

A newsletter for
Master Gardeners in
Dodge County and
surrounding areas



Growing Up

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UNL Extension In Dodge County
1206 W. 23rd Street • Fremont, NE • (402) 727-2775

October 2012

Hello Master Gardeners!

Hooray for Fall!

What a great fall we've had! I hope everyone has had a chance to enjoy the temperatures, and the beautiful fall colors.

I hope everyone had a good growing season, despite the drought. Unfortunately, we will be seeing the effects on our trees and shrubs for years to come. Don't forget to water trees and shrubs until the ground freezes.

Happy Fall!
-Natalia

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"I'M TRYING SOMETHING NEW...
GIRAFFE MANURE!"

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Nebraska Master Gardeners Are Now on Facebook

Keep up with events statewide

- Go to www.FaceBook.com and create a free account.
- Then search for "Nebraska Master Gardeners" and become a "fan."

Each time you log into your account you will receive updates, news and current MG events.

Registration for the International Master Gardener Conference is now open!



More information can be found at:

<http://www.uaex.edu/>

2013 MG Training and Events

Speakers are still being scheduled, but dates are set for next year's master gardener training.

Connect Sessions

Tuesdays, 6:30-9:00pm

Taught by various educators, via the web

February 12

February 19

February 26

March 5

March 12

March 19

These are a great way to get continuing education hours!!

Master Gardener training sessions

Saturdays, 9:00 am-4 pm

Taught by various educators, in person

January 12

January 26

February 9

February 23

March 9



End of Season Harvest Celebration

December 4

Tuesday, 6:30 pm

Dodge County Extension Office

**1206 W. 23rd St.
Fremont, NE**

This will be a potluck dinner and seed exchange, so bring a dish and this year's leftover seeds!

Plant Spotlight - *Euonymus atropurpurea*

by Lorraine Urban

Fall is a colorful season. The most colorful thing in my yard this year is my *Euonymus atropurpurea*. It looks like it's on fire! Wahoo, NE, where I live, is thought to have gotten its name from the Native American word for "burning bush." Wahoo. The plant was formerly used for medicinal purposes. Commonly known as "Eastern Wahoo," "Wahoo," or "Burning Bush," this cultivar is native from the east coast to the upper-Midwest, most often found growing near river banks.

I got my specimen from a gardening friend right here in town. I dug up one of the suckers from her bush, which was growing along the alley behind her house, about 9 years ago. It is now about 15 feet tall which is probably about as tall as it will grow.

Because of the common name "burning bush," *Euonymus atropurpurea* is sometimes confused with *Euonymus alatus*, the much-planted cultivar grown for its deep red Fall foliage. (I have an "alatus", too.) The Wahoo tree gets its color from the seed heads which turn scarlet in late summer, then pop open in Sept. revealing a bright orange seed.

Plant Spotlight (continued)

It reminds me fruit of bitter-sweet (which is of the same family - Celastraceae). These fruits last a long time and retain their color for much of the winter, unless they fall off or are eaten by local wildlife.

The Wahoo blooms in the spring are not-especially-showy flowers that are somewhat hidden by the chartreuse-green leaves. The cultivar name “atropurpurea” means “very purple.” The blossoms on my tree are more of a mauve color than a deep purple.

The “Wahoo” likes full sun to part shade and average to moist soil. However, the only “artificial” water my tree got

this summer was when I watered perennials planted near it. Some of the literature says that it is susceptible to scale and mildew. I have not seen a sign of either one on my plant. It also says that deer and rabbits like the bark and leaves, but neither has bothered my plant. In fact, the only “care” I give this plant is to cut off the numerous suckers it produces. Perhaps in wetter years, or wetter parts of the country is where the scale and mildew are problematic.

E. atropurpurea can be reproduced from seeds. Plant in fall or else they require stratification. They can also be repro-

duced by cuttings or relocating one of the “suckers.”

This year the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum listed *Euonymus atropurpurea* as one of the eight plants on their Great Plants for the Great Plains list. It is a “great plant!”



Overwintering Garden Geraniums

By Betty Hamata



The first hard frost will destroy geraniums growing outdoors. Geraniums can be overwintered indoors. Before frost, pot up individual plants, take cuttings, or store bareroot plants in a cool, dry place. Select only plants that are healthy and disease free.

Potted Plants

Carefully dig up each plant and place it in a 6-10 inch pot. Prune the geraniums back to one-half to one-third of original height and water thoroughly. Place in bright sunny window or under florescent lights place no more than 10-12 inches above the plants for about

12 hours daily. Daytime temperatures of 65-70 degrees, and night temperatures of 55-60 degrees are ideal. Geraniums become tall and spindly when grown in warm, poorly lit are-



as. Water plants thoroughly when soil becomes dry and occasionally pinch leaves to produce stocky, well-branched plants.



Cuttings

Using a sharp, sterilized knife, take 3-4 inch stem cuttings from the terminal ends of the shoots. Pinch off lower leaves, then dip the base of each cutting in a rooting hormone. Stick the cuttings in a rooting medium of coarse sand or a mixture of sand and sphagnum peat moss in a clay or plastic container.



Make sure your pot has drainage holes, and only stick the cuttings in as far as needed to support themselves. Water thoroughly and allow to drain. Place a clear plastic bag over the cuttings and container to

prevent wilting. Place in bright light, but not direct sun. Cuttings should root in about 6 weeks

Bare Root Plants

Dig entire geranium plant, and shake all the soil from the roots. Hang the plants upside down in a cool, (about 45-50 degrees), dry place. Or place one or two plants in a large paper sack. Once a month through the winter, soak the roots of each plant in water for 1 to 2 hours. In mid March, prune each plant, remove all shriveled, dead material. Healthy, live stems will be firm and solid. Pot each plant and water. Place in a sunny window until May, when you can then plant them outdoors.

Growing Geraniums From Seed

Geranium seed should be sown in early to mid February to produce flower plants by spring. Using seed starting medium such as Jiffy Mix, fill a flat or container to within ½" to 1" of the top, firm the medium, water thoroughly, and drain 30 minutes. Sow the seed in rows 2-3" apart and cover with 1/8" of medium. Water the medium and cover with clear plastic. Place in a spot where the temperatures are around 70-75 degrees. Remove plastic as soon as germination occurs. Place seedlings in a sunny window or under lights. Transplant seedlings into individual containers when their first true set of leaves is visible.



Food Drying at Home

by Mary Svoda

Why bother drying food? Foods dried the natural way are delicious, economical, nutritious, simple to prepare, and easy to use. Dried foods save you money, are healthy, easy to store, provides convenience and variety, and can let you make use of nearly free food. There is no pre-blanching or additives!



Why does dried food keep? When moisture is removed, bacteria cannot grow. Proper drying is key, so it is necessary to dry at the right temperature for the right amount of time. To get the greatest benefit from food drying, consider first the dehydrator. Drying at low temperatures, usually those between 115-120 degrees, seems to be the best range for color, flavor, and nu-

trition. However, some authors suggest temperatures of 130-180 degrees. I think this gives the product a 'cooked' appearance.

Food dehydrators should have a temperature control. Don't buy a dehydrator with the heating element on the bottom, as the heat will not be distributed evenly throughout.

The heating element should be on the back or side of the unit. It should have a good thermostat ranging between 100-140 degrees. Check the airflow as well. A flow across the trays is best. Without proper air flow and temperature, food loses nutrition, color, and flavor, and will dry unevenly. The area between the trays should be open, so you can see the motor and fan. Air should

not be recycled in the unit. Trays that have the best support to hold weight of the food should be about 11 x 15," or 15 x 17," and about 1 1/2" apart. No more than 8 trays are recommended. Tray material should be dishwasher safe. The dehydrator must be sturdy and well built, since it will be running for long periods of time. My first food dryer I ordered from the Montgomery catalog and used almost constantly for 35 years. I eventually replaced it with an Excalibur brand dehydrator, which has been running now for 10 years. You get what you pay for!



Oven drying is generally not recommended for a couple of reasons. First of all, most electric ovens have a minimum temperature that is too high to

Food Drying at Home (continued)

dry foods. Secondly, the oven door must be propped open to allow the moisture to leave the oven, so it becomes a waste of energy and heats the kitchen. There isn't enough airflow, so the drying process is slow and trays need to be rotated constantly. Sun drying outdoors also produces uncertain results and demands enormous labor inputs. Pitfalls include: the need to blanch, chemical treatment with sulfur for preservation, ideal weather, carrying trays inside each night, and battling birds, insects, dust and animals.



There are 5 steps for drying:
 1. Wash the food and eliminate anything that looks spoiled. Use only what is in peak condition. 2. Slice, dice, chop, chunk and shred – waste nothing. 3. Place the food directly on trays. 4. Put the trays into the dehydrator for the required time. 5. When dry, remove the

food from the trays and store in airtight containers.

Plastic bags are not recommended for storage of any length of time, as they leak air. However, food saver bags are good. Mayonnaise, pickle, spaghetti sauce jars are good, but be sure there is no odor coming from the jar, or your dried foods will pick up the odor of whatever was in the jar. If you have any canning jars that are no longer usable for canning, these can be used for drying with a good lid. Plastic containers are not recommended.

How can you tell if your food is dry? Strawberries and cranberries feel spongy, apples bendable and leathery, peas will powder in the blender, onions break and herbs crumble. There should be no moisture in the center. Cherries, raisins, and pears will be slightly sticky.

Thinner slices will dry faster,



and the more trays you have, the longer it will take. Here are some estimates:

Herbs: 2.5 hours

Cucumbers, zucchini, corn, mushrooms, peppers: 5-8 hours

Tomatoes slices: 12-14 hours

Peaches, apricots, apples: 8-9 hrs

Bananas: 16-18 hours

I have found that a good method for preparing apricots is just to take one half of the fruit, and flatten it with your hand. It will dry better, and looks pretty when done. Bananas also can be varied in their preparation by dipping them in hot cocoa mix or 'tang' prior to drying. This makes a sweet treat! I do not add chemicals. But I do use ascorbic acid to prevent discoloration of some fruits. It is almost impossible to overdry at 110-120 degrees, so if in doubt, dry for a longer time. For onions and garlic, I would advise to take the dehydrator outside. My first attempt at drying 8 trays of garlic caused my children problems at school; they were being teased because they smelled like garlic! When I realized it, I discovered my entire house reeked of garlic.

The scraps of the fruits I dry I make into fruit leathers. I usually begin with apples, especially the ones that are given away that no one wants. I cook them up and blend them

Food Drying at Home (continued)

with other fruits or one of the my favorites is adding a little sugar and some kool-aid to the batch. There are some new great flavors this year. I just blend it and put it into the dehydrator on a plastic sheet. With a full dryer and if the fruit is thick, it will take about 18 hours. When done, it should be sticky and leathery. The advantage of using plastic underneath the leather is that you can cut it into strips together, roll it up and seal with a little clear tape. My dehydrator has plastic liners, which work fine, but you still have to wrap the finished product.



There are many recipes for fruit and vegetable leathers using fresh produce. I haven't tried these, but some of the suggestions include apricot, peach or nectarine leathers, cranberry orange leathers,

pumpkin pie leather, strawberry rhubarb leather, and hot tomato leather.

Dried vegetables can be processed into powders, such as tomatoes, for use in soups and sauces. Herbs also can be blended into powders. There is no limit to the uses of dried foods!

Next time someone offers you fruits or vegetables, just imagine what you can do with them. Also, if you use a neighborhood grocery, you might have access to fruits and vegetables that are pulled from the shelves, but are not spoiled, and have great potential.

Recipes

Easy Tomato Soup

1 cup dried tomato powder
6-8 cups water
1 cup nonfat dry milk powder
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon dried crushed parsley

Mix tomato powder, 3 cups water, milk powder, and pepper in blender. Add remaining water and heat to serve. Sprinkle with parsley. Yields 6-8 servings

Pumpkin Pie Leathers

2 eggs
1/3 cup honey
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 2/3 cup unsweetened evaporated milk
1 can pumpkin (1 pound)

Place ingredients in blender and blend well. Prepare 5 trays with plastic wrap or parchment paper over each tray. Pour mixture into 5 rectangular shapes on lined trays. Spread approximately 1/8 inch thick. Dehydrate 8-10 hours, or until leather will pull away from liner. Yield – 5 leathers

Fresh Corn Chips

2 cups fresh corn
1/4 teaspoon dried powdered onion
1/4 teaspoon dried powdered garlic
3 tablespoons chopped green pepper
3 tablespoons chopped tomato, including skin and seeds

Puree corn, onion and garlic in blender. Prepare one tray. Pour corn mixture into a rectangular shape, and spread to 1/4 inch thick, about 9 x 13.' Sprinkle with peppers and tomato. Dehydrate 8-10 hours, or overnight until crispy. May be broken into chips as a snack. Yield – 1 or more cups of chips

A Little Philosophy ??...

Rich Apking

Well, today is the Autumnal Equinox, or as we usually say, the first day of fall. So in the best of Master Gardener fashion, I was sitting on my back deck and day dreaming, and thinking great thoughts. One that I've borrowed from my daughter: It is what it is. Now is that deep thinking or what. So in that vein, I'd like to pass along a few thoughts or axioms; perhaps almost universal truths. Maria Rodale once wrote that, "A garden is like a clothes dryer and tools are like socks. They are somewhere, but also they are nowhere".

So, here it goes:

1. *You will lose tools.* Tools usually get lost before they wear out. You can paint the handles red or be meticulously organized, but it is almost assured that one or two tools per season will go missing. You can blame it on the kids, the pets, the spouses, or the neighbors. I tend to blame it on the garden gnomes.

2. *Your body might feel stiff after gardening,* but your mind and soul will feel more limber. A good gardening session is accompanied by a combination of ouch and ahh. The ouch usually involves legs, back, arms, splinters, fingernails, scratched corneas, or bites and rashes. But the ahh, that's the sound of a peaceful mind, a spirit that has been literally grounded by the earth. It's helpful to remember that the ouches usually result in stronger muscles and a healthier body.

The ahhs definitely restore your soul.

3. *Something will surprise you.* It could be the status of something you planted—perhaps it's growing faster or slower than expected (or disappeared altogether). It could be a batch of mice nestled in your compost pile. It could be something squishy you step on in bare feet. It could be the sheer mass of excrement a pet can scatter around your yard. It could be the incredible beauty of a flower or a bird you didn't expect to see. It could be the discovery of a long-lost tool. But every interaction with your garden will surprise you with something.

4. *You will confront your fears and gain confidence.* Perhaps it's primal, but fear of gardening exists and is real. The fear that we might eat something poisonous or touch something dangerous or confront a beast that will kill us surrounds us all. But, have no fear! Nine times out of ten, nothing bad happens. And when something bad does happen, usually the worst outcome is a massive annoyance. A few good books and a friend or neighbor or Master Gardener who can answer your question is the best solution.

5. *Nature always wins.* Seriously, you can have a perfect looking lawn and the tidiest garden on your block, but don't be fooled for a minute. It will only be days before nature creeps back into control. This is not a bad thing, although it can be frustrating.

This is the ultimate lesson of nature and gardening, and perhaps life. If you can't beat her, join her! Then you too can be on the winning team.

A Fall Veggie Garden?

There's still a little time to get some fall veggies planted. If you can find some transplants, you know little plants in the 2" x 2" pots or in 6-packs you stand a real good chance of getting a crop before snowballs are beating you to death.

Most of the bracia such as cabbage, broccoli and that stuff if started with plants should give you a crop, if the past couple of extended falls, or "Indian Summer"s are an indication of what this fall will be like. Also transplants of leaf lettuce should produce a good crop.

Seeds that can be directly sown should include: spinach, radishes, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, and your favorite mescaline mixture.

Probably the greatest advantage to fall veggie planting, is that you will miss the seasonal pests and have the cool weather that most of these plants enjoy. I'm just betting that with the totally strange weather we've experienced this summer, it will be a long and pleasant fall. So, I'm putting my money where my mouth is and have already started my fall garden. Happy gardening, and I'll see you next issue.

Amaryllis a.k.a. 'The Flower in the Box'

by Jenny Cich



I recently told a friend I couldn't wait for Amaryllis to start showing up in the garden centers, they said to me, "Is that the flower in the box that blooms at Christmas and in the garbage by Valentine's Day?" I was shocked!

She's part right, amaryllis bulbs are commonly found in a box with a pot and a wafer of peat moss. They grace our tables, desks and countertops with beautiful showy flowers when it's cold and snowy outdoors, however these gems need not be thrown away when the show is over! With a little care until first frost, they can be over-summered and after a brief dormancy period they will bloom for you again the following winter.

Here's how I do it:

When I bring home my new amaryllis purchase I follow the planting instructions and grow the amaryllis through the first bloom as recommended.

After I've enjoyed weeks of beautiful flowers, (by the way- if you've never grown an amaryllis

you really should!) I keep the amaryllis well watered and fed in a sunny window. When the bloom stalk begins to dry down; I cut it off and continue to keep the plant fed, watered and healthy.

Once all danger of frost is past, the amaryllis can be planted outside. If you don't want to plant the amaryllis outside over summer, you can keep it as a house plant. I prefer to plant mine outside and done this two different ways, both resulting in a successful bloom the following winter.

You can pick which of the three options works for you, house plant, planting the entire pot in the ground or planting just the bulb in the ground. I usually plant my amaryllis in the vegetable garden so I remember to bring them in after summer is over. Tripping over them during vegetable garden clean up is a good reminder to bring them in.

During the summer months, amaryllis should be grown in full sunlight with fertilization and water. The care you give the plant during this time will impact your winter bloom.

As fall nears I gradually decrease watering. Either indoors or outdoors, when the leaves begin to yellow and the bulb goes dormant, dig the pot (or bulb) up and store in a cool dark place. If you kept the bulb planted in the pot, lie the pot on its side during storage. Rest the bulb for 6 to 8

weeks before bringing back into the light.

If I keep the amaryllis in the pot, I evaluate how much space the bulb has in its pot. Amaryllis like a fairly tight pot with between 1 and 2 inches of space between it and the pot's edge. If necessary I repot the amaryllis before watering it to wake it from its dormant state. Water as roots and foliage develop and hopefully you'll enjoy another winter indoor flowering show!

You may find that you enjoy the process of over-summering the bulbs and getting them to bloom again so much that you purchase a new variety the following year and begin your amaryllis collection. For more information and what the UNL experts have to say see <http://lancaster.unl.edu/hort/neblina/amaryllis.shtml>.



Botanic Garden Spotlight—Chanticleer

by Natalia Bjorklund

I recently visited friends in Cape Cod, and of course, there were many trips to botanic gardens. One of my new favorites is Chanticleer, located just outside of Philadelphia. Surprisingly, no where we went, (Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts) had very much fall color yet! I think part of the reason was they received more rainfall than the Midwest did, and they're naturally warmer, so they weren't into the fall season as much as we are.

Chanticleer was originally the private summer home of the Rosengarten family. It consists of approximately 100 acres of gardens, with three houses also on the property. To give you an idea of scale, Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha is also about 100 acres. The mission of Chanticleer is slightly dif-



ferent than many other botanic gardens—visiting the gardens is meant to be a strictly aesthetically pleasing experience—so you won't see plant labels on anything! Chanticleer opened to the public in 1993, and has a staff of only 17!

Of which 12 are garden staff. As if they aren't busy enough, any furniture, or artwork is made by the gardeners in the winter time. It was truly a beautiful place, and I highly recommend anyone going to the area to visit.



P.S. It's only 30 miles from Longwood Gardens, so you can easily sneak in another garden tour.

Botanic Garden Spotlight— Chanticleer

by Natalia Bjorklund



Gardening At Lunch

Join us for this exciting Webinar series, Gardening At Lunch, right from your desk at work or home, You must pre-register for each program, and will need a computer with internet access and sound to participate. During each program, you can view, listen and interact with the speakers.

To register, go to:

<http://marketplace.unl.edu/extension>

2012 Fall Class Schedule

August 8 — Household Insects
Nicole Stoner, Extension Educator

What are those pesky insects you find in the kitchen? In the basement? Nicole will cover their identification, and control.

September 5 — Weed I.D.
Natalia Bjorklund, Extension Educator

Being able to identify weeds properly is the first step in proper control. Natalia will point out important keys in identifying weeds common to Nebraska.

October 10 — Fall Gardening
Vaughn Hammond, Extension Educator

Vaughn will cover different ways you can extend your gardening into the fall and key things to keep in mind going

Extension is a Division of Institute of
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States
Department of Agriculture.

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2013 Spring Class Schedule

February 6 — Pruning
Kelly Feehan, Extension Educator

Late winter is a great time to prune woody plant material! Kelly will cover the basics of proper pruning techniques.

February 20 — Tree Hazard Awareness
John Fech, Extension Educator

Is that tree branch hanging over your house dangerous? What about that branch that looks damaged after a storm? John will cover what to look for in recognizing tree hazards.

March 6 — Get Ready for Spring Vegetable Gardening
Sarah Browning, Extension Educator

In this program we'll discuss the ideal planting time of vegetables, particularly those that do best with cool spring temperatures, and give you tips on growing strong, healthy transplants at home.

April 3 — Plant Diseases
Amy Timmerman, Extension Educator

Are those spots on your plant's leaves caused by a disease? What do you do if they are? Amy will teach you how to identify different plant diseases, and how to treat them.

May 1 — Outdoor Insects
Nicole Stoner, Extension Educator

Are those insects you find in your garden beneficial to your plants, or are they going to cause problems. Nicole will teach you how to identify the good from the bad!

Everyone is welcome to participate in these live, online webinars, but registration is required. To register, go to:

<http://marketplace.unl.edu/extension>

Registration Fee:
\$10.00 per program or
\$60.00 for the entire program series

Once you have registered, you will receive the program handout and login information via email.

Program Times:
12:05 p.m.—12:55 p.m.
CDT

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