

A newsletter for
Master Gardeners in
Dodge County and
surrounding areas



Growing Up

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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.

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone is taking some much-deserved time inside before our lives move outdoors. It's hard to think about spring on days with freezing temps, but we all know it's just around the corner. I am excited and optimistic about what 2016 will bring us, and I hope you are too.

-Natalia

Does anyone have pictures or thoughts from the 2015 International Master Gardener Conference they would like share? If so, please forward to me and they'll make it in the April newsletter.



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

Master Gardener Adobe Connect Classes — 2016

As always, these classes are taught from 6:30 - 9:00 pm on Tuesday evenings at the extension office.

Registration is not required, but appreciated.

February 2 – Selection and Care of Evergreen Trees and Shrubs – Evergreens are an important feature of Nebraska landscapes. Learn how to correctly select, plant, and care for evergreens to help them thrive in the landscape.

- Presented by Todd Faller, Faller Nursery and Landscaping

February 9 – Putting Perennials to Work – Help maximize your landscape by choosing the right plant for the right location. Which plants work best in challenging locations, underutilized perennials to help increase plant diversity for positive impacts on beneficial arthropods, and more will be covered.

- Presented by Scott Evans, Douglas-Sarpy Extension Horticulture Assistant

February 16 – Basic Botany/Plant Identification - It is time to go back to basics! Learn key concepts to plant growth and development; and strategies to identify different types of plant material.

-Presented by Stacy Adams – Professor of Practice, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture

February 23 – Weed Identification and Control – Is that a weed? How do we know? Learn the correct process to use general and specific weed characteristics for correct identification. Once weeds are correctly identified, learn how to select and use best control methods for various weed species.

-Presented by Natalia Bjorklund, Dodge County Extension Educator

March 1 – Polarizing Yard and Garden Issues – Polarizing issues related to growing plant material, controlling pests, and our environment face the general public. Learn about issues (GMO's, invasive species, pest resistance, climate change, and biodiversity) and tips for tactfully communicating about these issues.

- Presented by Kelly Feehan, Platte County Extension Educator, Tamra Jackson-Ziems, Extension Plant Pathology Specialist, and Nicole Stoner, Gage County Extension Educator

March 8 – Efficient Landscape Irrigation – Irrigation is a key factor to the success of Nebraska landscapes. Learn how much water plants need and about plant management and irrigation strategies to help conserve water in the landscape but still have a flourishing landscape!-*Presented by John Fech, Douglas-Sarpy Extension Educator*

Volunteer Opportunities, Continuing Education, & Horticulture Events

Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Conference

Nebraska City, NE
January 29 and 30th
<http://www.nebsusag.org/>

Beginning Beekeeping

Ithaca, NE — March 12
North Platte, NE—April 16
Lincoln (hands on day) -
April 9th on East Campus
www.entomology.unl.edu
402-472-2123 (Entomology
Department)

Siouxland Garden Show

Sioux City, NE
April 1-3
siouxlandgardenshow.org

Orchid Show

Lauritzen Gardens
Omaha, NE
March 5 and 6
402.346.4002

Native Bee ID Class

May 14th
Lincoln, NE
402.727.2775

Master Gardener Hands-On Training Day

Raising Nebraska
Grand Island, NE
June 10th
402.472.8973

Spring Affair Plant Sale

Lancaster Event Center
Lincoln, NE
April 23; 9 am—2 pm

NE Nebraska MG Plant Sale

NECC Chuck Pohlman Ag
Complex,
Norfolk, NE
April 29 and 30
402-370-4040

May Museum Plant Sale

Fremont, NE
May 7
402.721.4515

Spring Plant Sale

Lauritzen Gardens
Omaha, NE
May 14th
402.346.4002

WANTED:

Help with the Master Gardener Newsletter

REWARD:

Master Gardener Volunteer Hours and my never ending thanks and appreciation

Please call or email me!

If past article writers are interested in continuing during 2016,

Milkweed Watch

What is Milkweed Watch?

Milkweed Watch is a citizen science program that seeks to explore and document the diversity of milkweed plants and their associated animal fauna. Much remains to be discovered about the range and diversity of milkweeds in Nebraska and the animals that use these plants.

Milkweed Watch Goals

Milkweed Watch will collaborate with citizen scientists to achieve 4 goals:

1. Determine what animal species use milkweed plants
2. Determine the diversity and distribution of milkweed plants in Nebraska
3. Update the diversity and distribution records of Red Milkweed Beetles (*Tetraopes*) in Nebraska
4. Promote awareness about and appreciation of milkweeds and other wild plants

How to get involved: Contact Louise Lynch (UNL Entomology) at the link below:

<http://milkweedwatch.unl.edu/contact-us>

Or Natalia Bjorklund (402.727.2775)



Bees of Nebraska

Are you interested in being a part of science – in your own backyard?

Did you know there are over 4,000 different bees in North America, and many of them rarely sting? We want to find out what bees live in Nebraska, and that's where you come in!

We're asking anyone interested to help us collect and report back their findings. How-to trainings, protocols, and pollinator conservation classes will be offered.

This information will help with pollinator conservation in Nebraska, and beyond!

Collecting will begin in April, 2016, so please let us know of your interest by April 15, 2016

Please contact us for more information: Natalia Bjorklund, 402.727.2775



Pruning Fruit Trees

Productive fruit trees with an abundance of high quality fruit don't just happen. They result from good cultural practices, including pruning. However, fruit tree pruning is often neglected either due to a lack of pruning skills and knowledge, or a fear that the tree will be damaged or killed by incorrect pruning.

Goals of Pruning

The goals of fruit tree pruning are many, including 1) to obtain maximum light exposure for both leaves and fruit; 2) provide uniform distribution of fruiting wood along the scaffold branches; 3) control the size and vigor of the tree; 4) reduce limb breakage due to excessively heavy fruit loads; and 5) produce high quality fruit of good size. The major requirement of backyard gardeners is to have a tree small enough to spray and harvest easily. Pruning, combine with the use of dwarf fruit trees will help accomplish this goal.

When to Prune

Most fruit tree pruning is done during the dormant season when no leaves are on the tree. Cultivars or varieties of trees susceptible to winter injury are pruned in late spring before growth begins, rather than in January or February. Regardless of the cultivar grown, do not prune any tree before January or winter injury will occur. Besides dormant pruning, you may prune at planting; during July and August to restrict growth; to remove water sprouts; and to remove diseased or damaged wood. Once the basic structure of a fruit tree is developed, avoid pruning until fruiting occurs.

Fruit Tree Training Systems

There are many training systems for fruit trees, and each system has its own advantages and disadvantages. For homeowners, the modified leader system is the most versatile and the easiest to learn. Any fruit tree, whether standard sized or dwarf, can be trained to the modified leader system. In training fruit trees remember these two basic concepts: 1) excess pruning delays fruiting; and 2) branches spread to a 45-55 degree angle with the main trunk are stronger, and produce more fruit than branches with narrower branch-trunk angles.

Working with Unbranched One-Year Trees, or 'Whips'

Unbranched, one-year old fruit trees are often called 'whips', because they have a single straight trunk with no side branches and resemble a riding whip. After planting a new whip, cut the top of the trunk back to encourage buds low on the trunk to sprout and develop. This results in a tree with branches low enough for easy harvesting. Head the whip back to the following height: standard trees, 44"; semi-dwarf trees, 36-40"; and dwarf trees, 29-30".

If the tree has side branches at planting, then completely remove any branches that form narrow angles (less than 45 degrees) with the trunk. Measure the vertical distance between branches on the main trunk and remove them as necessary to achieve at least a 6" vertical spacing. Branches should also be spaced evenly around the trunk, like the spokes of a wheel. Finally, head back or shorten any remaining branches to about half their length by making a slanted cut just above an outward facing bud. Assuming the tree is planted in spring, after completing this initial pruning required at planting, the tree will not be pruned again until the following March.

Pruning Fruit Trees (continued)

Selecting Scaffold Branches

The lowest scaffold branch should be 20-24 inches above the ground, so remove any lower branches or shoots from the trunk. Choose the most vigorous upright-growing branch at the top of the tree to become the central leader. Among the remaining branches, remove those that form narrow angles, less than 45 degrees, with the trunk. Select for permanent scaffold branches 2 or 3 well placed branches that are spaced evenly around the trunk, like the spokes of a wheel, and are vertically spaced at least 6 inches apart. Remove all remaining shoots or branches. Apply branch spreaders to the scaffold shoots if needed to widen the trunk-branch angle. The central leader shoot should be two times as tall as the longest side shoot, so prune any long lateral branches back so that they are a foot shorter than the tip of the central leader when held in an upright position.

Second Year Pruning

During the second dormant season following planting, choose 2 or 3 additional scaffold branches at the top of the tree. Maintain the dominance of the central leader shoot by again cutting by any excessively long lateral branches. Secondary shoots may have started to develop on the main scaffold branches. Treat each of the main scaffold branches as a small tree, in regards to choosing secondary scaffold branches. Don't allow the secondary shoots, or laterals, of the scaffold branches to compete with the leader of that branch; so head back any extra long secondary lateral branches. Also, don't prune out the short fruiting branches known as spurs.

Prune the tree as little as possible in the next few years prior to fruit bearing. Excessive pruning will delay bearing, and result in fewer and smaller fruits in the first few years of production. Maintain the dominance of the central leader and upper branches by heading back long, lower laterals. Likewise, do not let the upper branches overgrow and shade the lower portion of the tree. Remove suckers and dead, diseased or damaged branches as needed. Remove branches growing toward the center of the tree, and the weakest of crossing or closely parallel branches.

When pruning, use tools made for the purpose and keep them sharp and clean. To disinfect pruning tools, use either a 70% denatured alcohol solution, or household bleach at one part bleach to nine parts water. Either use a sponge or dip the equipment into these solutions between cuts.

