

- The Meristem -

Spring
2020

WHERE WE CULTIVATE GROWTH

NEBRASKA EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER



MG Notes

By Kathleen Cue, Extension Educator

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Resources for Master Gardeners:

Websites:

Mastergardener.unl.edu

GroBigRed.com

Facebook:

Nebraska Master Gardeners

Send articles for publishing to:

mspath2@unl.edu

Next newsletter deadline: June 15

Kathleen Cue, Assistant Extension Educator

kcue2@unl.edu

402-727-2775

Region: Burt, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Dodge, Saunders, Stanton, Thurston, Washington and Wayne Counties.

Covid-19 is keeping lots of people at home with time on their hands and beautiful weather to be outside. I can't think of any activity more suited to the times than gardening. Seeds have become the new toilet paper of the gardening world with some catalog websites shutting down, overrun with seed orders. To step up to meet the interest in beginning gardening, Nebraska Extension is gathering blogs, video clips and podcasts to launch Gardening 101. Once information has been compiled, I'll provide you with the link so you can share it with friends, family and neighbors.

At this juncture, vegetable gardening is deemed an essential activity and so the Growing Together Nebraska projects in Dodge and Washington Counties are a go. GTN is a Master Gardener service project, growing food for the food insecure. If you'd like to get involved, please let me know.

Please continue to share your gardening questions and identification requests by emailing me at kcue2@unl.edu. When submitting a picture, please be sure the image is taken from as close a vantage point as possible, including a pencil, penny or some other common object to give an idea of scale. Thanks!

Many thanks to all of you for doing your part to cover coughs, physically distancing, and staying healthy. Take care!



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A Hugelkultur Style Raised Bed

By Julie Rohlfig, Master Gardener

Hugelkultur (Hoo-gull culture) is a German term that means hill or mound culture. Hugelkultur beds hold moisture, build fertility and are great spaces for growing just about any plants.

Years ago in the vegetable garden on our acreage, we dug a deep trench and filled it with large logs. Then we piled smaller logs and branches on top to make a mound which we covered with soil. It did not take long for us to realize it would be a better use of space to have a raised bed rather than a mound at one end of the vegetable garden. So Charlie built wooden “walls” to make our mound look like a large raised bed. It was great and for years I used it to raise beans that were just the right height to harvest easily. The bed did not require nearly as much water as the rest of the garden and the vegetables grew prolifically!

The rotting wood enhanced the ability of the soil to retain moisture and provided nutrients. We were composting underground and it made the work aboveground easier for these aging gardeners.

Now we have moved away from the acreage and miss our Hugelkultur raised bed. I was sure we needed another one! Charlie built a sturdy frame and I dug a shallow trench. We had access to rotten firewood to use instead of logs. I suspect this wood will rot away somewhat quickly but we did not need a tractor to haul it so that was a real plus. We may have to add compost to keep the box filled to a convenient height for harvesting.

The cost of the six, 8 foot long 2” x 10” boards and a 12 foot long 4” x 4” post was \$70. Only 2 boards had to be cut in half to make the ends and the 4” x 4” post was cut into 4 pieces. We had the bolts, nuts and washers on hand. Otherwise, 32 sets of those would have added to the cost. In the final analysis, a Hugelkultur raised bed is more work to create but the gardening results are fantastic. More information may be found here: <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/sustainable-landscapes-creating-a-hugelkultur-for-gardening-with-stormwater-management-benefits.html>

Happy gardening!



Rotten firewood was placed in a shallow trench at the bottom of a constructed frame.



The finished frame and the firewood added are the beginning steps of this Hugelkultur raised bed.

Peace Lily Problems

By Mary Spath, Master Gardener

Enjoying plants indoors is a wonderful way to lift our moods and reduce stress. Indoor plants also help with indoor humidity by adding moisture to the air. They purify the air by taking in toxins, too. One indoor plant that is frequently given as a gift is the peace lily (*Spathiphyllum*). I have a few of these plants and generally they are easy to grow and do well in the home with minimal care. This past winter I had trouble with my peace lilies and checked into proper care that I am sharing with you.

Peace lilies are sensitive to chemicals commonly found in municipal tap water, such as fluoride, which may cause brown leaf tips. Use filtered, room-temperature well water, if possible. I found that having a used milk jug filled with well water that doesn't go through the water softener and kept at room temperature works for me. Keep the soil moist, but do not overwater. They let you know when they are dry by wilting leaves, but their leaves will start to brown if neglected for too long.

Periodically I will set the plant, pot and all, in a large container (or the kitchen sink will work too). Water the plant from the bottom by filling the container with enough water so that the plant can wick-up the water with its roots. I like to leave the plant sit in water for about an hour so that the water is drawn up into the soil in the pot. Dump out the excess water (or remove the sink plug) and leave the plant in place to allow excess water to drain from the soil.

These plants also like high humidity. Misting their leaves helps for only about 10 minutes. A better choice would be to place the pot atop a moistened tray of gravel to increase humidity long term.

Peace lilies are a tropical plant so keep them in temperatures above 60 degrees F and away from cold, drafty windows. They do best in temperatures upwards of 70 degrees F.

Keep plants out of direct afternoon sunlight, but in a well-lit area. An east-facing window is perfect as they will be exposed to the warmth of the morning sun but avoid the intense mid-day rays.

The peace lily will flower if they are getting enough light. To encourage flowering, move the plant to a brighter location where it will receive bright, indirect light. Green or weak-looking flowers can be caused by improper fertilizing. Green flowers indicate that you should cut back on fertilizing. In case of weak-looking or lack of flowers, try a fertilizer for flowering plants that has a higher amount of phosphorous, which plants need for blooming. In general you will only fertilize to encourage spring and summer growth, fertilizing every 6 weeks or so with a balanced houseplant fertilizer starting in late winter.

Source: askextension.org



Photo Source: Pinterest



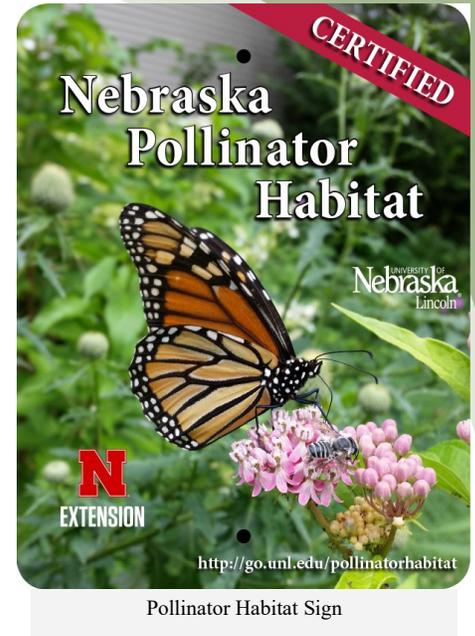
Photo Source: askextension.org

Test Your Knowledge of Pollinators

By Kathy Meyer, Master Gardener

Sources: GRO Big Red Blog and the Nebraska Pollinator Habitat Certification Application

- How much of our food supply exists because of pollinators?
 - 20%
 - 33%
 - 50%
 - 66%
 - 75%
- True or False Honey bees colonize, and some native bees, like the bumble bee, colonize, each has a specific job to do.
- A honey bee hive, of 30,000 bees, pollinates tens of thousands of flowers. How many native bees does it take to do the same amount of pollination work?
 - 250
 - 1000
 - 5000
 - 15,000
- Regarding a POLLINATOR FRIENDLY GARDEN, which of the following answers are correct?
 - Provide a water source
 - Leave areas of bare ground
 - If a pesticide is needed, apply late in the evening
 - Eradicate weeds as soon as possible
 - Plants with single flowers are preferred over showy double flowers.
- Pollinators need a variety of flowering plants every season. SPRINGTIME sources of pollen and nectar include which of the following plants?
 - Pasqueflower
 - Crown vetch
 - White Clover
 - False Indigo
 - Tall Boneset
- Which of the following herbs serve as larvae hosts for butterflies?
 - Dill
 - Basil
 - Sage
 - Lovage
 - Oregano
- Why go through the trouble of certifying your garden as a Nebraska Pollinator Habitat?
 - There's a long list of pollinator plants, some of which we already have in our gardens.
 - When pollinators benefit, so do we.
 - It's a learning experience for myself and a teaching tool for others.
 - The form is easy to fill out, and it's relatively inexpensive to apply.
 - All of the above



Answers

- b
- True
- a
- a, b, c & e
- a, b, c & d
- a, b, d & e
- e



Hoverfly



Delaware Skipper on Echinacea



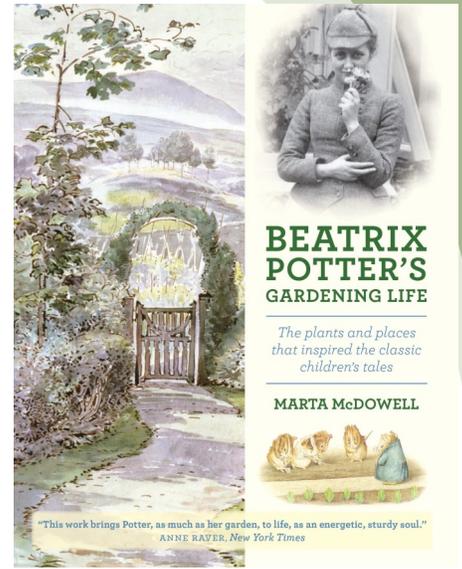
Bumble Bee and Wild Senna

Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life by Marta McDowell

Book Review By Lorraine Urban, Master Gardener

I came upon this book, incidentally, when I was looking through our considerable home library for something to quiet my soul and redirect my thoughts after the loss of a couple of people who were very close to me. I found a small-in-all-three-dimensions book with the title *Garden Lovers Quotations*, which was just what the title said. I read through it several times, a few quotes at a time. It contained such gems as “All gardeners know better than other gardeners,” identified as a Chinese proverb, and “In order to live off a garden you practically have to live in it,” attributed to someone not familiar to me: Frank McKinney Hubbard.

After about the 4th time through I decided to see whether or not I could get more copies to give as gifts. (I have a lot of friends who are gardeners.) The selector of these quotations was Helen Exley; information about her was easily found on-line. A couple of her other books sounded interesting to me. One was *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life*. I had read about Beatrix Potter before and had a copy of her *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* with a 1907 copyright. Amazon was able to send it to me, as well as 2 copies of *Garden Lovers Quotations*.



Beatrix was born in the 1860s in London, England. Her family summered in Dalguise, in Scotland, and this is where her interest in gardening began. Her success as a writer/illustrator began earlier than for some authors. She was making enough money to buy her own property while still in her early 30s! She chose the “country” over the “city.”

Why did I like this book (and think you might, too)? It's loaded with black/white/sepia photographs, and technicolor pictures of her plants and woodland animals, drawn/painted by her. It tells much about her gardens, and, as she had several properties, she had several gardens. It tells of exchanging plants with friends, learning garden tips and lore from such unlikely people as the postman, her gradual change in attitude toward the woodland creatures she used for her stories and illustrations. There are 2 appendices in the back: A list of plants that Beatrix Potter grew in her gardens, and a list of plants in her books.

At a time when (at this writing) we are experiencing the unsettling caused by the pandemic of the Covid 19 virus, this is a book to take you away from that. Gardening does that, too, but most of us can not do that 8 hours a day. When you need a break, pick up your copy of *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life*, if you are lucky enough to have one.



Mushrooms in the woods, watercolor with pencil



Summer Border at Hill Top

The CoVictory Garden

By Vikki Brandstetter, Master Gardener

Gardening is not cancelled. A worldwide pandemic can't stop the seasons from changing or a seed from sprouting. Thank goodness! It's the most hopeful thing we can do and shows that we have faith in something other than ourselves. Americans have a way of stepping up to the plate and solving problems while taking care of others.



A victory garden poster from 1945.
Food and Drug Administration

“War gardens” were planted during WWI. There was a severe food crisis in Europe and Americans planted these gardens so that we could export more food to our allies. Victory Gardens were grown during WWII. This campaign differed from WWI gardens in that it focused on feeding America and maintaining the strength and physical health of the U.S. domestic population. We needed to be healthy and strong to support our country. An estimated 20 million Victory Gardens produced nearly *40% of the nation's fruits and vegetables*. WOW!

Currently seeds and six packs of veggies are flying off the shelves of garden centers and hardware stores across the country. The motivation is most definitely the same thing that drove our ancestors to plant, tend and harvest Victory Gardens so many years ago. They were anxious and worried about the future. Most of us are feeling that same way – and powerless in the face of our current condition. But hey! We can grow a garden. We can help feed ourselves and our neighbors. We can escape the house, the news and our computer screens for an activity that is empowering and satisfying. Anyone with a balcony or sunny window ledge can grow their own salad or herbs. “Cut and come again” lettuce, radishes and parsley are perfect for your CoVictory Container Garden.

So grow something for yourself and for your neighbors. It is good for your mind, body and soul.

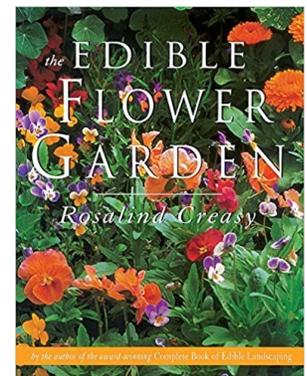
Learning About Edible Landscape

By Betty Hamata, Master Gardener

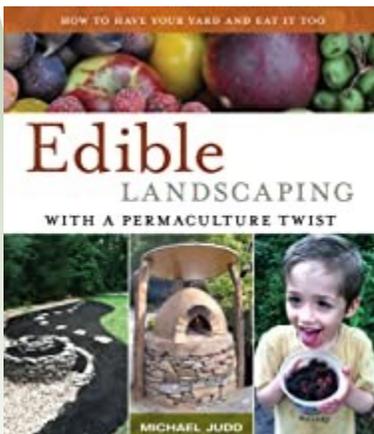
While viewing a program on Iowa PBS television that talked about edible landscaping, I was interested in what this was. They interviewed an employee at the New Pioneer food co-op office building in Iowa City, Iowa. They had created an "edible oasis" in a small yard of their office building, which was actually a big two story Victorian house in the middle of the city. The yard was planted with several varieties of fruit-bearing shrubs—serviceberry, gooseberry, currant, dwarf apple; perennials—rhubarb, strawberry, and asparagus; as well as annual vegetables and edible flowers. Management consisted of cutting plants back or pulling plants out.

I grow lots of flowers in my yard and the vegetable garden is in a separate part of the farm. After researching what "edible landscaping" is, I learned that any fruit or vegetable that serves an architectural purpose and produces food can be used in landscaping. A few examples could be asparagus grown for its ferny greenery, strawberries grown as a ground cover, squash and cucumber vines growing up a trellis, lettuce growing along pathways and borders (or chard with its bright colorful stalks.) A few herb plants by the kitchen door are easy to grow and harvest and a lot of them have a pleasant aroma. Marigolds repel some insects in tomatoes, so this year I will plant a couple of tomato plants among the many marigolds I plant.

Edible flowers can add color and interest. If you don't use pesticides, several flowers can be eaten. Violets, pansies and nasturtiums make tasty additions to salads. Minced rose petals fold into butter for an exotic spread. Lavender can be used in cookies or lavender lemonade. Other flowers than can be eaten include calendula petals, chamomile flower heads, chrysanthemum petals, daylily buds and petals, honeysuckle flowers, lavender petals, rose petals with bases removed, tulip petals, pansy petals and violet flowers. A good source for edible flower information is by Rosalind Creasy, *The Edible Flower Garden*.



I also read an article on Haskap berries, also known as honeyberry (*Lonicera caerulea*) that I was not familiar with. This is a non-climbing, very hardy shrub in the honeysuckle family and related to blueberry and huckleberry. This shrub blooms in very early spring and frost does not seem to affect the blooms. The fruits are oblong and blue and they taste like a cross between blueberry and grape. They do need two different cultivars to pollinate each other. They are a little tart, but make great jams, ice creams, pies, pastries and wine. I do not have these, but a close source is Jung Seed from Randolph, Wisconsin.



Since we are all pretty much homebound these days, a good source for edible landscaping is the book *Edible Landscaping with a Permaculture Twist: How to Have Your Yard and Eat it Too* by Michael Judd. You can also source edible landscaping on Google. Be sure to include the phrase "site:.edu" after your search words to bring up research-based sites.