

- The Meristem -

Winter
2019

WHERE WE CULTIVATE GROWTH

NEBRASKA EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER



MG Notes

By Kathleen Cue, Assistant Extension Educator

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Resources

Websites:

Mastgardener.unl.edu

GroBigRed.com

Facebook:

[Nebraska Master Gardeners](#)

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Next newsletter deadline: April 15

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

Welcome to the first edition of The Meristem. Kudos go to **Kathy Meyer** and **Mary Spath** for their willingness to take on this project. The goal for this newsletter is to be the “glue” in providing updates about the program as well as educating each other on what is happening, a newsletter written by Master Gardeners for Master Gardeners.

The newsletter will come out four times each year, clumping months together more by season rather than calendar year. Please consider submitting articles for the newsletter. Remember that your time spent researching a subject and writing the article count as volunteer time. For 2019, articles are due April 15, June 15 and September 15, with the newsletter going out on the 22nd of that month.

Be sure to check out the MG Education schedule on page 4. By paying your annual \$20 fee, Master Gardeners have access to all of these classes. In addition, watch for advanced Master Gardener classes that will be scheduled this year. My intention is to provide these at no extra cost, but if there is a charge, I will arrange to make it a nominal one.

With March here, I am reminded that this marks one year I have been your Master Gardener Program Coordinator and horticulture educator. I appreciate the suggestions and insights you’ve shared, as well as the kindness you have shown. My accountability region covers 10 counties and consists of Burt, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Dodge, Saunders, Stanton, Thurston, Wayne and Washington counties. The mechanics behind accountability regions start with an understanding of how things used to work. Fifty years ago, the Extension “agent” as s/he was known, answered every question that came into the office, regardless if it was on livestock, food preservation, 4-H or gardening. Today’s Extension has changed, allowing Extension Educators to focus in their area of expertise. Nebraska Extension educators are assigned accountability regions based on population size.

Seven new people will be joining the Master Gardener program this year as MG Interns. Please welcome **Vikki Brandstetter**, **Nancy Hoppes**, **Melanie Kaeding**, **Diane Lee**, **Ramona Miller-Heiss**, **Lisa O’Connell** and **Jennifer Potadle** as you see them in class or encounter them during a volunteer activity. We are looking forward to working with them!

Testing Your Knowledge

By Kathy Meyer, Washington County Master Gardener

Source of Information - Pruning Fruit Trees EC1233

1. Which of these answers is NOT a pruning objective for fruit trees?

- a. Ensure a healthy root system by root pruning at planting
- b. Get maximum light exposure for leaves and fruit
- c. Produce good sized, high-quality fruit
- d. Obtain a leader that is slightly longer than the lateral side branches
- e. Increase air flow in the tree

2. Which of these answers is NOT correct when pruning and planting a new fruit tree?

- a. Prune damaged roots back to sound tissue
- b. Bend healthy roots or dig a deeper hole to accommodate long roots
- c. Remove branches that form narrow angles less than 45 degrees with the trunk
- d. Remove branches spaced less than 6 inches from other branches

3. Which of these answers is NOT a good time to prune fruit trees?

- a. In late fall or early winter, as soon as the tree has lost its leaves
- b. In late spring before new growth begins
- c. During early summer, after vegetative growth is several inches long
- d. Anytime for damaged or diseased branches and suckers

4. Which of the following answers is NOT true about water sprouts?

- a. They are shoots that grow from the trunk or scaffold branches
- b. They are growths that arise from latent or dormant buds
- c. They are tiny fruits that have not fully developed
- d. They usually appear after excessive dormant pruning

5. True or False?

- a. Young unbranched trees or whips are pruned back to a healthy bud at a proper height based on tree type.
- b. Lopping shears are needed for pruning branches between 1- 2 inches in diameter.
- c. Pruning sealants can trap moisture and bacteria, increase disease, and actually impede the callusing process.
- d. Weighting down branches is an effective way to force branches into a good permanent position.
- e. When pruning a neglected fruit tree, it is important not to remove more than 1/3 of the tree each year.



Answers

- 1. d
- 2. b
- 3. a
- 4. c
- 5. a - True
b - False
c - True
d - True
e - True

Catalogs And Seeds

By Betty Hamata, Dodge County Master Gardener

Even before the holidays were over, the seed catalogs started coming. Now during the winter months is a good time to look at the beautiful flower and vegetable varieties to plan what we want to grow this coming year. Burpee, Parks, and Gurneys are some of the many catalogs I receive. I am always intrigued with the new varieties, especially if they are also an AAS, All American Selections, winner. All American Selections are varieties that have been tested under a range of conditions over several years and have performed exceptionally.

Seed packets have basic planting and care instructions and often include a picture. Tomato packets usually have disease resistance designated, with letters such as V, for Verticillium wilt resistance; F, Fusarium wilt resistance; EB, resistance to Early Blight; LB, Late Blight resistant; or any number of other diseases. Since zinnias are so mildew-prone in our humid summers, selecting zinnias that are mildew resistant is a plus.

It is important to have the year stamped on the bottom of the packet. Sometimes if I buy a large packet of seeds, I cannot use all the seeds at once. I have seeds that are several years old that I never got around to planting. How do I know if the seeds are viable? A germination test can be conducted! About 20 seeds spread between two moist paper towels, placed on a paper plate, covered with another paper plate, and then put in a warm spot for about 10 days will be enough to get seeds to germinate. Next, count the seeds with emerging small white radicles. If the percentage is 75% or higher, the seeds have good viability. I have started marigold, zinnia, pepper, radish, lettuce and bean seeds that were over two years old and have had good results.

Low temperature, humidity and oxygen levels slow biological and chemical reactions, thereby slowing aging of seeds. Store leftover seeds in air tight containers, placing them in the freezer or refrigerator.

Why buy and start seeds, when transplants are so easily available, you ask? The cost is a huge factor. A four pack of plants can cost up to two or three dollars while a whole seed packet with many seeds runs from two to three dollars. Also many of the newer varieties are not available as transplants yet. I plant so many flowers, so this is a big savings for me.

Have a great year out in the garden!



Planning Your Garden

By Mary Spath, Dodge County Master Gardener

During the winter months, my thoughts always go to wishing I were outside and doing something with plants, regardless if this “doing” is only being in their presence or actually digging in the dirt by planting or weeding. Nevertheless, I know that sooner or later the calendar pages turn and the temperature will rise so that the time to start that garden is here.

Instead of just wishing the cold days away, there are a few things that we can do in the winter months to make springtime more productive in the vegetable garden. According to seedsavers.org, we should begin by planning what, how much and where to plant those beloved plants for the most productive harvest.

Start by listing out the vegetables you would like to harvest this coming growing season, planning to plant those vegetables that you love to eat and share. Know what your soil is telling you by doing a soil test and making the necessary adjustments. Also, be honest and think about how much time you really want to spend in the garden this year. Are family activities becoming more frequent so that the hours you are available to tackle the tasks limited? If so, look for alternative gardening methods to ease the load of maintaining your garden.

One of these time-saving methods may be to simply mulch between the rows of your vegetables. You can use straw, wood chips, shredded hardwood or organic mulches. Nicole Stoner, UNL Extension Educator writes in [“Prepare Vegetable Gardens for Dry Summer Conditions”](#) that grass clippings can be used if shallow applications of 1 to 2 inches of clippings are applied and then allowed to dry out before applying more to the top. If those clippings have been sprayed with herbicides, do not use them on your vegetables.

It is good to look back at where you had your vegetables planted last year and rotate your plantings. Rotating your vegetables can help discourage many diseases in your garden. Vegetable crops in the same family are often affected by the same diseases and insects, which can stay in the soil. Annually rotating your plants is recommended as written in [“Crop Rotation in the Vegetable Garden”](#) from Richard Jaure, Department of Horticulture from Iowa State University.

Also, think back to what did and did not work last growing season. John Fech in his article [“In the Vegetable Garden – Looking Toward 2018”](#) tells us that creating a good growing environment helps the plant grow and produce a good healthy crop. Maybe you can trellis your melons this year to keep those vines from underfoot or do some pruning to other plants to increase airflow. Think of ways you can create the proper spacing of your garden plants so that they all have room to thrive during the growing season.



**2019 Master Gardener/ProHort Education Schedule in
Dodge County** (All program held at the Dodge County Extension Office, 1206
West 23rd Street, Fremont.)

Date	Time	Class (Topics subject to change)	Instructor
Wed., March 6	9:00 am	Basic Botany	Terri James, Extension Educator, Statewide MG Coordinator
	1:00 pm	Bug Boot Camp	Jonathan Larson, Jody Green, Extension Educators-Entomology
Wed., March 13	9:00 am	Soils and Composting	Scott Evans, Douglas-Sarpy County Horticulture Program Coordinator
	1:00 pm	The Basics of Landscape Design	Kathleen Cue, Nebraska Extension Educator-Horticulture
Wed., March 20	9:00 am	Weed Management	Mary Anna Anderson, Master Gardener
	1:00 pm	Insects and Diseases of Vegetables	John Porter, Nebraska Extension Educator-Urban Agriculture
Wed., March 27	9:00 am	Insects and Diseases of Trees	Laurie Stepanek, Nebraska Forest Service
	1:00 pm	Tree Pruning and Management	Graham Herbst, Nebraska Forest Service
Wed., April 3	9:00 am	Turfgrass Management	John Fech, Nebraska Extension Educator-Horticulture
	1:00 pm	Vertebrate Pests	Soni Cochran, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster Co.
Wed., April 10 *Potluck snack day	9:00 am	9 am to 2 pm, Pest Management Approaches	Larry Schulze, Retired Professor Emeritus, UNL
	2:00 pm	Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training	Cindy Brison, Nebraska Extension Educator-Food and Nutrition
•Wed., April 17	9:00 am to 4:00 pm	Snow Date	Make up for classes cancelled due to snow
Wed., June 5	1:00 to 5:00 pm	Diagnostic Lab	Kathleen Cue
*April 10 is potluck snack day. You may bring a snack to share (optional).	Please be environmentally-friendly and bring your own coffee cup.		•Classes are unlikely to be cancelled for 1-2 inches of snow. 402.727.2775 to check.

