
GREEN PAGES

A newsletter for people interested in horticulture and natural resources in Western Wisconsin
March 2009 No.10

Winter Garden Seminar a Success

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Imagine...getting your hands in the moist soil... listening to songbirds... smelling the flowers...and eating fresh vegetables. This is the type of imagery Gayle Kleppe, co-president of the Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Volunteer Association, used in her introductory speech at the Winter Garden Seminar: Ready, Set, Grow which had over 170 people in attendance.

Dr. Jeff Gillman a professor from the University of Minnesota was the keynote speaker and gave a lively presentation on myths and tips of organic gardening. Dr. Gillman has researched many gardening remedies from slug control to beer as fertilizer. These findings and other fun stories can be found in his books *The Truth About Organic Gardening: Benefits, Drawbacks, and the Bottom Line* and *The Truth About*

Garden Remedies: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why.

Before the keynote speaker, Chippewa Valley Growers received an award from the Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Volunteer Association for their substantial support in the form of plant donations to the association.

There were vendors selling items such as iron works, books, jewelry, plants, and prairie seeds. If you missed it this year, I highly recommend attending next years event.

March Dates to Remember

March 8th Daylight Savings Time,
March 17th St. Patrick's Day,
March 20th Vernal Equinox



About this newsletter

This monthly newsletter's purpose is to disseminate research based information on topics of horticultural and natural resources in Western WI. In addition, it's purpose is to connect the public with local events of similar topics.

Information, Please!

This summer if you are looking for information on gardening, remember you have **FREE** access to UW-Extension publications at *The Learning Store* <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/> Most publications are available to download as a PDF, some are in Spanish, most are available to purchase as hard copies via the on-line payment system, and some are available to purchase at the Eau Claire County Extension office.

In addition, *The University of Wisconsin Urban Horticulture* website <http://wihort.uwex> has gardening fact-sheets, calendars, and PowerPoint presentations.

If you can't find your information there, a call to the Eau Claire County Extension office (715) 839-4712 will connect you to the Horticulture Educator or a Master Gardener Volunteer who will assist you in finding the answer.

Invasive Species: Wild Parsnip

What is wild parsnip?

Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) is an aggressive Eurasian member of the carrot family that grows in sunny areas and tolerates dry to wet soil types. It is often found along highways, in prairies or bordering farmed fields. The plant spreads primarily by seed.

Sap from the plant can cause phytophotodermatitis, a light sensitive reaction on your skin. If the juice from broken stalks, leaves or flowers contacts your skin and then is exposed to sunlight, a skin rash will result 24-48 hours later. Symptoms range from slightly reddened skin to large blisters. The blisters may produce a sensation similar to a mild to severe sunburn. The blisters do not spread or itch, as poison ivy rashes do, but they are uncomfortable and leave brown scars that last for a number of months to two years. See your doctor if you develop burn symptoms.

What does wild parsnip look like?

At maturity, wild parsnip is about four to five feet tall. It bears many large flat clusters of yellow-green flowers on a thick stem. Flowers appear from the first of June through July in southern Wisconsin. Seeds form around the end of July. The plant will often have both flowers and seed capsules at the same time. Seeds are flat, oval and about the size of a sunflower seed. After flowering and producing seed, the plant turns brown and dies. The plants have a rosette of basal leaves, as well as leaves arranged alternately on the stem. The leaves are branched into leaflets and have heavily toothed margins. The plant can be confused with prairie parsley (*Polytaenia nuttallii*), an endangered native species in Wisconsin. Prairie parsley has sparse, light yellow flowers, and long leaves branched into leaflets with few teeth.

How can I control wild parsnip?

Prevention is the best way to control wild parsnip. When wild parsnip is first detected in an area, it can be cut below ground level with a sharp shovel. Be sure to wear long sleeves, long pants and gloves when working with plants. Also, try to work after sunset so that exposure to sunlight does not occur. Plants can also be pulled by hand, if you wear protective gloves.

If the wild parsnip population is fairly large, you may use a brush-cutter just after peak bloom and before the plant sets seed. Remove all the cut material. A few weeks later, repeat the treatment to prevent plants from re-sprouting. Treatments may need to be repeated over several years.

Herbicides containing the active ingredient glyphosate are also effective against wild parsnip. In high quality natural areas such as prairies, the Department of Natural Resources recommends burning the site and then applying spot treatments of a 1-3% glyphosate solution to wild parsnip rosettes if they re-sprout after burning.

*Lisa Johnson,
Commercial Horticulture Agent,
UW-Extension Milwaukee/Waukesha Counties*



Phenology



The word phenology is derived from the Greek word *phaino* meaning “to show” or “to appear”. Phenology is a branch of science that studies the relationships between periodic biological events—usually the life cycles of plants and animals—and environmental changes. Natural events such as bird migration, the opening of local lakes, plant budding, flowering or fruiting, insect activities, and harvest dates of cultivated plants are all annual events that can be correlated with seasonal or climatic changes, particularly with weather or temperature, rather than specific calendar dates. You may be familiar with folklore that associates gardening events with unrelated processes. One example is planting corn when oak leaves are the size of a squirrel’s ear. You know that planting corn has nothing to do with oak leaves or squirrels. However, Native Americans made the observation centuries ago that the soil was

warm enough to prevent seeds from rotting, yet it was still early enough to reap a suitable harvest if corn was planted at this time. This is an early example of phenology. But phenology can trace its origin much further back in history. The first paper on phenology was written in 974 B.C. – long before meteorology, botany, and ornithology, the key components of phenology, were born. The Japanese began recording the first bloom of the cherry trees in 812 A.D., and Carl Linnaeus was one of the first scientists to record observations of natural phenomena. Locally, Aldo Leopold was one of the early phenologists in Wisconsin. He kept extensive records of natural seasonal events near his home in Sauk County from 1935-1945. When observing phenological events on a large scale, the same event—such as lilacs blooming—progresses from west to east and south to north. This phenomenon is referred to as “Hopkin’s Rule” which states that phenological events are delayed by four days per

(Continued on page 6)

Master Composter Training



The locations for the Master Composter Program initial training workshops have been set for the spring of 2009. Workshops will be held in four locations this year. The Master Composter program is a train the trainer program that aims to build the capacity of composters to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for composting with others. In order to become a certified Master Composter trainees must attend the one day workshop, participate in a Wisline program and complete three outreach activities.

The composters who participate in the program will gain a more thorough understanding of the composting process as well as common uses for compost. The program also provides an introduction to vermicomposting and

techniques to reduce the amount of waste generated. Most importantly Master Composter trainees will learn strategies that will enable them to share their knowledge and interest in composting with others.

One day workshops are scheduled to be held in the following communities:

- Menominee County, February 28
- Iowa County, March 21
- Milwaukee County, April 18
- Barron County, April 25

For additional information about the scheduled workshops or the Master Composter Program please contact:

Joe Van Rossum,
SHWEC Recycling Specialist
vanrossum@epd.engr.wisc.edu
608-262-0936

Horticulture Quiz

Test your knowledge of plant term or simply look at the answers and learn some terms! Match the answers to the question. Answers are on the bottom of the page. Information obtained from the Wisconsin Master Gardener Volunteer Program Training Manual.



Questions

1. Insects are the most successful type of animal on _____.
2. They have been around for at least _____ million years.
3. There are over _____ species in the U.S. and Canada.
4. Only about _____% of the species of insects cause serious injury to crops, animals, stored products or structures, or spread disease.
5. Beneficial activities of insects have been estimated to be worth \$_____ in the U.S.
6. Spiders, ticks, mites, millipedes and crayfish belong to this group.
7. The _____ is the hard outer shell on insects and is their skeleton.
8. An insect that hatches from an egg is a _____.
9. The _____ is a non-mobile stage, during which the larval structures are disintegrated and reconstructed into a very different looking adult.

Answers

pupa
exoskeleton
earth
350
arthropods
1%
20
nymph
87,000



How to Control Slugs

If you are a hosta grower you may be aware of holes in your leaves caused by slugs. How does one control slug damage?

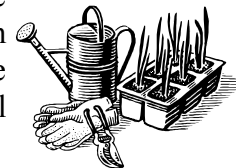
Slugs are a result of moist conditions. Increase air circulation amongst your plants by keeping enough space between them when planting and dividing out as they grow larger. If that doesn't solve the problem, try diatomaceous earth which is the fossilized remains of diatoms. The diatoms are a form of algae that naturally make glass. The bodies of the slugs get cut by these tiny glass pieces and causes the slug to die.

Beer traps work well if you construct properly. It's best to use a Mason jar and bury it in the ground so that it's level with the ground. Fill the jar with beer until an inch from the top. If the jar is filled to the brim the slugs will just have a good drink. The trick is to get the slugs to move down toward the beer so they can't get out of the container and drown in the beer. There is a chemical for slug control but it's HIGHLY toxic to animals and not generally suggested because of this.

Answers. 1. earth, 2. 350, 3. 87,000, 4. 1%, 5. 20, 6. arthropods, 7. exoskeleton, 8. nymph, 9. pupa

March Gardening Tips

- The sap in maples and birch trees is running strong now. Nevertheless, now is a good time to prune these trees. Don't worry about the bleeding of the sap. Some scientists believe this sap can actually help seal the wounds.
- This is the best month for pruning leafy trees and shrubs. The stress of pruning to dormant plants is minimal and the wounds will heal nicely when spring arrives.
- If you plan on pruning your oak trees, do this before April; otherwise, you risk introducing oak wilt disease into your woodland.
- Do you have any geraniums that you kept over-winter? Now is a good time to re-pot them. Cut them back (6 inches or so) to keep them bushier.
- Rake your lawn as soon as the final snow melts. This raking removes debris that contributes to leaf diseases.
- Ornamental grasses can be clipped back to the ground in late March/early April before new growth begins. This will promote faster regrowth.



AAS Winners for 2009



All-America Selections (AAS) has announced their winners for 2009, with one bedding plant and three vegetables.

Look for the red, white, and blue logo of **All-America Selections** on seed packets in retail stores, plant tags

in bedding plants in garden centers or nurseries, or in mail-order catalogs this spring. Success is almost guaranteed with these varieties of reliable new flower and vegetable varieties

The non-profit All-America Selections (AAS) organization was founded in 1932 to foster the development, production, and distribution of new and better horticultural and agricultural varieties, species, strains and kinds in and for North America. AAS winners are superior new annual flower and vegetable plants recognized for significant achievements – a promise of gardening success. Only the very best varieties receive this prestigious award. All AAS winners have been tested for home garden performance in more than 30 independent test sites, each under the responsibility of an AAS judge, all over the United States and Canada. Gardeners can rely on AAS Winners to perform in their garden because of these unbiased, independent tests. Most of the time only one to three flower varieties and the same number of vegetables get this award each year, and sometimes none qualifies.

AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner: **Viola 'Rain Blue and Purple'**

This variety creates a spreading pool of cool blue colors. The plants are cold and heat tolerant resulting in flowers throughout the seasons. Viola 'Rain Blue and Purple' will bloom in the south during fall and winter; in the north in the spring and summer. There is always a season of bloom for 'Rain Blue and Purple.' Another appealing trait is that the one and a half inch blooms change color from purple and white to purple and blue as they mature. Few flowers change colors naturally and 'Rain Blue and Purple' is one of them. The plants spread 10 to 14 inches in the garden or container. The trailing habit is perfectly designed for hanging baskets or patio urns. 'Rain Blue and Purple' was bred by Tokita Seed Co. Ltd., Saitama, Japan. Seed and plants of this AAS® Winner will be available from your favorite retailer.

Unique qualities: Creeping habit, flower color changes naturally from purple/white to purple/blue

Flower size: 1 1/2 inches

Color(s): Purple/white to purple/blue

Plant height: 6 inches

Garden spacing: 10 to 12 inches

Length of time from sowing seed to flower: 70 days

Closest comparison(s) on market: 'Alpine F1 Violet & White,' 'Viola F1 'Rebel Blue'

Another AAS winner will be featured in the next Green Pages.

Phenology *(Continued from page #)*

degree of north latitude and 1¼ days per degree of east longitude. Basically, the farther north or east you go, the later you'll see similar events. Hopkin's rule however, doesn't take into account altitude or topography – the latter being important in a state that is bordered on the east by Lake Michigan, which exerts a tremendous impact on the local climate.

By observing the relationship between discrete phenological events and the season, local weather conditions, or climate changes over a period of years, seemingly unrelated events can be correlated. You can do this yourself by keeping accurate records of dates when different plants bloom, when their leaves open, and when you first notice various insect pests. Make sure the plants you're observing aren't affected by the radiant heat of buildings or paved areas. After several years of consistently collecting information you will be able to notice a pattern and can begin to correlate unrelated events such as when a particular insect begins to cause damage. It will also become obvious that these annual events do not occur on the same date every year, but change depending on the weather. Phenological records need to be gathered over many years in order to develop reliable correlations. This information can be used to help determine crop planting dates, or predict when insect emergence will take place and pest control should be initiated. Many such correlations are based on the blooming time of common flowering plants.

Examples of phenological correlations include:



- Plant peas when forsythia blooms.
- Plant potatoes when the first dandelion blooms.
- Plant beets, carrots, cole crops, lettuce and spinach when lilac is in first leaf.
- Plant corn when oak leaves are the size of a squirrel's ear.
- Plant bean, cucumber, and squash seeds when lilac is in full bloom.

- Plant tomatoes when lily-of-the-valley plants are in full bloom.
- Transplant eggplant, melons, and peppers when irises bloom.

Phenology can be very useful as part of an integrated pest management (IPM) program because it helps to properly time controls to target the most susceptible life stage of the pest. Insects are particularly well suited to predictions based on phenology because, as cold-blooded animals, their growth and development is directly correlated with weather conditions, particularly temperature. Indicator plants, common plants that are typically not associated with the pest insect whose life stage they predict, can be used to determine when pest outbreaks are likely to occur:

- The saucer magnolia is a common indicator plant for early spring events. Pink bud, early bloom, full bloom, past bloom, and petal drop are some of the discrete events of the saucer magnolia that can be associated with an array of landscape insect pests.
- The common lilac has become a cornerstone for phenological observations, particularly for comparing one year to the next. First leaf, first flower, and full bloom are three life events frequently observed with the common lilac. There is also a common lilac observation program in the eastern United States and Canada that is used by climatologists to study global warming.
- Chicory is a summer-blooming indicator plant. When the first flowers of chicory open, the time is right to prevent damage from the squash vine borer.
- And when Canada thistle is in bloom, apple maggot adults are abundant and susceptible fruit should be protected.



*Karen Delahaut,
UW-Madison Fresh Market Vegetable Program*

Events

Adopt -A-Bucket

Sunday, March 15, 1 – 3 p.m.

Wise Nature Center

Join us for the first taping of the season! We will kick off the maple syrup season with the Reserve's second annual Adopt-A-Bucket program. Families, scout troops, and youth groups are welcome to decorate a bucket with their favorite design to be hung in the Reserve's sugar bush. Decorators will have their picture taken with their bucket before heading to the sugar bush to meet the sapmeister. In the sugar bush you will assist in tapping a maple tree and hang your bucket to catch sap. Upon returning to the Nature Center you will receive sweet rewards of Mother Nature, a maple syrup sundae. This in addition to a coupon for 8 ounces of pure maple syrup to take home once the syrup has been produced. Don't miss out this fun and educational opportunity.

Full payment required at registration until March 11
Friends \$15, Nonmembers \$20



Bluebird Program

Saturday, Mar. 7,
9:30-11 a.m.

Wise Nature Center

Join a staff naturalist to learn how to attract bluebirds to your yard. The slide program and discussion will provide information on the natural history, behavior and habitat requirements of bluebirds, as well as tips on building, placing and monitoring of bluebird houses. (Additional \$5 charge per bluebird house kit.) Please request the number of houses needed when you register for the class. Remember to bring a hammer if you would like to construct your house that morning. This is great family activity.

Full payment required at registration until Mar. 3
Friends: \$5 Adult/ \$3 Child, Nonmembers \$8 Adult/ \$4 Child



Maple Syrup Sunday

Sunday, March 29, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Wise Nature Center

Bring the family to explore the tradition of maple sugaring with a guided tour of the sugar bush. Learn about what trees to tap and how it is done, from tapping the trees to boiling the sap into syrup. Finish with a taste of fresh maple syrup over ice cream. Yummy!!!

Full payment required at registration until March 26.
Friends \$5 Adult/ \$3 Child, Nonmembers \$8Adult/
\$4 Child.



Owl Prowl

Monday, March 16, 7 p.m.

Wise Nature Center

Join a staff naturalist for a hootin' good time. The evening will begin with a short hike as we listen and hoot for owls in the neighborhood. Then we will move inside to discover some of the unique traits of the owl family. This program is appropriate for adults and upper elementary school age children. Guest appearances by BCR's non-releasable owls are expected. Dress appropriately for the weather so that everyone can have a hootin' good time.

Full payment required at registration until March 14.
Friends: \$5 Adult/ \$3 Chil, Nonmembers \$8 Adult/ \$4 Child



Terry Gips to Speak

Terry Gips will speak at UWEC, March 30th. Terry Gips is a widely published ecologist, agricultural economist, sustainability business consultant, independent Natural Step Framework instructor, speaker, and author with more than 30 years experience in global environmental leadership, government policy, sustainable development, business management and consulting.

Gips wrote the widely-acclaimed *Breaking the Pesticide Habit*, co-authored *The Humane Consumer and Producer Guide*, served as technical editor of *Reviving the Land*, and edited *Manna*.

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Unless otherwise noted, articles for this newsletter are submitted and/or written by Eau Claire County UW-Cooperative Extension Horticulture Educator Erin LaFaive. Unless otherwise noted, graphics are from clipart. Newsletter layout by Nikki Jackson.

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M-F 8AM-5PM

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