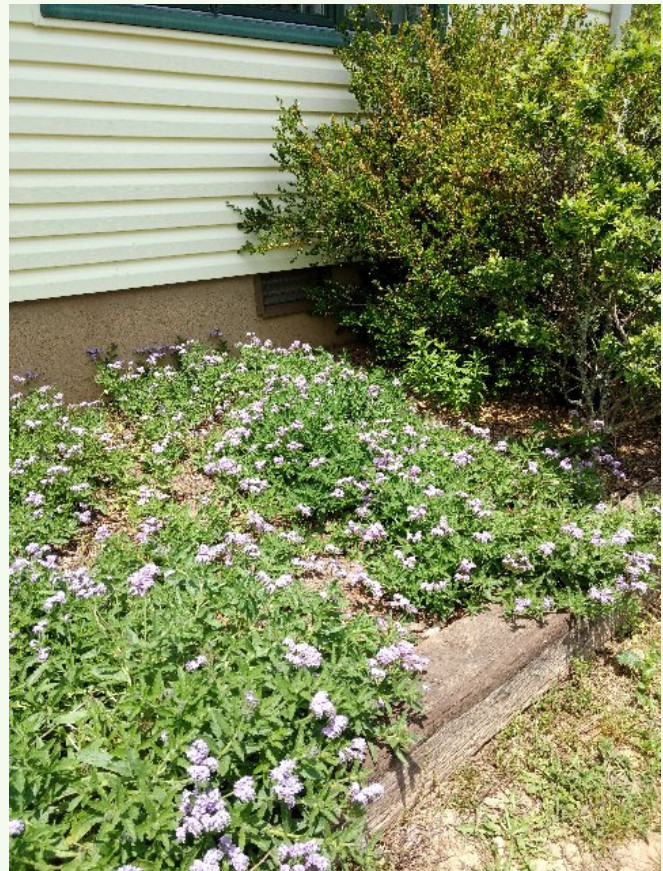


What's Blooming Now
continued



Chrysanthemum parthenium
Feverfew

Heliotropium arborescens
Heliotrope



What's Blooming Now
continued



Center Stage: Aruncus, Goat's
Beard

Background: Rosa 'Veilchenblau'

Front Right: Nigella damascene
Love-In-A-Mist (blue blossoms)

Hippeastrum
Amaryllis



Mini Greenhouse Report

In case you are interested in how I am doing with my little greenhouse, here is my report! It is very convenient to have your seeds germinating close by in a space you are able to check on as you desire.

The heat mats are very helpful when our weather has been so crazy as we have seen this spring/winter/spring or whatever term you have used. Each shelf has a grow light so it is nice to not have to move the trays to another spot for more light. The lights have three settings from bright to dull. I have not played much with this feature, just turning them on bright first thing in the a.m. and off in the evening.

I felt like the seed starting soil I used this time wasn't the same as in years past. Seeds would germinate but the baby plants grew very, very slowly. I believe they needed to have a diluted fertilizer to feed them immediately after they started growing and am trying this on my second batch. Once they break the soil, I have found bottom feeding has worked better than top watering.

When I transplanted the first round of tomatoes, peppers, egg plants and moon flowers to larger pots with Miracle Grow moisture control soil, I had to move them outside under the front porch. They are really taking off now but the cold weather we had at night for several weeks, took out all my moon flowers. I have now started a new batch and they seem to be growing fine.

I believe I need to experiment further to say I am an experienced inside greenhouse owner, maybe another 79 years!



Barb Baumgardner
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Barb's New Gadget

I believe I mentioned in the last newsletter, my daughter and her wife really love new gadgets and they are very kind to send Mom samples of lots of them.

The Tapetool is a cool stapler-like device which allows you to bind your plant stems to small upright supports with one hand.

It works with the plastic ribbon you buy in the garden center and allows you to wrap and staple the tape around the plants support.

This is the Tapetool loaded with the tape and staples but doesn't have the starting step of catching the tape in its bottom jaw:



This is the tape caught in the bottom jaw ready to be pulled out to the size you want to attach your plant with a single click of the black handle:



The black handle is the stapler/tape puller and the final full squeeze wraps the tape around your plant to its support.

I am still mastering this and playing with wrapping chopsticks, small sticks and wooden spoons as practice items.

Barb Baumgardner
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Latest Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Class is Completed

Our Master Gardener class is completed, and we have 11 new Master Gardeners! And most were present to help with the setup and/or Plant Sale!



They are as follows: (with mentor's names)

Alina Green - Brenda Micali

Louise Fortin & Tony Newbern - Elizabeth & Charles Claypool

Mark Hendry - Jared Ogden

Harriet Hoke - Roy Benjamin & Nancy Peters-Benjamin

Lucy Kerman - Carol Townsend

Janice King - Donni Folendorf

Margie Schramke - Tommy Westbrook

Jack Shoffner - Doug Koke

Toni Smith - Reecie Campbell

Leslie Wade - Elaine Bliss

Welcome and congratulations to each of you!

Celebrate Sunflowers!

The National Garden Bureau has declared 2021 at the “Year of the Sunflower.” Sunflowers are symbols of summer in America, of freedom and warmth, and are used to promote happiness, positivity and joy. Sunflowers are no longer a “one and done” plant in the garden. New varieties now offer continuous bloom from spring through fall with no more care than other annuals. They are also great sources of nectar for bees and other beneficial insects.

I planted some sunflower seeds earlier in May, ‘Tiger Eye Hybrid’. ‘Tiger Eye’ is a compact dwarf sunflower. Each plant, according to my Burpee Seed Catalog, will have up to eight 5” bicolor blooms with burning yellow petals and red-ringed disks. It also states that it is a welcome beacon for bees, butterflies and other pollinators. I will take pictures and report back on my results.

Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



Photograph
From Burpee’s
Catalog

Monarchs at Meeks!

We have visitors at Meeks Park tennis courts container garden! Monarch caterpillars munching on butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). These plants overwintered in the containers from last year.

Kim Duval, Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



Note: This article first appeared on page 19 of our Winter 2020 Newsletter

Could This Be the Big One?

Do you remember what happened 17 years ago, the serenade of the cicadas? In spring of 2021, Brood X, a group of periodical cicadas that emerge every 17 years, will once again come out of their long dormancy and sing with nature. Some find their constant shrill, raspy calls unpleasant, but I view the event as a part of nature and I love nature.

Typically, they begin to emerge in mid-May and linger through June. A warm rain will trigger their emergence in large numbers. The love-starved males will rapidly vibrate drum-like membranes or tymbals on the sides of their abdomens to produce their loud mating song to attract mates. They shed their exoskeletons, attach themselves to tree branches, mate and lay eggs all in about six weeks and then die. What a life!



Hatched immatures or nymphs then drop off the trees and tunnel underground, sometimes several feet down, to live for another 17 years, sucking moisture from tree roots. This nymphal feeding on tree roots has little adverse effect on trees and shrubs.

They can be very damaging to fruit trees and young trees because of the very large numbers that emerge at one time. When females lay their eggs, they saw slits in twigs and small branches where they deposit their eggs, causing the twigs and small branches to die.

They do not bite or sting, they are mainly a nuisance, hitting windshields and littering decks, porches and gardens when they shed their exoskeletons.

There are 15 broods of cicadas on life cycles of 13 or 17 years. They appear in the eastern and central parts of the United States; Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, Georgia, Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington D.C.

While researching cicadas, I got to wondering if there were any benefits. They do provide trees a service by pruning out weak branches when the females saw their slits when laying their eggs. They also release nutrients back into the soil when they fall from the tree branches and die. And birds and some people find them very tasty. No, I haven't given them a try but I read that they taste like corn. (I do like corn). Maybe they could be used as an alternative to your popcorn snack or perhaps, cicada pesto in lieu of the expensive pine nuts.

Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Weeds I Love To Hate

Horsenettle

Solanum carolinense

Horsenettle, a poisonous member of the nightshade family, is an erect to spreading, spiny perennial that reproduces by seed and rhizome. The leaves are alternate with wavy edges or coarsely lobed with spines along the midrib. It flowers in mid-summer and flowers are clustered, star-shaped, and white to pale-violet. They look similar to potato flowers, both being members of the nightshade family. Flowers are followed by the fruit, a smooth, round, yellow, tomato-like, three-quarters of an inch berry that contains many seeds.

Horsenettle is found in the eastern half of the United States, west to Kansas, Texas and California. It also can be found in southern Canada and Mexico.

Frequent mowing is an organic method of control. Roots are weakest just after the plant flowers so timing your mowing to just after it blooms is important. Systemic herbicide labeled for use against horsenettle can be applied after mowing when the plant is weak. Always follow label directions.



Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

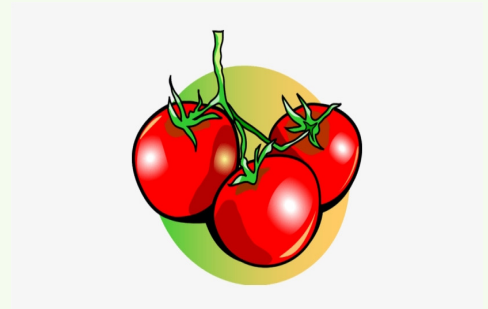
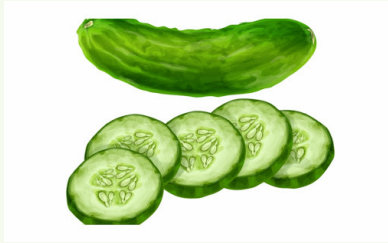


Photographs by Tom Allen

Tomato-Cucumber Salad

Serves 4

1 cucumber, sliced
1/2 onion, thinly sliced
2 C quartered small tomatoes
1/4 C olive oil and vinegar dressing
1/2 t lemon zest
1 T lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste



Stir together cucumber, onion and tomatoes. Add dressing, lemon zest, lemon juice and salt and pepper. Toss to coat. Enjoy!

Source: Southern Living Farmers Market Cookbook

Book Corner

Title: Fantastic Trees

Author: Edwin A. Menninger

From the library of Jo Anne Allen and she gives this book 5 green thumbs out of 5.

I am in the process of reading this book now and it is totally amazing! It is an older book, first published in 1967, but still can be found. The book is divided into six parts with 34 chapters. Part I is Trees Whose Parts Are Peculiar, Part II : Trees That Are Peculiar All Over, Part III: Trees That Cannot Live without Animals, Part IV: Trees of Peculiar Behavior, Part V: Trees Shackled to Fame by Size, Antiquity, or Superstition and Part VI: The Rugged Individualists. There is an index to the trees in the back. To quote the author, "In spite of fire, drought, sorrow, loss, hunger, storm, flood, wind, and sometimes perhaps the burden of too-good fortune, trees—like human beings—do (sometimes) survive, and set for mankind an example of patience, persistence, endurance, and above all adaptation."