



Dane County Master Gardener Newsletter

May, 2009

Dane Co UW Extension 1 Fen Oak Ct Madison WI 53718

May gardens—Watering them the right way!

With the good amount of rain that we had in April, it's hard to think about watering our gardens. In my experience, in gardening there are two basics which cannot be ignored. One, start with a good soil. Two, make sure your garden has adequate water. What could be more simple? I recently found some good information about watering on the Fine Gardening online newsletter, from an article "Learn to Water Well" by Janet Macunovich (at finegardening.com):

Highlights of the article:

"Water makes up 90 to 98 percent of every plant we grow. It holds leaves and stems aloft, just as air in an inner tube keeps a tire round. All the nutrients plants need to grow, color, flower, multiply, and defend their tissues against pests are produced by the solar-powered chemical reactions that take place in the watery soup within the cells."

There are a couple of tests you can do to determine when you need to water. One is called a capacity test and the other is a drainage test.

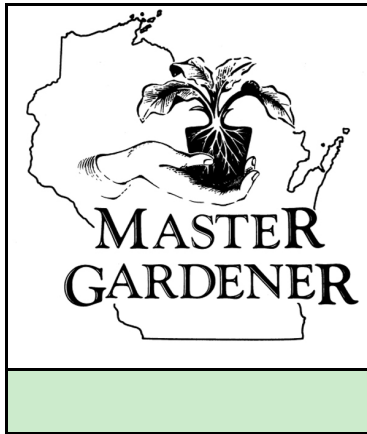
A capacity test is done when a rainless period is in the forecast. "First, soak a 12-inch diameter spot with a hose for about two minutes. After the water has had a chance to settle, thrust the head of a trowel into the spot so it reaches 3 to 4 inches below ground level. Pull the trowel towards you to make an opening, then reach in with your hand to feel the soil at the bottom of the opening. When watered well, soil should feel cool and damp at the bottom of the hole. Dig a new hole in the same spot every day and note the number of days that elapse until the soil at the bottom of the hole feels warm and dry. That's the number of days you can go without watering during a rainless period."

Soil type often determines water needs. Some soils drain quickly and some drain slowly. For example, a sandy soil's pore spaces are often too large to keep water not immediately claimed by roots from simply slipping away to the area below the root zone, so plants in sandy soils may need to be watered more often.

On the other hand, tightly packed clay soils hold water so well

that any excess displaces what little air there is in the root zone, and adding more water at that time will only raise the level of root-rotting puddles

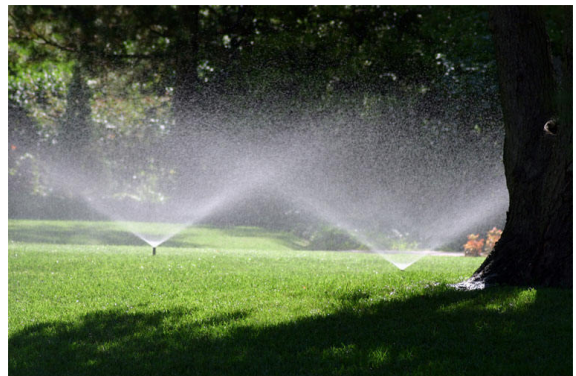
A drainage test can determine whether your soil has a drainage problem. Dig a 12 inch wide by 18 inch deep hole in your garden and fill it to the top with water. Let the hole drain and fill it again. If the water drains away within a few hours, your soil is excessively well drained, apt to dry out quickly unless watered frequently and lightly. If the water drains out in 12 to 24 hours, your soil is well drained, and you can grow almost anything without a problem. If the hole still has water in it after 24 hours, your soil is poorly drained. Install drain tiles, grow wetland plants, or measure how much water is left in the hole and build a raised bed of that height to achieve the 18 inch depth of well drained soil that most cultivated plants need.



How to measure amount of water applied by watering system:

"The best way to measure the amount of water supplied by an overhead sprinkling system is to place a rain gauge or a wide, cylindrical, straight-sided container—empty tuna or cat food cans work wonderfully—on the outside edge of the area being covered. Let the sprinkler run until 1 inch of water has accumulated.

When using soaker hoses or other direct to soil systems, irrigate until a 3 inch deep test hole dug 1 foot out from the far end of the line is moist. Moisture at that level indicates that an inch of water has been applied."





Fourth Annual Family Horticulture Day May 9, 2009 at the University of Wisconsin West Madison Agricultural Research Station

Gather your family, friends, or grab a neighbor and join us on May 9 at the West Madison Agricultural Research Station. Learn all about square foot or raised bed, and container gardening. See the rainbow of vegetables displayed and find out what a purple carrot taste like – you may really like the taste.

A variety of indoor and outdoor exhibits, staffed by Master Gardener volunteers, and the staff of the UW-West Madison Agricultural Research Station, and Science Alliance will give visitors hands-on experience with horticultural science. Purple carrots, along with their red, pink, yellow, blue and white brethren, will be part of the Rainbow of Carrots. Potatoes in purple, red and yellow will feature the “Eyes of Potatoes”. The red popcorn program is back and (along with white, yellow, purple and black) is part of the Popcorn Challenge. Take the challenge to figure out which makes the best popcorn. And enjoy tasting and comparing three types of ice cream (all flavored with plant extracts, of course!).

Still interested in more amazing science projects? Check out the Cabbage Chemistry Challenge and join in the amazing color change. Squeeze a few strawberries and extract the DNA from the berries and from wheat. Want to learn more? Learn how to plant, maintain and harvest a square foot garden – take home tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, basil, parsley plants, and squash seed to “grow” your own garden. Learn how to make a container garden and to grow vegetables in the containers. Containers, potting media, and stabilizers will be available for a small donation – plants for all gardens will be provided free of charge. Small donations are appreciated, however, to support the program.

The UW – Soils Lab will offer information on how to manage the soil in your garden to grow the best plants ever!

Family Horticulture Day is the finale of Science Expeditions 2009, a month-long series of public science events at the UW-Madison. **The event will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 9.** The West Madison Agricultural Research Station is located at 8502 Mineral Point Road, about a mile west of the beltline. More information and directions to the gardens at <http://www.cals.wisc.edu/westmad/garden/>.



SIGNS OF SPRING

The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing. It was small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung down his brush on the floor, said 'Bother!' and 'O blow!' and also 'Hang spring-cleaning!' and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat. Something up above was calling him imperiously, and he made for the steep little tunnel which answered in his case to the gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air. So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged and then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, 'Up we go! Up we go!' till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found

himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

'This is fine!' he said to himself. 'This is better than whitewashing!' The sunshine struck hot on his fur, soft breezes caressed his heated brow, and after the seclusion of the cellarage he had lived in so long the carol of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing almost like a shout. Jumping off all his four legs at once, in the joy of living and the delight of spring without its cleaning, he pursued his way across the meadow till he reached the hedge on the further side. **From The Wind in the Willows, by Kenneth Graham**



Garden Musings

By Ann Munson

I think the month of May should be expanded. Let's take 2 weeks out of February and make May 2 weeks longer. I also wish I could manufacture money this time of year.

Foolishness aside, the month will remain 31 days and credit cards are almost like manufacturing money. If I didn't spend so much time walking around looking for new tips of plants coming up I probably could get a lot more done. Carrying a cup of coffee is a good excuse for not working, just looking.

April 15 will be remembered this year for the first double bloodroot bloom along with the first Magnolia stellata bloom. Speaking of double bloodroot, I will be donating some of it to the Extension Plant sale. I have been fortunate to have received a very vigorous root which I must divide every year. It is very hard to locate this plant commercially. There have been many Master Gardeners who have donated plants, time and labor to the plant sale and we thank you all. **The Master Gardener plant sale will be held Sunday, May 17, from 1:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Dane Co. Extension Office.**

Looking over the plant list for Olbrich's plant sale, there will be many exciting new plants there too. The plant palette is continuing to explode with new cultivars, driving us ever madder with plant lust. I will be removing the seats in my van soon so I can get more plants in on the May plant safaris. I even plan on driving to Michigan mid-May with the rock garden society to visit plant nurseries and gardens around Ann Arbor.

The Spee Dee delivery man brought me a package of potatoes from Seed Savers Exchange. The chickens are coming home to roost from the winter flurry of interest in veggies! At least I only ordered a pound. Watching the weather, once the soil warmed to 50 degrees I planted just before an evening/night time rain. A good reason we should watch the weather closely this time of year is to time plantings to rain forecast.

Are you all as disappointed as I am by the hardiness and vitality of the new echinacea. I've done my part in trying to get these plants into my gardens but not a one has made it so far. I am trying Mac'n cheese this year and will do everything possible to site it correctly and BABY it so it survives.

Review of Madison Area Master Gardener program with Zannah Crowe

On Tuesday, April 28, the Madison Area Master Gardeners program was Zannah Crowe of Monches Farm, Colgate WI. She was very informative, and gave us recommendations of her favorite perennials. Her favorite hosta is June and her favorite all round perennial flower is *Nepeta* hybrid 'Souvenir D'Andre, which blooms for many weeks during the summer. Other unusual perennials she likes are *Lathyrus vernas* which blooms in the spring and Bowman's Root *Gillenia trifoliata*

She also gave us this recommendation for controlling slugs. This is the copy from the Monches webpage:

Slug Wars! Slugs can devastate a beautiful Hosta collection and reduce a moist shade garden to tatters. FIGHT BACK! Mix a simple solution of 20% household ammonia (1 part ammonia to 4 parts water). Using a watering can apply this solution generously as a soil soak around the crown of your Hosta plants just as the pips are breaking the soil in the spring. This solution will kill overwintering slugs and slug eggs in the soil. We have found that it significantly reduces slug populations.

Note: Once the Hostas have leafed out a milder 10% solution can be applied during the growing season.



Brown Bag Teleconferences

Held 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. at the **Dane Co. Extension Office**.
Please call Ann at 224-3721 to register.

May 29...Managing Vegetable Vine Crops for Better Production

Soil management, mulches, irrigation, pruning and trellising are requirements of any successful vegetable operation. It is also critical to the production of quality vegetables. Tomatoes as well as most vegetables are 85 to 95 percent water, so any loss in water weight is equal to a loss in production. Trellising tomatoes improves fruit quality by keeping plants and fruits off the ground and by providing better pesticide coverage. Join Dr. Robert Tomesh in a discussion of managing tomato vines during the growing season.

June 26...Late Plantings of Cool- and Warm-Season Vegetables

Though often overlooked by the gardener, planting vegetables in July and August for fall production is an excellent practice. Late plantings of cool- and warm-season vegetables can extend the harvest long after spring-planted crops have ceased production. Most cool-season vegetables grow as well as or better than those planted in the spring as they mature during shorter, cooler days. Flavors of vegetables maturing in the cool, crisp days of autumn are often sweeter and milder than those grown during hot summer weather. Join us for a discussion for planning a fall crop of vegetables.

Fall Specialized Master Gardener Training Backyard Food Production

Dane Co. Extension will be offering a new specialized master gardener training this fall starting September 22 and going for 4 consecutive Tuesdays, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The classes offered will be:

Organic vegetable growing Insect pests of vegetables Backyard fruit trees and berries
Insect pests of fruit Composting and compost teas Diseases of fruit Diseases of vegetables
Introduction to beekeeping Introduction to backyard chickens

More details will be in the June newsletter.

Regent Neighborhood Garden Tour is Sunday, July 19, --Chickens, Veggies, Workshops featured--

This year's Regent Neighborhood garden tour features fruit and vegetable growing and includes 3 properties where chickens are raised. Shade gardening is another common theme and we'll check on the progress of the terrace rain gardens that were installed during last summer's street reconstruction.

At least 2 workshops are planned--one on trellis building with willow and the other on making attractive, serviceable planters from styrofoam containers.

The Tour is from 10am to 4pm on July 19. Tickets, including a tour map and the schedule of clinics, will be available the day of the Tour at the corner of S. Allen Street and Commonwealth Ave, and at the Froth House, N. Allen St near the corner of Regent St. Cost is \$5 for adults; children are free.



MG VOLUNTEER AND CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS FOR THE YEAR 2009

MGV-in-Training must turn in required volunteer hours within one year of completing training.
Recertifying MGVs must turn in volunteer and C.E. hours by **October 1, 2009** to their local county record keeper.

MGV Name: _____ Phone (____)_____

Address: _____

email: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____ -

Dane County UW Extension
 Attn: Ann Munson
 1 Fen Oak Ct
 Madison WI 53718

Date	Project Name, Work Accomplished or Continuing Education Topic	Volunteer Hours			Continuing Education Hours <i>(I learned something)</i>
		Youth Ed <i>(I worked with kids)</i>	Comm. Ed <i>(I taught something)</i>	Support Services <i>(I helped with...)</i>	
	Dane Co Extension Teaching Garden				
	Dane Co Extension Office Help – i.e. watering plants, clerical				
	Dane Co Extension Horticulture Help Line				
	Madison Area Master Gardener Association				
	Wisconsin Garden Journal				
	West Madison Ag Research Station Garden				
	U.W. Arboretum				
	Allen Centennial Garden – UW campus				
	Olbrich Botanic Garden				
	Madison City Parks				
	Other Parks				
	Community Gardens				
	Public Schools				
TOTAL HOURS <input type="checkbox"/> confidentiality requested					



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UW Cooperative Extension

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Master Gardener
Newsletter

Master Gardener Volunteers Reporting Hours for 2008-2009

Hours to 36 Thank you for reporting your hours!!

Shirley Koehler

Thank you to the following volunteers at the Extension Office: Jessica Clark, Donna Dresen, Dorothea Murphy, Janice Gary, Hayley Hart, Pat Breinieur, Peggy Mravik, Shannon Renne, Betty Lou Knight, Megan Montgomery, Dean Smith, Ellen Hess, Angie Burnett, Hollis Spaier, Amanda Mravec, Cathy Brodbeck, Shirley Koehler, Bennett Rock, Kris Voegeli, Marc Nielsen, Sara Herpolsheimer, Dee Wade, Rebecca Flood, Bill Dovi, Nancy Gustaf, Libby Howting, Edie Ferguson, Annette Nekola, Bonnie Allbaugh, Cathy Acosta and Sandy Ellarson. If any names were forgotten, sorry and will try to get you into the next newsletter!

How You can help the Dane Co. Master Gardener Program

Many Dane Co. and University programs are in danger from budget cuts and the Dane Co. UW Extension Master Gardener program is one of them. Because we are partners with both entities, we can get cuts from either one.

We need to let decision-makers in government and the University administration know how valuable our program is. If you could email Lisa Johnson, johnson.lisa@co.dane.wi.us a brief description of what volunteer programs you are involved with, she can describe to Dane County Board members and others what an asset Master Gardeners are to the community. This is why it is so important that you report your hours.

Upcoming Work days at the Extension Office

June 13, 9:00 to 2:00

June 27, 9:00 to 2:00

Garden Tours sponsored by MAMGA and Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society

Directions given in MAMGA May newsletter. Go to http://www.madison.com/communities/mamga/library/files/2009_Newsletter_May.pdf to access the newsletter.

Garden Tour—Fitchburg/Oregon

Wednesday, May 20, 2009

5:00 PM—dark

Garden Tour – McFarland

Wednesday, June 3, 2009

5:00 PM – dark