

From Garden to Table

A newsletter for Trempealeau County Community Gardening Project participants



Issue 3, August 8, 2007

Cucumber Beetles

Pat Malone, adapted from an article by Karen Delahaut, UW-Madison IPM Program

There are two species of cucumber beetles that are common in Wisconsin—striped and spotted. The striped cucumber beetles are more serious in Wisconsin. Cucumber beetles are a problem on vine crops because they transmit the bacterial wilt organism. Vine crops attacked by cucumber beetles include cucumbers, muskmelons, watermelons, squash and pumpkins. However, only cucumbers and melons are susceptible to bacterial wilt.

Appearance The striped cucumber beetle (*Diabrotica vittatum*) is 1/5 inch long and yellow-green in color with three black stripes running the length of its body. Its abdomen is black.

Symptoms and Effects Cucumber beetle larvae feed on roots and stems and can stunt or kill seedlings or transplants. The adults feed on stems, foliage and fruit. More importantly, these beetles transmit the bacterium that causes bacterial wilt. Once the bacterium is in the plant, it travels through the vascular system and causes blockages of the vessels. The first symptom of bacterial wilt is a distinct wilting of individual lateral leaves. Eventually, the entire plant wilts and dies. Cutting through the stem and holding the cut ends together for 10 seconds can help you diagnose the disease. Slowly pull the ends apart and look for white, viscous sap which is the bacteria reproducing in the xylem.

Control/Non-Chemical Non-Chemical control can be achieved in small plantings by covering the plants with floating row covers to keep the beetles out. Make sure you uncover flowering plants to allow the bees to enter and pollinate the plants. If bacterial wilt infections have already occurred, remove the diseased plants immediately to prevent the spread of the disease while insects are present.

For pesticide recommendations: See UW-Extension Bulletin A3422 or contact our office at 877-538-2311 ext. 206

Special Points of Interest:

- Cucumber Beetles
- Gardening with Children
- Master Gardener Information
- Freezing Garden Vegetables



Gardening with Children by Jon Zander, Ag Agent

The whole world is a wondrous place to a child. The garden is an exciting and intriguing part of that world. If you garden and there are children in your life, find a way to welcome them into the garden. You can give them a plot of their very own or just include some “kid-friendly” features or “fun” plants in the family garden

Melons or bright flowers are the plants children enjoy taking care of. Assign them the task of watering instead of weeding. Try to give them different tasks each time they go to the garden with you. By changing the chores each time you go, they will have more interest. Also, you may want to let them choose what they would like to do to help out.

Having kids in the garden is fun but it has its challenges too. It means that you have to accept a little chaos and probably a few damaged plants. Tomatoes may be picked too soon, and potatoes harvested too small. Seeds may be planted in handfuls and plants pulled as weeds when they are not.

Don't expect them to do much work in the garden either, at least not at first. They do love to water but detailed, tedious, repetitive chores like weeding and sowing large areas with small seeds can be boring and a real turn-off. Instead let them learn to love the garden as a place to explore and have fun before you make them responsible for its upkeep.

Most of all, relax and enjoy sharing your enthusiasm and love of nature with them. Your child will soon see the garden as a fantastic world where they can explore, observe, smell, taste, learn and grow.

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Master Gardener Program Schedule...

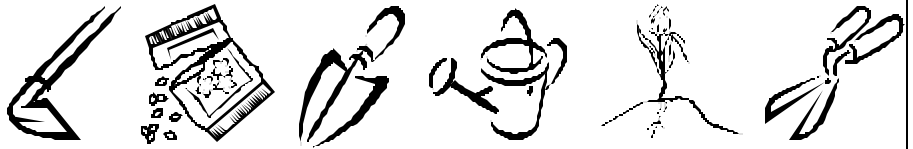
The 2007 Ornamental Trees and Shrubs, Landscaping and Lawns
Specialized Master Gardener Program schedule has been set.

Weekly, Tuesday evenings, September 25-December 11

5:45-6:00 p.m., classroom orientation

6:00-8:50 p.m., fiber-optics and/or CD/Wisline presentations.

The participant cost is \$100. This fee will be used to cover program materials, electronic and other overhead costs. Registration deadline is September 1, 2007. Please contact the UW-Extension Office for a copy of the Master Gardener Program schedule or if you have any questions.



Freezing Garden Vegetables

By Cyndy Jacoby, Family Living Educator

Freezing your freshly picked garden vegetables preserves not only the taste and good looks, but also the nutrients. Nutrients and over-all quality can be kept by following these tips:

- Start with high-quality vegetables. If they cannot be frozen within a few hours after harvest, store them in the refrigerator.
- Freeze small amounts at one time. Spread the unfrozen packaged vegetables in a single layer in the freezer. This will allow quicker freezing and smaller ice crystals within the goods and will result in a better texture.
- Use freezer containers with tight-fitting lids and remove as much air as possible. Plastic bags made especially for freezing work well. Plastic sandwich or general "food storage" bags ARE NOT recommended for freezing.
- Vegetables packed dry need to be packed tightly to avoid air. Tomato juice or food packed with a juice needs at least 1/2 inch space at the top of the container to allow for expansion.
- Most vegetables need to be blanched. Blanching stops or slows the enzyme action that causes the vegetables to continue to grow. Stopping this action prevents off-flavors, discoloration, toughness, and destruction of nutrients.
- Blanch ONLY the recommended time. Over-blanching vegetables will appear cooked and taste over-cooked when served.
- To blanch, plunge small amount of prepared vegetable into a large pot of boiling water. It is best if water stays boiling. If it stops boiling, return to boil quickly and start timing when water boils. Drain or remove from boiling water and plunge into ice water immediately. Leave in ice water for the same time that the vegetable was in boiling water. Drain thoroughly and pack into freezer container.
- Blanching times depend on the vegetable and the size of the pieces. Specific preparation and times can be found at <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/B3278.pdf>
- Label the packages with the product and date. Place in the freezer at 0° F or below.

If you do not have Internet access, contact the UW-Extension Office at the number above for more information on freezing vegetables and fruits.