

A newsletter for  
Master Gardeners in  
Dodge County and  
surrounding areas

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln EXTENSION



# Growing Up

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January 2014

## Hello Master Gardeners!

*Happy New Year Everyone!  
I hope the beginning of 2014 has been good for you, with only better things to come. There will be a lot of new programs and opportunities this year, and I hope you take advantage of them. Watch the newsletters to come for more information.*

*I'm also considering a late fall advanced Master Gardener training series with different speakers.. Anyone interested in that? Topic suggestions? I'll try to be accommodating!*

*-Natalia*

## Nebraska Master Gardeners Are Now on Facebook

*Keep up with events statewide*

- Go to [www.FaceBook.com](http://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.



## Eastern Nebraska Tree Care Workshops

### March 20 - Norfolk

Northeast Community College Lifelong Learning Center  
801 E. Benjamin Ave.

### March 25 - Lincoln

University of Nebraska - Lincoln  
Nebraska East Campus Union  
North of 37th & Holdrege streets

### March 26 - Omaha

Joslyn Castle  
3902 Davenport St.



**To register: [go.unl.edu/easterntreecareworkshops](http://go.unl.edu/easterntreecareworkshops)**

**For registration questions, contact:**

UNL Event and Conference Planning  
402.472.1772 or 800.328.2851 OR E-mail: [eventplanning@unl.edu](mailto:eventplanning@unl.edu)

Extension is a division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska— Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture

## Opportunities to Grow

\* The following webinars can be used for continuing education. However, please remember that these are considered to be part of the initial training for new master gardeners. While you are welcome to come to any and all, at some point you will find this information repetitive and need to find continuing education from other sources (upcoming activities with continuing education are listed in the next article)

### February 11

#### Integrated Pest Management Options for Landscapes\*

Combining correct growing and maintenance practices in the landscapes can enhance the health of landscapes. In the case of using pesticides, this presentation will help participants know what a pesticide is, correctly reading information on pesticide labels, and safely handling pesticides.

*- Presented by Wayne Ohnesorg, Madison County Extension Educator*



### February 18

#### Disease Identification of Herbaceous Landscape Plants\*

Don't miss out on this opportunity to learn about various diseases and disorders found on herbaceous landscape plants. Correct identification and control options for these diseases and disorders will be offered to reduce their spread and damage.

*- Presented by Amy Timmerman, Holt/Boyd County Extension Educator*

### February 25

#### Turfgrass Care and Management\*

Learn the basics for maintaining lawns in NE, from selecting species to renovating/establishing a new lawn, to mowing, irrigation, fertilization, soil management, and pest control.

*-Presented by Zac Reicher, Professor, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture*

## More Opportunities to Grow



### March 4

#### Pollinators in the Landscape and “Pollinator Friendly” Plant Material\*

Plant pollination is crucial to the reproduction and the diversity in landscapes. Here is an opportunity to learn about the numerous pollinating insects that help carry out this crucial job to the environment, and how to protect these unsung heroes of the landscape. Adding recommended plant material that attracts pollinators will bring diversity to any landscape.

*Presented by Natalia Bjorklund, Dodge County  
Extension Educator*

### March 11

#### Plant Propagation Concepts\*

Have you ever wanted more of your favorite plants? Learn how to apply basic plant propagation treatments to reproduce new plant material at home.

*Presented by Nicole Stoner, Gage County Extension Educator  
And David Lott, West Central District Extension Educator*

### March 25

#### Landscape Weed Identification and Herbicide Update\*

What is that weed? What do I need to do to get rid of it? Correct weed identification and control options for a variety of landscape weeds will be presented.

*Presented by Lowell Sandell, Assistant  
Extension Educator,  
Department of Agronomy and Horticulture*



## Some Thoughts About Spring by Rich Apking

The Spring Seed Catalogs have been arriving for the past few weeks, and like most gardeners I'm starting to plan for my upcoming vegetable garden. So-o-o I thought I'd share a few ideas and thoughts about preparing for the 'Best Veggie Garden Ever', or at least the best one in my mind.

The first thing that comes up is the plan, you know, trying to remember what you had planted where, so you can rotate your crops (hopefully on a four year cycle) to avoid some of the soil borne diseases and just to give your vegetables the best chance of success.

I imagine you all know what you want to plant, I actually have a pretty good idea of what I want this year. Some greens (lettuce, spinach, kale, mustard, bak choy, and chard), radishes, carrots, celery, snow peas, squash (acorn, butternut, spaghetti, and zucchini), eggplant, okra, tomatoes, peppers (hot and sweet), onions, broccoli, beets, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, and maybe some small melons. My garlic and shallots have been in the ground since October, so I don't really need to think about them.

Right now is the time to really think about acquiring your garden seeds, whether you order them or purchase them locally. A few terms you should become familiar with are:

**Open Pollinated (OP)** refers to pollination by insects, birds, or the wind. These plants 'breed true', meaning that you can save the seeds if you grow them somewhat isolated from other similar OP plants.

**Hybrid seed** is produced by the controlled crossing of two plants of closely related species or strains. These seeds should NOT be saved since you won't know necessarily grow a true copy.

**Certified Organic (OG) plants and seeds** are produced in compliance with the federal organic law.

I try to order my seeds early, so I can be assured that what I want is in stock, I know that sounds like 'well duh' but the times I've been rather tardy in ordering seeds or plants have usually resulted in the 'sorry we can't fill your order'

*Some stuff from the 'I learned this the hard way' column.*

### **Carrots**

Start harvest when they are at least a half inch in diameter, when you pull them, leave them in the sun for several hours to kill the root hairs, trim the tops to an inch to prevent them from dehydrating.



### **Kale**

Pick the side leaves, if you pick the center, the plant will quit.

### **Beets**

You can harvest up to half of the leaves without hurting the plant; harvest the roots at 1-1/2 to 3 inches. They deteriorate if left in the ground for more than 10 days after they reach full size.

### **Swiss Chard**

Leaves taste best when they are 6-10 inches long. Pick a few of the outer leaves from each plant to insure a long harvest.

## Some Thoughts About Spring by Rich Apking

(continued)

notes with my shipments.

Another hint, unless you have already found a 'favorite' vendor, try to stick with the old established companies, there are a few vendors that just don't have what it takes, their seeds are expensive for what you get, and the plants are of inferior quality and packaged poorly so what you get is a plant and a bag of dirt. Not a good combination

A few hints: when you get your seeds, read the seed packet. Usually there is a wealth of information, as to when you should plant your seeds outdoors, or if you want to start your plants inside, a guide as to when to plant.

Remember, our frost date is still the middle of May. This year building on my resounding success in growing celery

(NOT), I'm going to start the seeds inside, and make sure that the plants aren't shaded by some (I'm still not sure why they grew this big) gigantic parsley plants. I'll start some tomatoes, peppers, okra, cabbage (well most of the cucurbits), and bak choi in the basement and hope for the best.

One of the most important skills a gardener must develop is to know when something is ready to harvest. If you are able to recognize a vegetable at its peak, you will almost have a sensational experience when you dine. In fact, the vegetable varieties you grow may be less important than the conditions under which they are grown and harvested. So with those words of wisdom (LOL) I bid you goodbye until the next time. Happy gardening,

### Lettuce

Best if picked early in the morning, while it is still plump with moisture. Butterheads only last a few days if refrigerated, other varieties can last up to two weeks.

### Broccoli

Pick when it's deep green and the flower buds are still tight, cut the center head. If the buds have started to yellow you've waited too long.



## Beekeeping Workshops for 2014

Registration is **REQUIRED!!**

Workshop Registration Online:  
<http://go.unl.edu/2014beekeepingworkshops>  
OR

If you do not have access to register online,  
contact Vaughn Hammond  
at (402) 873-3166.

### Beginning Beekeeping Workshops

North Platte, NE – Feb. 15, 2014

Nebraska City, NE – Feb. 22, 2014

### Beginning Beekeeping Field Day

ARDC near Mead, NE—April 19, 2014

### Cucumbers

Pick them frequently before they mature, because if the seeds of even one fruit mature, the whole vine will quit producing.

### Brussel Sprouts

Pick when the sprouts are full and well formed. Break off the leaf below the sprout and snap off the sprout. The upper sprouts will continue to

## Next Time It Will Be Better by Mary Svoboda



Two years ago when someone offered me the use of a plot suitable for melon-growing, I was excited. Nevermind the sandy soil—it was once a river bed—or the fact that the nearest water was two miles away. Being a summer baby, I could imagine nothing better than growing my own melons!

I will list some of my mistakes and tell how I hope to improve them.

First, I allowed only a five foot square per plant. This was NOT large enough, especially for gourds. All the vines were growing around each other. We couldn't get near the origin of the plant for watering. The weeds were unbelievable.

Next year I will give each plant at least ten feet, with a tall marker at each planting site. Landscape fabric will be placed around the plantings since it gets too hot for weeding. It's also hard to find the vines under the weeds. Each ten-foot square will be surrounded by a three-foot path covered by old carpet.

For watering we used a metal animal watering tank placed on a pick-up. It has a hose on the bottom of the tank but does NOT have adequate pressure for drip irrigation. I decided to use some pieces of hose and keep them in of hose hand keep them in place at the planting site. They will have connectors to hook up to the water tank. We can drive around the ten foot squares

and be certain that we will NOT be watering the weeds.

When the coons began eating the banana melons, I decided they were ready to pick. Next time I will keep a log according to the seed packets and pay attention to the dates. The nutmeg melons continue green when ripe. If you wait for them to look like a cantaloupe it's too late. It's sad to open a watermelon and find it still white inside.

Although my management was pretty inept, we produced some great melons. I made more work for myself but will do better next time and am looking forward to improved technique. Any recommendations will be gratefully accepted.

## Learning from Gardening by Betty Hamata



The popular saying “A garden is never finished” certainly applies to a lot of us. After gardening at my farm for about 35 years, I can say that my gardens are not yet finished. Although I have several flower and landscaped gardens, there is always something new to plant or another area to renovate.

I have made mistakes during these years. Some that come to mind include planting junipers too close to the deck. After several years, I finally took them all out and planted shrub roses that I can control.

About 25 years ago, I planted a dwarf burning bush on the corner of the house and another at the back of the house. Both were planted too close to the house. Although both were beautiful in the fall, the one at the corner was anything but dwarf! After growing wider and taller, it completely blocked the view from the kitchen into the yard. After complaining for several years, I finally let my husband prune (cut) it down almost to the ground. Hopefully it will come back next spring, but our view is now back.

After learning that mice and voles eat tulip bulbs, about 20 years ago I made a chicken wire box and planted red and yellow tulips inside. While others have come and gone, these are still coming up, blooming faithfully each year.

Anyone that plants violas, petunias or larkspur knows how prolifically they reseed. Every year I tell myself I will not let them reseed, but they bloom so beautifully. I let them ramble on and then endure the back-breaking cleanup in the fall. If I prune the petunias while spreading I can keep them in bounds. And I like the look cottage garden look they give to the borders.

When we first moved here, there were four big elm trees in the yard. After enduring all the seeds and seedlings every

year, we finally had them removed. It really opened up the yard. But their offspring live on.

Yes, gardening out in the country is a challenge as broomgrass creeps in from the ditches into the perennials, but digging it out is good exercise. Sometimes something comes up that I know I did not plant from birds dropping seeds. Little cedars keep popping up in the yard, but I just dig them up and replant them in the windbreak. At least I don't have to maintain a beautiful, green lawn as I have no close neighbors to impress!

I enjoy being a Master Gardener as I always learn something new from the continuing education classes and Gardeners always know the best “dirt”.



## What's Wrong with My Vegetable Garden?

By David Deardorff  
and Kathryn Wadsworth  
A Book Review by Lorraine Urban



A gardening friend recently lent me a couple of books he had purchased for my enlightenment and enjoyment. I've chosen one to review...possibly for your enlightenment and enjoyment.

**"What's Wrong with My Vegetable Garden?"** is what I call a Garden Encyclopedia. Most of us who've gardened for many seasons probably already have one. Those who are younger in age may choose to get their plant information solely from the Internet. I have yet to find that to be faster or more reliable than using a hard copy of a well-written garden encyclopedia which contains some pertinent information (Table of Contents and Index at your fingertips) on most garden topics, in this case, vegetable plants.

My criteria for this type of reference book is that it must be written by someone (or ones) with a "pedigree," be interesting and easy to use, and have a fairly recent copyright date. David Deardorff has a PhD in Botany. He and co-writer/photographer Kathryn Wadsworth have years of experience in growing plants in nurseries and gardens. They have given workshops, and lectures, and presented infor-

mation on radio shows across the country. The book was first published in 2011.

As a former English teacher, I'm always interested in new gardening words. I was familiar with the term **"polyculture garden."** But, I find I have been growing one for many years. This means that I lay out my garden so that plants related to each other (chard & spinach) are NOT growing side by side.

Learn reasons why in this book. The **"Plant Portraits"** sections includes the familiar vegetables, and some not so familiar. Maybe you'll be inspired to try growing French sorrel, Bok choi, or soy beans. You may want to try inoculating the soy bean seeds with a nitrogen-fixing bacteria instead of buying the pre-inoculated seeds. You won't need an M.D. degree.

To a visual learner like me, the photographs in the **"Pests and Diseases"** section are especially helpful. Did you know that the appearance of "sooty mold" on such vegetables as lettuce, kale, and pumpkin vines, is a sign of aphid infestation? I didn't. **And, all of the suggestions in the "Problem Solving Guide" are 100% organic solutions.**

There is a section called

**"Water Solutions"** which is very helpful, with the most recent ideas about collection of rain water. The amounts of water needed weekly for each vegetable are also listed, including changes needed during fruiting periods, i.e. cucumbers need to have 2", not 1" of water, during heavy fruit production.

I always thought that planting French marigolds would help protect near-by plants from nematodes. It does, but not in the way I thought: the marigolds don't protect the plants growing next to them. The marigold roots excrete a compound that nematodes do not like which remains in the soil. Whatever you plant the next year in the place where the marigolds were previously located should be nematode-free.

If you don't already have a "gardener's guide to everything" type of book, (or if you don't like the one you have) you might want to take a look at this one. To paraphrase: Hope springs eternal in the gardener's breast. Here's a book that can help that "hope" become a reality.

## Louisiana Iris by Jenny Cich



The vision of iris lined ponds and marsh lands is one we just don't see that often in Nebraska, but I have dreams to make such a spot a reality in my own landscape. This dream had lead to research on many different types of beardless iris that might do well in such a spot; Japanese, Spuria, Siberians and Louisiana. Spuria and Siberians do not tolerate standing water while Japanese and Louisiana Irises do. However, after learning that Japanese iris often suffocate under ice or in frozen soil that is too damp or boggy that left me taking a closer look at Louisiana iris and am I glad I did! Louisiana iris are grown in zones 4-9 and offer 3-8 inch blooms with the widest color range of any iris group. Their established clumps are often 2-3 foot high and 3 foot in diameter. They are native to southern swamp-

lands of the United States. Louisiana Iris prefers a fairly neutral to slightly acidic soil PH but can tolerate slightly alkaline soils. They prefer clay soils and those with high organic matter content. Like bearded irises, Louisiana irises will do best when planted in full sun with 6-8 hours of daylight.

When purchasing or receiving transplants, make sure they are always kept moist as allowing them to dry out may cause them to perish. New transplants would benefit from a soaking prior to planting. Transplants are will do best when they are planted during a cooler, wet time of the year allowing ample time for root development prior to freezing temperatures.

Louisiana irises can spread up to 8" per season. Similar to bearded iris, Louisiana irises reproduce by rhizomes making new clone plants from the original parent plant. For this reason a distance of 2 feet or more between Louisiana iris varieties is recommended.

If planting Louisiana iris in the ground outside of a pond/stream area, mulch heavily to help regulate soil temperatures and retain

moisture. Mulch of pine needles or alfalfa will help meet the PH and fertility needs of the plant and will also help prevent sunscald which is a common problem suffered by Louisiana irises. Louisiana Irises tend to perform at their peak when there is 1 inch of water over the rhizomes; however this is not a requirement for survival. For a water feature planting they could be placed in wide shallow pots and submerged, taking care to pin down the rhizomes using a bent metal rod to keep the rhizomes from floating away from the soil. If you don't have a water feature (artificial or naturally occurring) any area that holds moisture consistently in your landscape, like a rain garden, could be used as an area to try your hand with Louisiana Irises.



## More Opportunities to Grow

### Horticultural Horizons in the Heartland

Mark your calendars for  
**September 22-25, 2015**,  
when Iowa and Nebraska  
will co-host the  
**International Master  
Gardener Conference.**

We're looking for volunteers to serve on numerous committees, including Decorations, Entertainment, Evaluation, Finance, Food, Hospitality, Registration, Speakers, Tours, Trade Show, Sponsorships, and Communications. If you're interested in serving on one or more of these committees, please contact your local coordinator. The official sign-up list will be available soon. Watch for updates on the conference website, and sign up to "Like" the conference on Facebook.



### West Pottawattamie Spring Master Gardener Conference

The Iowa State University Extension Master Gardeners of West Pottawattamie County will hold the event at the Council Bluffs Senior Center, Saturday, **March 29, 2014** from 8:00am to 4:00pm. The day starts at 8:00 with coffee and light refreshments. Sessions then begin at 9:15 and continue throughout the day finishing up at 4:00 pm. Various vendors will also display and sell new and interesting gardening items

For more information: **(800) 262-3804**

### Louisiana Iris continued

When it comes to moisture, Louisiana irises need an inch of water a week when getting established but once established they can tolerate moderately dry conditions for short periods of time. When irrigating Louisiana irises that are not planted as a part of a natural or artificial water feature, water deeply and do not allow the soil to completely dry out or deeply crack between watering.

Unlike bearded irises Louisiana Irises are heavy feeders and do best when fed twice per year. They benefit from an application of balanced fertilizer in the spring (10-10-10 or similar) and from a higher phosphorous feeding in the fall (5-20-10 or similar). For alkaline soils one should consider using an acidifying fertilizer like those marketed for azaleas. As always, if you are attempting to grow these beauties in a natural or artificial water feature you should be conscientious of other life you may be impacting with fertilization.

Varieties of Louisiana Iris that can you may have heard of include Black Gamecock, Easter Tide, Anne Chowning, Jack Attack and Inner Beauty. To see photos and read about the success of Louisiana Irises being grown in northern climates check out: <http://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2013/03/louisiana-irises-grow-well-in-upstate.html>.

[theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2013/03/louisiana-irises-grow-well-in-upstate.html](http://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2013/03/louisiana-irises-grow-well-in-upstate.html).