

- The Meristem -

Winter
2020

WHERE WE CULTIVATE GROWTH

NEBRASKA EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER



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Resources for Master Gardeners:

Websites:

Mastergardener.unl.edu

GroBigRed.com

Facebook:

[Nebraska Master Gardeners](https://www.facebook.com/NebraskaMasterGardeners)

Send articles for publishing to:

mspath2@unl.edu

Next newsletter deadline: April 15

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

MG Notes

By Kathleen Cue, Extension Educator

Promoting MG program

As you plan your We Teach for the coming season, please take 7-10 minutes at the beginning to inform your audience about the Master Gardener program and what you find rewarding with your involvement. If you have questions or want to run something past me, please feel free to do so. We want to raise awareness for and greater involvement in the program. Thanks!

Congrats

Congratulations to Sandy and Jerry Grove who have been recognized by the state for their 10 years of service as Master Gardener volunteers. They will be receiving a handmade bowl constructed of local walnut by Nebraska artisan Thed Alles.

Congratulations to John Mitchell for achieving 40 hours of service to qualify as a certified Master Gardener. John earned his certificate through his participation in the Growing Together Nebraska program in Dodge County. This project raises fresh produce for the food insecure.

Congratulations to Betsy Anderson for her grant-writing work to make the funding of a pollinator garden a reality at Veterans Tribute Plaza in Blair. The Blair Community Foundation has awarded \$2600 to the project, as well as additional funding from the Papio Missouri River NRD to put in seven son trees.

Projects in Need of MG Leadership

These include:

- A MG to take on leadership of coordinating advanced classes.
- Washington County is launching a Growing Together Nebraska project to raise vegetables for the food insecure. This project needs Master Gardeners with vegetable growing experience.
- An "Ask the MG" table is featured twice monthly on Saturdays at the Blair Farmers Market. A MG to coordinate the table is needed.

Phone Duty

Since May 1 falls on a Friday, the 2020 start of the Master Gardener helpline will begin on May 4 and will conclude on September 30. Washington County will be staffing phones on Mondays and Dodge and Saunders County MGs in Dodge County on Wednesdays and Fridays.

This Season's Volunteer Activity

Please remember to let me know if you are changing where you are volunteering your time in 2020. This will help me to focus on coordinating projects that need more attention. Thanks

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California Garden Tour

By Betty Hamata, Master Gardener

While visiting Los Angeles relatives this past January, I went to the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California. These beautiful gardens were founded by Henry E. and Arabella Huntington in 1919. Henry was an exceptional businessman who built a financial empire in southern California. He had special interests in books, art and gardens. Mr. Huntington had one of the finest research libraries and spectacular art collections, having both a European and an American gallery.

There are a dozen principle gardens on 207 acres of the grounds. I was most interested in the Chinese gardens as they were just completed this last year. Here the apricot and cherry trees were blooming as well as the azaleas and camellias. I also enjoyed the Japanese garden as the cherry trees were blooming there too. The Desert and Rose Gardens are world famous for their beauty. The aloes were blooming but workers were cutting back the roses. Roses need to be pruned back even in California. I was amazed how little hand watering is done here, as every garden is set up with soaker hoses or drip irrigation. These practices really cut down on labor as they can leave the hoses down all year to water even during the winter.

We were able to visit the Los Angeles County Arboretum, where there are 127 acres of paths, trees and gardens. We were there on a Saturday and were glad there was a tram to ride as the grounds are hilly and there are several gardens to view. The Tallac Knoll has a vast collection of trees from

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Firestick cactus in L.A. Arboretum, Arcadia California.
This cactus turns red in cooler winter weather



Backyard in San Juan Capistrano, California
with desert landscaping

California Garden Tour

By Betty Hamata, Master Gardener

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around the world. The Grace Kallam Perennial gardens, African and Australia gardens and tropical greenhouses with orchids were all beautiful. Constructed in 1885, the Queen Anne Cottage is an example of Victorian elegance. This was the cottage used in the TV series “Fantasy Island”. Several peacocks roam freely through the property. Although the Arboretum is located in Arcadia, California on two busy streets it felt peaceful and quiet.

California is in the midst of a yearlong drought, but in December they did benefit from some rainfall so the hills and yards and roadways were green and blooming. While in Palm Springs, I was told that “reclaimed water” is used to water the hillsides, medians and even some of the golf courses. Every so often, I could see giant rain barrels that captured what little rain that did fall in the area. A lot of the resorts, houses and businesses use desert landscaping with cactus and rock hardscaping to cut down on water usage.

A wonderful time was had visiting all these beautiful gardens in California, especially when the landscape is so brown in Nebraska this time of year.



Betty Hamata in Desert garden at Huntington Gardens.



The Japanese garden at Huntington Gardens in San Marina, California

Test Your Knowledge of Seed Packets and Seed Storage

By Kathy Meyer, Master Gardener

Sources: EC1953 *Understanding the Seed Packet* and EC2090 *Seed Storage and Germination* .

Both Extension Circulars are available at: <https://marketplace.unl.edu/extension/extpubs> .

1. Seeds should be stored:
 - a. In a cool place.
 - b. In a dry place.
 - c. In a closed container.
 - d. In the original package.
 - e. All of the above.
2. On a seed packet, what does the plant requirement term "PARTIAL SUN" mean?
 - a. Three hours of full sun per day.
 - b. Four hours of direct sun per day.
 - c. Five hours of dappled sunlight per day.
 - d. Six hours of diffused sunlight per day.
 - e. All of the above qualify.
3. Some seeds are sold by weight. Approximately how many carrot seeds are in 1 ounce?
 - a. 46,000
 - b. 23,000
 - c. 13,000
 - d. 5,000
 - e. 1,200
4. Which seeds remain viable for over 5 years in optimal storage conditions?
 - a. Carrots
 - b. Lima Beans
 - c. Sweet Corn
 - d. Lettuce
 - e. Parsnips
5. Which crop requires a minimum soil temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit to germinate?
 - a. Lettuce
 - b. Parsnips
 - c. Cucumbers
 - d. Beets
 - e. Tomatoes
6. How many days of optimal conditions does it take to germinate pepper seeds?
 - a. 8 days
 - b. 10 days
 - c. 12 days
 - d. 14 days
 - e. 16 days
7. Which crop has seeds that are viable for more than 2 years?
 - a. Leeks
 - b. Onions
 - c. Parsnips
 - d. Parsley
 - e. Salsify



Answers

1. e
2. b
3. b
4. d
5. c
6. a
7. a

Interview: With John Wilson - Tekamah Pollinator Garden

By Diane Lee, Master Gardener



Area Master Gardeners helping with planting of the garden. L to R Ron Fechner, Betsy Anderson, Ramona Miller-Heiss, and Kim Neumann

The Idea

The Tekamah Pollinator Garden started with a wish, an idea, and then a plan. Publisher Mike Wood from Lee Agri Media expressed interest in beautifying an area just north of the facility in Tekamah to Burt County Extension Educator John Wilson. Mr. Wood asked “Can you make the area pretty?” and Mr. Wilson replied, “How about we make it pretty AND educational?” Wilson explained the plight of pollinators, issues of concern, and need for friendly ecosystems to Mike Wood.

The Plan

Wilson then contacted Kathleen Cue, who then initiated the design and plan for the garden. The total project area is a quarter of an acre with the main part of the garden measuring 100 feet x 100 feet (10,000 square feet). The area needing transformation was all turf with a few evergreens.

The Funds

Funding for the project came from numerous sources. The first grant totaling \$19,000 was received by the Greener Town’s grant program through the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. A \$3,000 grant was received by the Public Information and Education Grant (PIE) from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The Tekamah Keno fund provided \$10,000 as part of the community benefit program. Lesser monies were also provided by the Papio Missouri River Natural Resource District, Lee Agri Media, Burt County Pheasants Forever, and Nebraska Extension Burt County. Cost for the first phase of the project totaled \$44,000.

The Garden

The Tekamah Pollinator Garden currently consists of sixty-five species and a total of 1800 plants. A massive planting operation was initiated the second and third week of June 2019. Over 25 people volunteered their time to complete the planting including two individuals from the statewide arboretum. Four different nurseries provided stock; Blue Bird, Mulhall’s, Siffing’s, and Faller in York. Monarch Watch at Kansas University in Lawrence Kansas sent fifty whorled milkweed right before the grand opening in September which were promptly planted.

The Garden Grows

Garden work extended to a grassy strip that wrapped around the corner of the Lee Agri building. Grass and rock were removed and replaced with pollinator plants such as allium, false indigo, ironweed, butterfly milkweed (‘Hello Yellow’), buffalograss, St. John’s wort, liatris, little bluestem, and giant sacaton grass.

Garden Features

Visitors will find plant labels with the scientific names and cultivar listed. The sidewalks are all handicapped accessible and three benches provide a seating option. A picnic table with benches is also available. There is a mailbox labeled “Garden Info” at the end of one of the sidewalks that contains free information about the garden. Approximately 15 – 20 bee hotels are in the garden, providing pollinators a place to lay eggs. An area of bare soil with no mulch is available for ground-dwelling insects.

Future Vision

Phase two of the garden will begin this spring with removal of several silver maple trees and one green ash tree. These will be replaced with trees that are pollinator-friendly. Trees in front of the publishing facility will be removed as well. Multiple viburnum plants will be added to the garden. A pergola will be built over the picnic table and climbing vines added. In the bare soil area, a few herbs such as dill and parsley will be planted. Larger information signs will be incorporated throughout the garden as well. There has been discussion to promote this garden through Lee Agri Media publications in the upper Midwest to enhance interest and visitation.

Memorials and/or Sponsorships

Donations are encouraged. If you would like more information about a memorial opportunity or sponsorship, please contact John Wilson, jwilson3@unl.edu, or 402-374-2929.

Seed-starting Using the Winter Sowing Method

By Vikki Brandstetter, Master Gardener

I was recently introduced to a new method of seed starting. The idea of growing annuals and perennials from seed has been an attractive option to buying started plants but doing so has some drawbacks. Seeds are much less expensive than buying plants in the spring, but it can be labor intensive and requires special equipment and indoor space.

Winter sowing requires only seed starting mix, seeds (perennial or hardy annuals), empty gallon jugs and a sunny spot in your yard. These jugs become mini greenhouses. Cut the milk jugs almost in half - about 3-4 inches from the bottom - leaving a 2 inch "hinge". Add pre-moistened seed starter and then your seeds. Add a marker to the inside with the type of seed and date planted. Any outside marking will likely fade. Tape your mini greenhouse shut with duct tape. Put the cap back on the jug and place them outside in a sunny spot.

Some instructions tell you to keep the cap on until germination. I chose to follow that line of thinking. You'll have to keep an eye on them to make sure they stay moist but don't get too wet. Another advantage to this method is it eliminates the "hardening off" step.

I'm including two links for further instruction and information. The first link is to the video from "Garden Answer" and is the one that inspired me.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgNTAJgW_w4
<https://extension.psu.edu/successful-winter-seed-sowing>



Vikki Brandstetter with her new planting



Plantings ready to go.

MG Notes: By Kathleen Cue, Extension Educator

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Corona Virus

The Center for Disease Control is reminding us that it is a good idea to wash our hands thoroughly and regularly. With this in mind, if a local coronavirus outbreak is present when a Master Gardener project workday or We Teach session is scheduled, do not hesitate to re-schedule or cancel altogether.

