

The Green Patch

Welcome Spring! That means the Plant Fair is just around the corner!

Mark your calendar for Friday, April 29 and Saturday, April 30.

More details pages 2, 3 and 4.

April 1, 2011

Volume 3, Issue 2

It's Spring!

By Deb Daehnke, Wayne County Master Gardener

Spring officially began March 20, and those tantalizingly warmer temperatures we experienced on some days have said one thing to gardeners – the Northeast Nebraska Master Gardeners Plant Fair is just around the corner.

This year's fair will culminate 19 years of providing Northeast Nebraskans with informative speakers, children's area, fabulous vendors and unique plants. Modeled after the Spring Affair held in Lincoln each year, the Plant Fair offers local gardeners opportunities for unusual or tried-and-true plants without driving a long distance. This year's dates are April 29-30 at the Cox Activity Center located on the campus of Northeast Community College in Norfolk, NE. Starting at 6:00 pm Friday evening, early birds can start their spring garden shopping. Saturday hours are 9:00 am – 3:00 pm with the first of four speakers beginning at 9:00 am.

This year's speakers will cover cooking with herbs, tried and true plants, landscaping tips and tricks, and dealing with those garden critters that give you fits. Don't know what's a vole or a mole? A pocket gopher? Come hear from a speaker who offers methods to deal with these troublesome critters. (see a complete list of topics and speakers elsewhere in *The Green Patch*)

The Youth Horticulture Contest is back for its second year and offers entrants an opportunity to test their skills in plant identification. Awards in different age groups will be awarded at approximately 12:30 pm.

Don't meet the criteria to enter the Youth Horticulture Contest? How about a Garden Hat Contest? Also in its second year, create a snazzy garden hat, which is limited only by your creativity. Enter your creation at 10:30am with voting done by fair patrons throughout the morning. Awards will be given out starting at 12:30 pm.

Proceeds from the Plant Fair are used to provide horticulture scholarships for students at Northeast Community College. Come see what's new for spring! Catch the speakers' presentations, enjoy lunch at the food stand, and help us provide local students opportunities to further their education in horticulture.

Your patronage is always appreciated. Hope to see you at the 2011 Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Plant Fair.

Wichita Garden Show

By Karen Zierke, Pierce County Master Gardener

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Early Thursday morning, March 3, seven 'bright-eyed and bushy tailed' Master Gardeners headed south to the Wichita Garden Show. Several of our ladies competed in the garden hat contest with some very creative entries.

We were amazed at the five 'great gardens' whose theme was "Gardens in the Movies." We could hardly imagine how much pre-planning and work it has to be to create these living gardens complete with large trees, blooming flowers, water features, buildings, landscaping, and still ties to their chosen movie. There are smaller gardens, floral and fine art exhibitions that the public also can cast a vote for their favorite. This huge Century II round convention center has vendors representing all the gardening aspects and even some not. Who can resist? Musical entertainment can be enjoyed each evening as well as during the day. All of us took advantage of some of the seminars (to add to our educational hours).

By early Thursday evening seven tired Master Gardeners retired to their motel to be back early on Friday morning to absorb more gardening experiences and by mid-afternoon we were heading north to Nebraska and home. The weather was great, we found a very good restaurant in Salina, no traveling problems, and a great time was had by all.

Those making the trip were Joyce Eucker, Marjorie Jansen, ViAnn Stange, Darlene Bennett, Alice Johnson, Vlasta Zrust and Karen Zierke.



<http://www.wichitagardenshow.com/>

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.

Saturday, April 30
**We have some outstanding speakers lined up
 to educate everyone on various topics.**

Below is information on our four speakers.
 Be sure to attend and learn from the experts.

9:00 AM—A Bit of Sage With Rosemary is a talk that will feature how you can use basic herbs in every day cooking. From ancient times people have valued the benefits of using herbs and the practice of cooking with fresh herbs is becoming more popular today. Come and learn how herbs can enrich your life and improve your diet. After the talk stop by her cooking station in the main floor and sample some culinary delights.

Rosemary Frey, retired National Park Service Ranger/Historian has studied and used herbs both professionally and personally. She has a MA in history from the University of South Dakota and moved back to Nebraska upon retirement in 2007. She joined Master Gardeners at that time and besides raising her own herbs she is an avid vegetable and flower gardener.



10:15 AM—New, Plus Tried and True, Garden Ideas— Shirley will give a realistic look at some highly promoted new plants, keeping in perspective the tried & true performers we know can be successful in northeast Nebraska. Gardeners need to recognize that 'new' is not always 'better' & you can't believe all you read or see in the catalogs. A wonderful picture of a spectacular flower gives no hint of how difficult it is to grow, if it is high maintenance, has poor plant habit, etc.

Shirley Hamernik, recently retired from Bluebird Nursery, Inc., spent 53 years working in many areas of the business. An All America Flower judge from 1989 through 2009, she also was responsible for seed & custom label ordering, the wholesale catalog, etc.

11:30 AM—Rabbits, Voles, Moles, and More—Ideas for Identifying & Stopping Their Damage—

Stephen will be explaining how to identify, prevent, and resolve damage from vertebrate species that attack gardens. He will also discuss what doesn't work and why it doesn't.

Stephen Vantassel Since 2004, Stephen Vantassel has been the Project Coordinator of Distance Education for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Among his many duties, Stephen is responsible for managing the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management, <http://icwdm.org>, the nation's leading source for research-based wildlife damage information on the web.

Stephen is well known to the wildlife control industry through his many articles in *Wildlife Control Technology Magazine* and *the Probe* and presentations on wildlife damage management topics. He founded Wildlife Removal Service, Inc., headquartered in his hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts which he sold in 1998. His achievements include founding the Massachusetts Association of Problem Animal Controllers, NWCOA certification, NWCOA Educator of the Year (2008), and the authoring of three books.

He is a member of the NWCOA Certification Committee and assists the wildlife damage management community by being a clearing house of information related to the industry. His latest project is the National Wildlife Control Training Program which seeks to provide a national standard for the licensing of WCOs.

Stephen has a Doctorate in Theology with the Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana. His dissertation, published under the title *Dominion over Wildlife? An Environmental-Theology of Human-Wildlife Relations* (Wipf and Stock, 2009), defends the consumptive use of wildlife against the claims of the animal rights movement. He desires to use this theological training to educate the public about the vital role that the fur and animal control industries play in responsible ecological stewardship.



1:00 PM—Landscaping Design Basics and Mistakes— Elizabeth will focus on an introduction to landscape design, the basic principles of landscape design, and some common mistakes that people make.

Elizabeth Killinger is an Extension Educator with a horticulture focus who works with the University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension office in Hall County. Elizabeth received her Bachelor's Degree in Horticulture with a landscape design emphasis and her Master's Degree in Public Horticulture from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. She provides horticulture related programs for youth and adults, acts as the Central Nebraska Master Gardener Coordinator, answers horticulture-based related client questions, and is a regular panel member on NET's Backyard Farmer program. She and her husband, Justin, live in Wolbach, where they own and operate a feed store focusing in livestock feeds. Other interests include scrapbooking, baking, and gardening.

Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener 2011 Plant Fair



Proceeds support Horticulture Scholarships to Northeast Community College & Educational Speakers.

Great Educational Speakers!

Free Admission!

Demonstrations! Discover Herbs

Great Vendors!

Children's Activities!

Door Prizes!

Lunch Stand Provided by Master Gardeners!

Friday, April 29 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.
Saturday, April 30, 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Northeast Community College—Cox Activity Center
801 E. Benjamin Ave., Norfolk, Nebraska

Educational Speakers (in the Theater) and Events:

Saturday:

9:00 a.m. **Rosemary Frey**, Master Gardener in Training
“A Bit of Sage with Rosemary”

10:15 a.m. **Shirley Hamernik**, Bluebird Nursery
“New, Plus Tried & True, Garden Ideas”

10:30-Noon **Garden Hat Contest Voting** —details below

11:00 a.m. **Youth Horticulture ID Contest**—details below

11:30 a.m. **Stephan Vantassel**, UNL Extension
“Rabbits, Voles, Moles, & More—Identifying and Stopping Their Damage”

12:30 p.m. **Master Gardener Awards and Contest Awards**

1:00 p.m. **Elizabeth Killinger**, UNL Extension
“Landscaping Design Basics & Mistakes”

Coordinated by Northeast Nebraska Master Gardeners

Sponsored by:



Show features include:

- * **Demonstrations:** Discover Herbs!
- * **Children's Garden:** Special activities for children to learn a love of gardening!
- * **Door Prizes** drawn hourly!
- * **Great Vendors** selling flowers, herbs & plants as well as mulch, garden décor, sculptures, home décor, garden tools, etc!
- * **Ask The Master Gardener** booth will feature a Master Gardener member on hand to answer your gardening questions!
- * **New perennials and annuals** on hand for sale!
- * **Locally grown houseplants** for sale, grown by Master Gardener members!
- * **Plant Sitter Area:** Place to keep your purchases until you have completed shopping and listening to speakers!
- * **Delivery assistance** to your vehicle!
- * Bring a Decorated **Garden Hat** April 30, 9:00—10:30 am and enter the contest. Voting will be from 10:30 to Noon. Winner receives prize awarded at 12:30pm!
- * **Youth Horticulture ID Contest:** Youth ages 8-18 years old (by January 1, 2011) are encouraged to participate. Participation is free. Pre-register by April 22 by contacting the UNL Extension office in Madison, Pierce, Stanton, or Wayne County. Three age brackets will receive prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place finishers.



Prizes: 1st Place - \$25 cash + \$25 gift certificate at the Master Gardener Plant Booths
2nd Place - \$10 cash + \$15 gift certificate at the Master Gardener Plant Booths
3rd Place - \$10 gift certificate at the Master Gardener Plant Booths

Contestants will be required to sight ID horticulture plants to the accepted common name. Plant list and study guides available at <http://madison.unl.edu/theplantfair> Look for Hort Contest Study Guide box on right bottom of page. Competition begins April 30 at 11:00 am and awards presented at 12:30 pm.

Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Plant Fair Youth Horticulture ID Contest

The Northeast Nebraska Master Gardeners will be hosting a Youth Horticulture ID Contest at their annual Plant Fair. All youth ages 8-18 years old (by January 1, 2011) are encouraged to participate. Participation is free but all participants must preregister by **April 22** by contacting the Extension office in Madison, Pierce, Stanton, or Wayne County. Prizes will be given for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place finishers in each of the age brackets. Contestants will be required to sight ID horticultural plants to the accepted common name. Plant list and study guides available on registration.

Contest Details:

Date: April 30, 2011

Time: Competition begins 11:00 AM, Awards Presented 12:30 PM

Location: Cox Activities Center, Northeast Community College, Norfolk

Prizes:

1st Place - \$25 cash + \$25 gift certificate at the Master Gardener Plant Booths

2nd Place - \$10 cash + \$15 gift certificate at the Master Gardener Plant Booths

3rd Place - \$10 gift certificate at the Master Gardener Plant Booths

The ages for brackets are broken down as follows:

Junior – 8-11 years old by January 1, 2011

Intermediate – 12-14 years old by January 1, 2011

Senior – 15-18 years old by January 1, 2011



Garden Hat Contest

By Carolyn Lingenfelter , Madison County Master Gardener

While the winter months have just ended and we are getting itchy fingers to do something garden related, well, how about getting that garden hat ready for the plant fair contest. Hats are always fun to see on others and fun to wear ourselves. The contest was started with this in mind and to add something new to the Plant Fair.

Robin and I, as last year's winner and runner-up in the Decorated Garden Tea Party Hat Contest, will join in the fun, however we will take our name out of the competition. This doesn't mean that we couldn't help campaign for someone. (Ahhhem!!), if the price were right) Now, now JUST KIDDING.



Let's see lots of hats this year!

The Master Gardeners have put a new twist on the Hat Contest this year! Bring a decorated **Garden Hat** on Saturday, April 30 between 9:00 and 10:30am. Voting will be from 10:30am to noon with awards given at 12:30pm.

There will be two divisions—one for the Master Gardeners and one for the public. Popular vote will determine the winner with the Master Gardeners voting for the public entries and the public voting for the Master Gardener entries. The hats can be worn during the competition or placed on a table next to the WJAG radio broadcast booth. WJAG will help with information and votes. Winners will receive gift certificates to be used for plants at the MG booth.

Curb Appeal Tip

By Robin Jones , Madison County Master Gardener

March took us through the tail end of winter. This presents some challenges for curb appeal. If you didn't cut back your perennials last fall, do it now. While you wait for your plants to bloom, brighten up your plant beds with some colorful mulch. Not only will it improve curb appeal, it also protects your plants until they grow.

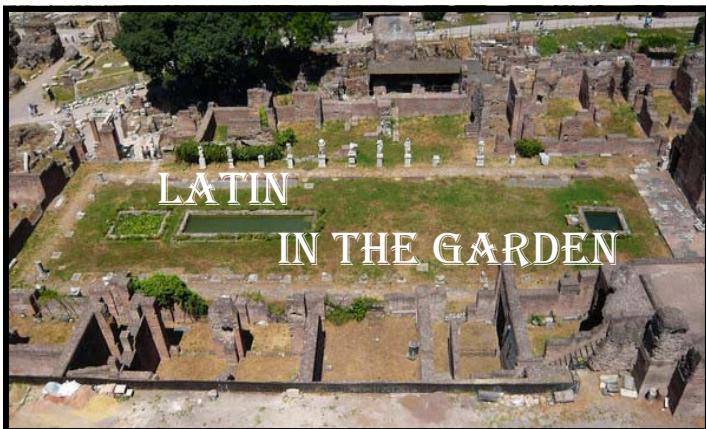


Clean Air Tip

By Marge Holland , Cuming County Master Gardener

If you received a house plant for Christmas or Valentine's Day, you are now surrounding yourself with cleaner air. Indoor houseplants safely and effortlessly clean the air you breathe by naturally recycling the air around them. Their innate filtration process can remove up to 87 percent of the VOCs (volatile organic compounds) from our homes. As nature's air purifiers, plants help to safeguard us from side effects connected with toxins such as formaldehyde, ammonia and benzene commonly found in carpets, upholstery and paint.

Scientific studies have found the following plants to be most effective in reducing household pollutants: English ivy, golden pothos, dwarf date palm, Boston fern, peace lily and gerbera daisy.



By Deb Daehnke, Wayne County Master Gardener

This is a new feature in *The Green Patch* that will focus on the Latin terms and pronunciations we use for common trees/shrubs, grasses, flowers, and herbs. The phonetic pronunciation of the Latin names will be included as well as a short description of the plant.

There can be many different common names of plants. When we need specific information, we may need the Latin name to help us find the plant we are really looking for. If you think Latin is intimidating, don't worry. Many others feel the same way. However, as you become more accustomed to using Latin words, they really do become much easier. Just pronounce it with confidence and it will sound just fine.

Grass *Bouteloua curtipendula*

boo te LOO uh kurt ih PEN dyoo luh

Sideoats grama is a medium-sized perennial bunch grass growing 15-30" tall. It has coarse, stiff leaves that are bluish-green in color, with a purplish cast in spring, drying to a reddish-brown or straw color in fall. The small oat-like seeds hang uniformly down one side of the stem. Rated as Zone 4, it does best in full sun with good drainage, but will grow in most types of soil. Ours is planted in our rock garden and receives very little supplemental watering, as it is drought tolerant. It is the state grass of Texas and there are no known serious pests. The sideoats are very attractive and they grow at a level that makes you want to touch them whenever you walk by the plant. As a bunch grass, we've had no problems with invasiveness.

Tree *Abies balsamea var. phanerolepis*

A-bees bal SAM ee a fa ner oh LEP is

Canaan Fir, also called West Virginia balsam fir, is a relatively new variety to the Christmas tree market. It has an attractive pyramidal habit and grows 40-55' high and 20-25' in width. It has a rich dark green to bluish green color with silvery stomatic bands on the underside of the needles and can grow in areas not well suited to other native firs. It can tolerate wetter soils than Fraser fir and since it buds late, is more resistant to spring frost injury. Some sources say it can grow in wet, poorly drained soils but we have ours in a well drained sunny site and most information suggests well-drained soils are preferable. Ours has grown moderately and has a nice shape so far; rated as Zone 4, it has suffered no winter burn where we have it planted on our acreage. If you have room for a variety of trees, this is a nice one to try. We found ours at a nursery in Nebraska but it is not an easily found tree in the nursery industry yet. You might find it at a Christmas tree farm if you don't have luck at a nursery.

Herb *Mentha x piperita f. citrada 'Chocolate'*

MEN thu pip er EE ta sit TRAY tuh

Chocolate mint, as its name implies, is one of the over 600 varieties of mint and as such can be invasive. I first planted chocolate mint as it sounded interesting, and although I have used it very little for flavoring, I continue to grow it for its scent. While in the garden, I'll grab a bunch of leaves and crush them in my hands, leaving a wonderful chocolate smell. Children love to go smell it or rub it (and as a mint, they can't seem to damage it). To contain mint, plant it in a buried container that sticks up about 2" above ground or in a regular pot. Every 3-5 years you'll have to repot. It has bronze-green foliage and small lavender blooms in late spring or early summer. As with most herbs, harvest the leaves prior to bloom for the best flavor. I read many accolades about its use in teas but saw it used in many other culinary endeavors such as flavoring coffee, milk and in desserts. A recipe for Banana Bread using chocolate mint, which I found on a certified organic herb grower's site, is included in this newsletter. Chocolate mint can give you a nice flavor without all the sugar. One article said it can cause skin irritation or allergic reactions so be careful when you touch it if you are prone to allergies. Zone 3.

Annual *Capsicum annuum*

KAP sih kum AN yoo um

Ornamental Pepper 'Black Pearl' is absolutely true to its name. It has semi-shiny foliage, tiny purple flowers, and pearl-shaped peppers that start as green, turning to dark purple and eventually to red. The colors are definitely eye-catching. It grows 18-24" tall and can be grown as a bedding plant or in a pot. It was an All America Selection winner in 2006. The peppers are not meant for eating but they are very HOT. As with most peppers, wearing gloves is advisable when handling this plant. It might self seed if the fruits drop and conditions are right. The foliage and fruits make this an outstanding specimen plant. When we planted this it did not receive much supplemental water but when it did, the color seemed to intensify in both the leaves and fruit. It looks great with chartreuse-colored companion plants.

Perennial *Eryngium yuccifolium*

er RIN jee um yuk ki FOH lee um

Rattlesnake Master is a Zone 4 native plant that resembles the yucca. It has long strap-like leaves and can be 2-5' tall with the central, long-stalked inflorescence. At the tip of the stems are prickly thistle-like flower heads that can be up to 1" in diameter. It has few pests or diseases and it is a wonderful accent plant. It needs a sunny location and well-draining soils, and will add texture to any location. It has a long tap root so moving it after it's established is discouraged. In optimum conditions it might self seed. Ours is only three years old so I have not seen self-seeding yet. It is located in our rock garden and receives very little additional water. That may be one reason why we've seen no self-seeding. Shade or soils that are too fertile will cause it to flop and poor drainage can cause rot. It has a spiny, arid look so is probably best used in rock garden environments or an area that will appreciate its prickly appearance.

Mint
v
Chocolate Banana Bread

1/2 Cup Butter	1 Teaspoon Baking Soda
1 Cup Brown Sugar	1 Teaspoon Salt
2 Extra Large Eggs	1/2 Cup Chopped Walnuts
1 Cup Mashed Banana	
1 Teaspoon Vanilla	
2 Cups Unbleached All Purpose Flour	
1/8 Cup Dried Crushed Chocolate Mint	

Preheat oven to 350F and butter loaf pan.
 Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, banana and vanilla.
 Add flour, soda, salt, chocolate mint and nuts. Mix Well.
 Bake for about an hour.
 A knife inserted in the middle should come out clean.
 Freezes well. Amount of Mint can be adjusted for taste.

Recipe from Mountain Valley Growers website

Poisonous Plants For Pets and Livestock

By Vicki Rundell , Pierce County Master Gardener In Training

Volume 3, Issue 2

Poisonings are one of the biggest risks to pets and livestock in a home, yard, or on a farm.

Many pet owners don't realize that many plants in the house, flower bed, garden, or pasture, can be toxic to pets. Many vegetables and flowers will only cause mild signs like vomiting and diarrhea, but some are toxic to the heart and could cause serious illness or death.

There's the curious cat that cannot resist nibbling on a few leaves of a plant. Holiday plants are especially toxic, with Easter lilies leading the list. Poinsettias, philodendrons and spider plants can also be poisonous to pets. Eating grapes or raisins on the vine can cause kidney failure and death in dogs. The toxic ingredient is unknown.

Dogs may chew on sticks from toxic plants when you're pruning. Watch puppies especially.

Never use cocoa bean mulch - like all chocolate products, it's dangerous to dogs. Cocoa bean mulch can also attract the attention of horses and cattle. The toxic principles in cocoa beans are caffeine and theobromine.

Dogs that eat cocoa bean mulch would probably start vomiting and develop diarrhea.

That would be followed by an increased heart rate, unsteadiness, and finally seizures, coma, and death. Horses might show signs of violent excitement and possibly death, if they ate enough. There is no antidote.

My brother's horse died from poison weed, possibly purple locoweed. Larkspur is one of the greatest causes of death in

grazing livestock. Chinaberry, pokeberry, castor bean, one of the most toxic, nightshade, spurge, buckwheat, and others can cause extreme illness or death.

One internet site listed 445 toxic plants for cats, dogs, and horses. To mention a few - Azalea, Baby's-breath, Coleus, Dahlia, English ivy, Gardenia, Hibiscus, Inkberry, Jonquil, Kiss-me-quick, Lace fern, Mayweed, Naked lady, Ornamental pepper, Pacific yew, Queenstand nut, Ragwort, Saddle leaf, Tipplant, Umbrella tree, Virgin's bower, Water flag, no X, Yucca, and no Z.



In most cases, the first step in a case of suspected toxin ingestion is to get them to throw up.

Hydrogen peroxide, a few teaspoons, for a small dog, or tablespoons, for a large dog, can sometimes cause an animal to vomit. Even if your dog or cat does vomit, about two-thirds of the stomach gets emptied. The next step is to give an absorbent such as activated charcoal, that binds up any material left in the stomach or intestines.

Some veterinarians recommend stomach lavage. A tube is placed into the stomach to rinse it out. This is not without risk, as there could be possible aspiration, when fluid and toxic material could go into the pet's airway.

In cases of severe poisoning, intravenous fluids are given to dilute toxins in the blood stream. There is still the possibility of permanent kidney or liver damage in your pet, affecting the rest of the pet's life.

Keep your animals safe...be cautious in your plant selection and keep an eye out for possible ingestions.

Starting Own Plants

By Karen Zierke , Pierce County Master Gardener

Is this the year you've decided to start your own plants, be it veggies or flowers? It's a good way to try some varieties that you are unable to locate in the local nurseries, often those new ones that are so tempting in the barrage of seed catalogs we've received this past winter.

One of my gardening friends, Kae (the one with whom we share a grand-daughter) and I have been combining our orders to help save with the rising cost of postage etc. After having tried different companies, we've been purchasing our seeds from Twilley and Parks the last couple years and have been happy with them. Did you know that most catalogs will help you with some of your tough garden questions? We really appreciate the toll-free numbers and the speed of delivery. Twilley's goal is to ship the same day as your order is received and their shipping cost decreases as you order more. (If you're interested in receiving a catalog, call #800-622-7333).



- For some years, I mixed my own soil starting mixture but decided it is just about as cheap and you have more consistency in texture by purchasing starter potting soil. We like to use an old canner to mix the 'soil' and water a day or so prior to planting. I'm always sorry when I get in a hurry and skip this step!
- I reuse pots and trays from greenhouse purchases of years prior. Kae often uses plastic jugs split lengthwise. I wash and disinfect my pots each year. Even egg cartons can be used. Check your seed packages and your catalogs or other forms of information to see if they need any special treatments like scarification (which is filing a bit of the tough outer shell from the seed) soaking (like hibiscus seeds) or stratification (cooling or freezing the seed prior to planting). If possible find out if your seeds need light to germinate or there are some like pansy, vinca, verbena, centaurea, parsley and cilantro that prefer to be in the dark as they germinate. I cover these with an old magazine. Plant the seeds as instructed (as a rule of thumb, seed depth should be 2 times the diameter of the seed) and cover lightly with dome lids or plastic. Remember to label the container with the date, variety etc. Be watchful that not too much moisture collects in the tray. Water as necessary. No fertilizer is needed until after transplanting.
- When to start? I try to curb myself from starting too early. I've learned, it's better to have a smaller plant than a tall leggy plant that is already root bound. As a general rule, start your veggie seeds about 4-6 weeks before you generally will plant them into your garden. Keep in mind that the hardier plants, cabbage, onion, broccoli etc. will be able to be set outside much earlier than say tomatoes. I usually wait until the end of March to start my tomatoes, eggplant, peppers etc. Most flowers seem to need more time. I'm plant sitting Kae's baby petunias, begonias, lisianthus etc. that were already up and growing at the end of February.
- We use timers on our 48" fluorescent shop lights to allow about 15-18 hours of light. If you can locate cool and warm bulbs, one of each is the best. But standard bulbs work fine. They need to be within a few inches of the pots as they germinate, moving the lights up as the plants grow. They like it warm, we use heating pads (set on low) to keep a consistent temp. I also have my 'sun heater' going. There is a saying, "start seeds warm and grow seedling cool" and I agree, especially with vegetables. A fan breeze helps the young plants (after they have their true leaves) grow strong and more resistant to diseases.
- Eventually you will need to do some transplanting. It is recommended that you hold the baby plant by its leaves not the stem. This can be time consuming, but is worth it. Again, I reuse the washed and disinfected plastic pots I've been collecting for years and a good quality potting soil. Keep them watered and if your soil does not have fertilizer included, add a weak fertilizer solution to your watering plan. By now I've moved them to my cooler basement but this year some of them may live in my new sun room until they need to be hardened off. That means, gradually acclimate them to the outdoors.



This year my grandsons are going to have a real garden. It will not be a bean seed in a Styrofoam cup. It will be a honest to goodness garden with things they can plant and eventually eat. I believe my love of gardening stems from learning to garden at an early age with my parents and grandparents. It stands to reason that I should pass this experience along to my grandkids. There is nothing in the world like taking a seed, planting it in the earth, and watching the magic that happens as it grows.

Tristan is 5 years old and Hayden is 3 years old so we will have to keep this first garden small and simple so that they enjoy the experience. I decided to select the vegetables this year but in the future I will let the boys get involved in the selection process. I know they like to pick and eat cherry tomatoes so that is a vegetable we must have. I think a few hills of potatoes will be another selection. Potatoes are easy to plant and maintain with a layer of straw mulch. They will be amazed when we dig up a shovel full of potatoes after the vines die back. Of course we will plant a row of green beans because they are so easy to plant and pick. I know they like to eat them as well. We will also plant some onion sets because they are so easy for their little hands to push into the soft earth. Kids love to pull up the mature onions and they will be so proud of their accomplishment.

I have an idea for the vining crops that will really be a big hit with the boys. I have an old metal swing set that we don't use anymore. I have never been able to part with it because I know I can recycle it into something else someday. (Are any of you in the "I-know-I-will-use-it-someday club"?") I plan to put wire fence material like a tent over the swing set frame to create a place for the cucumbers and small colorful gourds to climb. I can just see the vines scrambling up the sides, covering the fence and creating a lush, living tent for us to sit under on a hot day. The cucumbers and gourds will hang overhead where we can see them bloom, make baby fruit, and watch them grow each day to a mature size. Then we will pluck them from the vine at just the right time.

I think we will also plant a few flowers because I want to teach them the necessity of attracting bees and insects to the garden for pollination. We will certainly plant zinnias which are one of the easiest flowers to grow from seed. Zinnias also attract butterflies which are a great addition to any garden. Another flower that is easy to grow from seed is sunflowers. The flowers are large and come in a wide range of color now. We will watch the sunflowers turn toward the sun and follow it from east to west during the day. We will pick some of them to put in a vase but leave some to mature and set seed. I always have small yellow finch fly in to eat at the all-you-can-eat-sunflower-buffet in September. We will also harvest some of the seed heads to put out in the winter months to feed the birds.

I have to include ornamental Indian corn in their garden. We will shell corn off of the ears of Indian corn I bought for a fall decoration last year. It is important to plant the corn in a double row so the corn gets pollen to fall on the silk. It is easy to water the corn by digging a trench down the center between the rows to run a little river of water. Corn gets extremely thirsty and needs a good thorough soaking every 5 days. Each corn plant produces one or two ears of amazing colorful corn. Not only can the boys harvest the corn to hang in bunches for decorations in the fall, but we will cut off the stalks and stand them up near the house for decoration as well.

We will be busy planting, watering, weeding, and harvesting in the vegetable and flower garden this summer. Most of all, we will be learning about the fun and excitement of sowing seeds and watching with great expectation for flowers and vegetables to appear so that we can feast on vegetables we have grown ourselves. Won't you join us in a little gardening adventure of your own?

MY WIFE THE GARDENER

Author unknown

She dug the plot on Monday
the soil was rich and fine.
She forgot to thaw out dinner
so we went out to dine.

She planted roses Tuesday
she says they are a must,
they really are quite lovely
but she forgot to dust.

On Wednesday it was daisies-
they opened with the sun,
all whites and pinks and yellows
but the laundry wasn't done!

The poppies came on Thursday
a bright and cheery red.
I guess she really was engrossed
but never even made the bed.

It was dahlias on Friday
in colors she adores.
It never bothered her at all
all the crumbs upon the floor.

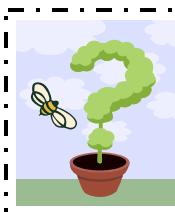
I hired a maid on Saturday,
my week was now complete.
My wife can garden all she wants
the house will still be neat!

It's nearly lunchtime Sunday
and I can't find the maid.
Oh no! I don't believe it!
She's out there with a spade!



The Green Patch Contributors

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Do you have a favorite tool, plant to trade, "Go Green" idea, "What Works for Me" tidbit or a question for other Master Gardeners?

The Green Patch needs your articles.

Please get to Pam Greunke (pgreunke2@unl.edu) by May 31 to be included in July's *The Green Patch* publication.

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Master Gardeners are people who love plants, gardening, landscaping, and teaching others.



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What is It?? By Wayne Ohnesorg, Extension Educator

Your challenge is to correctly identify the insect and/or plant. The first person to contact me with the correct answer will be the winner. And what do you win? The winner will receive the bragging rights for that quarter and have their name posted in the next installment of the column as the winner along with the correct answer.

Jim Laycock was the first one to give the correct answer. The insect in question was a western conifer seed bug (*Leptoglossus occidentalis*) adult. As the name implies these insects feed on the seeds of conifers (pines, spruces, firs). Native to this area of North America it is a common sight in Nebraska.



What is this insect???

This quarter's insect was photographed from a specimen brought in to me by the local NRCS office. This insect's food source is other soft-bodied insects and would be considered beneficial. It is about 1/4 inch in length. What is this insect and can you tell me what species?

If you think you know, you can give me a call at (402) 329-4821 or shoot me an email wohnesorg2@unl.edu.

