

The Green Patch

Spring Clean Up Made Easier

By Janelle McIntyre, Platte County Master Gardener

April 1, 2012

Volume 4, Issue 2

Winter interest is great, but come spring, dead foliage is not. You may have left much of your garden untouched; it can be hard work getting everything back into tip top shape. If you are like me, a bit lazy, you might try some of my shortcuts:

HEDGE TRIMMER A hedge trimmer (even if you have no hedge) can make short work of stiff dry stems. Peonies, echinacea, tall sedums, hydrangea, tall phlox, Russian sage and even rose bushes can be easily tamed in a few minutes. A small one is light, easy to handle and costs under \$30. This is a big time saver.

WEED EATER A weed eater can clean off many of the shorter plants, like, hosta, daylilies and perennial geraniums. Of course, the crown of the plant must not be cut into for fear of destroying it.

LAWN MOWER I know a gardener that gardens on a large scale and uses her lawn mower to level last year's debris. I'm not mentally healthy enough for that, but maybe you are. I do mow off ground covers such as catmint and soapwort.

RAKE Lamb's ears are a problem, they take extra time. I read this tip a couple of years ago and now use it. It works. Rake lamb's ear hard, the thick dead leaves come off. If some plants have winter killed (which is common), you may need to move them around a bit to fill in empty spots.

ROUNDUP If you get weeds early before the flowers are emerging, a roundup spray will permanently get rid of early growers such as dandelions, grasses, penny crest and thistles. It does seem the worst weeds emerge early. I spray right in among the perennials, carefully, of course.

PREEN At this time using a Preen or a treflan type product can help control future weeds up to six weeks. If you have flowers that reseed (pansies, snapdragons, rose moss, and petunias, etc.) don't use Preen in that area. Mulched beds can be Preened too, just sprinkle right on the mulch. Water it in.

MULCH Mulch can now be added to help control weeds and conserve moisture.

Hopefully, this helps you work less and enjoy more!



Backyard Medicine Chest

By Deb Daehnke, Wayne County Master Gardener

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You are probably aware of many of the healing qualities associated with herbs, but there are many other foods we can grow that offer natural properties to help our health. Foods have a real potential to boost our immune systems. And if we can't grow them, we can probably find them at an organic food source.

According to *The Green Pharmacy Guide to Healing Foods*, foods are a good source of natural enzymes, anti-inflammatory compounds, and antioxidants that can reduce swelling and help you cope with pain, all while allowing you to stock up on healthy nutrients.

Following are some foods that might help fight pain, boost your immunity or enhance your mood. There isn't enough space here to go into great detail but if something piques your interest, do some research and see if it's for you and maybe it's something you can even grow in your garden. If so, it can be even healthier if you grow it without using pesticides or herbicides. If you have any questions, visit with your doctor, especially if you are taking medications, as certain plants, especially herbs, can interfere with some medications.

Spinach and other leafy greens are great sources of magnesium. So Popeye wasn't kidding when he said "you could be strong to the finish if you eat your spinach". Make some buckwheat pancakes as buckwheat contains malic acid. Granny Smith apples are another good source of malic acid. Or you could try figs which also contain high levels of magnesium and manganese as well.

How about mashing chili peppers and applying them directly to tender joints. They contain capsaicin which can be purchased commercially, but you should avoid those creams that have petroleum-derived ingredients and artificial fragrances. So try making your own. Do be careful though as some peppers can be irritating to your skin. Try on a very small patch of skin. Add more peppers to your diet as well.

Although we can't grow pineapple here, try eating more of it. Just 1 cup of this fruit contains a variety of enzymes and minerals we need.

You've probably heard that garlic is a good immunity booster. Strive for two raw cloves a day but at least

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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.

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Saturday, May 5
We have some outstanding speakers lined up to educate
everyone on various topics.
 Be sure to attend and learn from the experts.

MEET THE 2012 SPEAKERS

9:00 AM—Bonsai & Other Contained Plants Why grow bonsai? Rod will share how he got started, basic history and lore of bonsai, a few basic techniques, and how to get started. Also the cultural requirements for the long term growth of a plant in a container. If time allows, he will finish up by talking about troughs and how they can be used to bring unique plants into your gardens.

Rod Ackerman, has been actively growing and collecting plants in one form or another for over 40 years. Bonsai and Dwarf Conifers for 25 years. During the last 24 of those years he has been working at Bluebird Nursery in Clarkson, NE as an Area Manager/Grower being involved in nearly every aspect of perennial production from seed collection, cuttings, tissue culture, new cultivar development, to finished plants ready for the garden center with over 2,000 different varieties of plants. Rod also maintains over an acre of private garden that contains a wide range of plant material from trees, shrubs, and dwarf conifers, intermixed with herbaceous perennials; including both woodland and prairie wildflowers.



10:30 AM—Easy, Productive Vegetable Gardening; More, with Less Space, Seed and Work! Simple, practical ideas to put the fun back in growing veggies for healthy eating. A small space, properly set up and managed, can produce more than you can imagine without drudgery. You can do it!

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.



Dennis Ferraro is a member of UNL Department of Fisheries & Wildlife faculty since 1990. He has conducted herpetological surveys and counts in five states over the past 25 years. He maintains UNL's live animal lab of native snakes for research and educational purposes. The co-creator and developer of the "Reptiles and Amphibians of Nebraska" website. Dennis also teaches courses on herpetology at UNL. He has a MS in Biology (Entomology), MS Graduate Research in Animal Ecology (Herpetology), and BS in Zoology (Wildlife Biology). Dennis is a familiar face as a Backyard Farmer panelist.

1:00 PM—Backyard Farmer Panelists The televised version of Backyard Farmer has been on the air, each April to September, since 1953. The panel provides research-based answers to gardening questions about insect pests, fruits and vegetables, turf to landscape design and much more. Backyard Farmer's panel of gardening experts includes University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Specialists, Educators and other professionals who specialize in horticulture, plant pathology, turfgrass, wildlife management, landscape design, and entomology. Bring your questions and samples to Backyard Farmer panel appearance at the Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Plant Fair.



Elizabeth Killinger is an Extension Educator with a horticulture focus who works with the UNL 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 UNL. 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.



Wayne Ohnesorg grew up in Sidney, Nebraska. He attended the University of Wyoming for a BS in Agroecology with minors in Insect Biology, Agricultural Entomology, and Soil Science. From there he attended Iowa State University obtaining a MS in Entomology. Currently Wayne is an Extension Educator with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln stationed in Madison County and working also in Wayne, Pierce, and Stanton Counties. He is the coordinator for the Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Group and panelist on Backyard Farmer.



Amy Timmerman has degrees from Nebraska Wesleyan University and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The previous 4.5 years she has worked at the Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic identifying all the plant diseases for the state of Nebraska. She is currently an Extension Educator in Holt/Boyd county. This is Amy's 5th season on Backyard Farmer answering all those rot and spot questions.



Coordinated by the Northeast
Nebraska Master Gardeners



EXTENSION

Know how. Know now.

2012

20th Annual Plant Fair

Friday, May 4, 6:00 pm—8:00 pm and Saturday, May 5, 9:00 am—3:00 pm
Northeast Community College—Cox Activity Center, 801 E. Benjamin Ave., Norfolk, Nebraska

Educational Speakers (in the Theater) and Other Events:

Saturday:

9:00 am **Rod Ackerman**, Bluebird Nursery
“Bonsai & Other Contained Plants”

10:30 am **Shirley Hamernik**, Bluebird Nursery
“Easy, Productive Vegetable Gardening; More, with Less Space, Seed & Work!”

11:00 am **Youth Horticulture ID Contest**—details below

12:30 pm **Master Gardener Awards and Contest Awards**

1:00 pm **Backyard Farmer**, Featuring Panelists:

Dennis Ferraro, Elizabeth Killinger, Wayne Ohnesorg, and Amy Timmerman



Sponsored by:



Plant Fair features include:

* **Free Admission!**

* **Demonstrations:** Your Path to Health and Harmony! Red Road Herbs

* **Lunch Stand** provided by Master Gardeners!

* **New perennials and annuals** on hand for sale!

* **Door Prizes** drawn hourly!

* **Delivery assistance** to your vehicle!

* **Plant Sitter Area:** Place to keep your purchases until you have completed shopping and listening to speakers!

* **Children's Garden:** Special activities for children to learn a love of gardening!

* **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!

* **Locally grown houseplants** for sale, grown by Master Gardener members!

* Vote for the Master Gardner with the best **Decorated Garden Hat** May 5 from 10:30 to Noon.

* **Youth Horticulture ID Contest:** Youth ages 8-18 years old (by January 1, 2012) are encouraged to participate.

Participation is free. *Pre-register by April 27* by contacting the UNL Extension—Madison County 402-370-4040.

Three age brackets will receive prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place finishers.

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

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

3rd Place - \$10 gift certificate to 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 on registration. Competition begins May 5 at 11:00 am and awards presented at 12:30 pm.



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, 2012) are encouraged to participate. Participation is free but all participants must preregister by **April 27** by contacting the Extension office in Madison County 402-370-4040. 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: May 5, 2012

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, 2012

Intermediate – 12-14 years old by January 1, 2012

Senior – 15-18 years old by January 1, 2012



Norfolk, NE Community Garden

By Char Finlayson, Madison County Master Gardener

The Norfolk Community Garden has been a "growing" experience during its first year of life. It is sponsored by the First United Methodist Church, who owns the property, and is open to anyone in the community for use. Since its inception during a meeting of interested parties in February, 2011, over thirty garden plots have been brought to life and more have been added for the 2012 season. Volunteers tilled the area which previously had been earmarked as a parking lot, handed out fliers, talked to local businesses and discovered all the things behind the scenes that it takes for a dream to become reality. Meanwhile, two water hydrants and a compost bin were added, the 10 X 20' plots were measured and the transformed space was ready for use.

Any visitor walking through the arbor (also donated) had the pleasure of seeing as many different gardens as there were personalities. There was a flower garden planted by the children attending a Vacation Bible School, someone brought sunflower seeds with them from North Dakota (which were mammoth), and because gardeners are able to reserve the same plot year after year, there is also a variety of raised permanent beds. Multi-generations within families share several plots, including mine, and the time spent with my grandchildren there has been priceless. First time gardeners are side by side with veterans (some experienced in farming) whose gardens are a work of art and technology. The walk begun at the arbor ends with a green space at the other end of the area which is equipped with a picnic table. The group is looking at adding additional landscaping of this area in the future. And oh yes....on your walk....please don't pick the flowers (or the vegetables).

The generosity of the community has "seeded" 2012 with tools, hose, wheelbarrow, garden cart, and even a small shed to store them in. Top soil, compost, and wood chips for the walkways between the individual gardens were contributed and there is even a bench to sit and rest on near the parking lot when the tasks are done for the day. The Master Gardeners will be adding to the sense of community by providing information monthly including question and answer sessions. To be held at the site or in the church in case of inclement weather, these training sessions will be advertised and open to the public.

Does this sound like something you would like to get your hands into? There will be a booth at the upcoming Master Gardeners Plant Fair, May 4-5th, where those questions can be answered. You may also call Cheri Kneifel, 402-371-2785 ext. 101 for information or an application.



Tucson, AZ Community Garden

By Marge Holland, Cuming County Master Gardener

Just over the wall here in Tucson where Bill and I spend our winters is the Midtown Community Garden. The lot is owned by our son, but is lent to the gardeners of the area.

Separate gardens plots measuring about 3 x 20 feet are available for individuals and/or families in the neighborhood. The plots themselves are made up of trenches dug about three feet deep and alternately layered with composted cow manure from a local dairy and soil.

The gardeners are charged \$15.00 a month for each plot which pays the water bill for the drip irrigation system (an absolute necessity in Arizona) and the use of a shed full of tools. The gardener supplies only the plants/seed and soil amendments.

The enthusiasm for this project is overwhelming. Twenty plots are available in the community garden and gardeners can raise anything they wish. Because this is a multicultural neighborhood, there is a wide variety of vegetables and flowers growing in the individual plots, and the camaraderie and sharing of knowledge is an added benefit to the participants.

Once a month a Master Gardener from the Extension Service gives a presentation on what the gardeners should be doing in the garden at the present time. These lessons are helpful and informative as many of the participants are first time gardeners.

The photo shows Bill (scarecrow in the background) as he and our son Brad planted their winter garden the first week in January. We will be able to enjoy "the vegetables of their labor" before we return to Nebraska in late April.



The Three Sisters

By Marge Holland , Cuming County Master Gardener



Corn Beans Squash

<http://www.reneesgarden.com> gives a lengthy discussion of the benefits of this procedure as well as the following directions for planting:

1. In late May hoe up the ground and heap the earth into piles about a foot high and about 20 inches across. The centers of the mounds should be about four feet apart and should have flattened tops.
2. In the center of each mound, plant five or six corn kernels in a small circle.
3. After a week or two, when the corn has grown to about five inches, plant seven or eight pole beans in a circle about six inches away from the corn kernels.
4. A week later, at the edge of the mound about a foot away from the beans, plant seven or eight squash or pumpkin seeds.

The tall growing corn creates a natural tepee shaped frame for the beans to attach to while the beans help stabilize the corn plants and make them less vulnerable to blowing winds. The growing beans build up nitrogen on their roots. This improves the overall fertility of the soil and provides nutrients for the following year's crops.

The spiny, prickly squash leaves keep predators away from the corn and beans, shade the soil and create a living mulch which preserves moisture and prevents weed growth.

At the end of the growing season, the crop residue from the planting combination can be tilled back into soil to build up the organic matter.

The Indians of the Southwest long ago developed a gardening technique called The Three Sisters. An interesting concept, it can be used in a family garden or as a school gardening project. This tradition of interplanting corn, beans and squash all in the same mound, not only saves space but the Three Sisters offer a nutritious, well balanced diet. Corn provides carbohydrates, dried beans supply protein, and squash contains numerous vitamins.

Dahlberg Daisy

By Beverly McClure , Cuming County Master Gardener

AKA Golden Fleece or Shooting Star

A gardener once remarked when she planted Dahlberg Daisies, it turned out to be a "happy accident". How true.

This annual has fine textured fern-like foliage that produces masses of bright yellow blooms from mid summer into late fall. I feel these plants are over looked in garden centers because they look pretty wimpy beside most other annuals. Given a bit of TLC and warm weather to get established, they require very little water and no need to dead head.

Another great feature is they reseed readily. Each spring, I am surprised by where I will find new seedlings as long as I don't get on a weeding frenzy. The seeds do need very warm soil to germinate. I let them grow and bloom in crazy places like along the sidewalk or retaining wall. I've even had them thrive in a soggy end of the garden. I planted the wooden barrel 10 years ago and have never needed to replant.

I leave the exhausted plants until late October to insure seeds have fallen which will bring on another year of carefree flowers.



Dahlberg Daisies planted in wooden barrel 10 years ago

(Continued from page 1) Backyard Medicine Chest

include more in your cooking. Some research suggests that if you eat more than six cloves a week, you have a 30 percent lower rate of colorectal cancer and a 50 percent lower rate of stomach cancer. The study didn't mention if other people still hung around the test groups when they were eating this much garlic.

Eat oats and barley. They contain beta-glucan which is a type of fiber with antimicrobial and antioxidant capabilities. One Norwegian study reported these fibers to be more potent than Echinacea.

Drink more green and black tea. If your doctor has told you to limit your caffeine, check with him/her first to see if decaf would be ok as the decaf versions also have the amino acid that can give your immune system a boost.

When someone mentions sweet potatoes many people cringe, turn up their nose or both. But don't dismiss this beta-carotene rich veggie. It has even shown promise in fighting diabetes. If you just can't stomach sweet potatoes, think orange and eat carrots, squash, pumpkin and cantaloupe.

Is anyone surprised that tomatoes are a must eat? But did you know that what's great about tomatoes is the lycopene (a mood booster) contained in the skin. So it's better to eat cherry tomatoes because you'll be eating more skin. Another good reason to grow tomatoes is that trials at the University of California-Davis found that organic tomatoes had higher lycopene levels.

Are you prone to depression or just need a little mood boost? Try asparagus. It has high levels of folate and studies have shown that 50 percent of people with depression suffer from low folate levels. It is also one of the top plant-based sources of tryptophan, necessary for the creation of serotonin which is essential to our brains.

When doing my research I was amazed at all the possible benefits plants can provide if we eat a balanced diet and these suggestions here don't even touch the "tip of the iceberg". I'll finish with blue potatoes. Sets are available from specialty potato sources and are more available in farmer's markets. The color in blue spuds is due to anthocyanins, a powerful antioxidant that can provide such benefits as bolstering short-term memory. Eat the skins as they are loaded with iodine, a diet-derived nutrient that is essential for life in helping regulate the thyroid. Grow your own spuds and skip the chemicals. Many store varieties have multiple toxic chemical sprays used on them which is absorbed into their flesh.

If we look around carefully we really do have a medicine chest in our own back yards.

Green Beans

*Beans, beans the musical fruit
The more you eat the more you toot.
The more you eat, the better you feel
So eat your beans with every meal.*

Every time I think of beans, any kind of beans, I automatically recall that little ditty; and I'm sure many of you recall learning it on the playground during grade school. When I Googled the song, it was no surprise to see all the references to both the song and green beans since it is such a versatile veggie.

According to Veronica Lorsen Fowler of *The Iowa Gardener*, "green beans are, well, a snap to grow in Iowa." So no surprise they are a snap to grow in Nebraska as well. Just find the variety that suits your growing conditions – and varieties there are. One source reported over 130 varieties of snap beans which come in pole or bush varieties. Green beans are a tender, warm season vegetable harvested for the immature seed pods, and rank second only to the tomato in our home gardens (some sources rank them lower). Initially called string beans, that fibrous string has been bred out of many varieties and they are now often called snap beans. But some people prefer the flavor of the earlier varieties. Snap beans also come in different colors and gourmet types are continually being developed.

Never soak beans prior to planting as most varieties tend to crack and germinate poorly if the moisture content is too high. Just plant and water. Beans have shallow root systems so frequent, shallow cultivating is important. Cultivate too deep or too close and you could damage the roots and reduce the harvest. Read the seed packets for planting depth and spacing or other specifics for a particular variety.

By Deb Daehnke , Wayne County Master Gardener

Beans are susceptible to several diseases and hot, dry winds. So it's very important to rotate your bean crop each year. Keep them mulched, water consistently and harvest them often when pencil size and they will reproduce for many weeks. If left to themselves they will get too big and become tough or mushy. Plus they will start producing fewer beans.

There are multiple ways to cook green beans, they are complimented by many herbs and spices and go well with several other vegetables including tomatoes and bell peppers.

The University of Illinois Extension listed the following nutritional values for green beans. They are a good source of carbohydrates, and a moderate source of protein, dietary fiber, Vitamin C and beta carotene. The beta carotene is converted to vitamin A in our body. Green beans also contain small amounts of calcium and other trace nutrients.

Nutrition Facts (1/2 cup cooked fresh green beans)

Calories 15
Dietary fiber 1.6 grams
Protein 1 gram
Carbohydrates 3.5 mg
Vitamin A 340 IU
Vitamin C 7.5 mg
Folic Acid 21 mg
Calcium 31.5 mg
Iron .4 mg
Potassium 94.5 mg



If you've never planted them, now is a good time to try them. If they've been a staple in your garden, try some different varieties and see if you find a new favorite.

Growing Zoysiagrass

By Sharon Hinrichsen , Antelope County Master Gardener



Having grown Zoysiagrass for about 30 years now, I decided I might share some of my experience and at the same time, do some research on the history of Zoysiagrass.

I found that Zoysiagrasses are a warm season grass native to China, Japan and other parts of Southeast Asia. The name commemorates an 18th century Austrian botanist, Karl von Zois. The first Zoysia species was introduced to the United States from Manila in 1911.

There are 3 types of Zoysia. *Zoysia japonica* is a coarser textured, but more cold weather hardy species than *Zoysia matrella*. The third species is used for turf and is called Korean velvet grass or Mascarene grass, *Zoysia tenuifolia*. This is a very fine textured species.

Meyer zoysiagrass is an improved strain of *Zoysia japonica*. It was selected from a population of plants grown from seed by the U.S.D.A. and U.S.G.A. This selection was named in honor of Frank N. Meyer, a plant explorer for the U.S.D.A. who made the first collection of zoysiagrass seed in Korea in 1905.

Zoysiagrasses are sod-forming perennial species that possess both stolons and rhizomes. The grasses turn brown after the first hard frost and are among the first grasses to green up in the spring.

Zoysiagrass is extremely drought tolerant. It will turn straw colored under severe drought conditions. It does have the ability to respond to irrigation or rainfall. The deep root system of Zoysiagrass also allows it to effectively extract water from greater soil depths.

Zoysiagrasses can be established from seed, sprigs or sod. *Zoysia japonica* is the only species that can be established from seed.

Sprigs should be planted no more than 2 inches apart in rows spaced 6 inches apart, or broadcast over an area at a rate of 10 bushels per 1000 sq. ft. It is important that the sprigs not be completely covered with soil. Freshly sprigged Zoysiagrass must be kept moist for several weeks after planting.

Springing is the least expensive method of planting zoysiagrass and should give a faster rate of cover than plugging. However, keeping the soil moist during the establishment period is most critical with sprigs. You can cover the sprigs with a clear polyethylene tarp to maintain adequate moisture and increase soil temperature in the early spring. The cover should be removed as soon as the temperature gets too hot.

I, personally, planted the plugs. I planted these during a rain storm wearing a raincoat and basically forgot about them. I planted these on the back side of my house and they received minimum care. It was a few years before I even realized that they were establishing themselves. You can imagine my delight when I figured out that the plugs had taken off and were crowding out the other grasses. In the years that followed, you can see the progress where this is slowly moving southeast and around to the front of my house.

Close, frequent mowing produces the finest turf. However, most people sacrifice this for less frequent mowing.

Zoysiagrass lawns tend to build up a thatch layer, a layer of undecomposed organic residues just above the soil surface. Occasionally, thatch

(Continued on page 7)

Rain Gardens Are Environmentally Sensitive Addition to Landscape

On rainy days, rainwater flows over our roofs, lawns and impermeable surfaces, picking up pollutants and carrying them into the stormwater system and, ultimately, into streams and rivers. The volume of runoff can damage bodies of water by changing their natural flow and increasing erosion. The pollution rainwater carries (E. coli, hard metals, oils, fertilizer, sediment, etc.) also damages water quality.

In the past, the goal was to get rainwater off our properties as quickly as possible. This is changing, and now communities are looking at ways to reduce stormwater runoff, improve water quality and use the moisture by finding ways to slow it down, spread it out and soak it in before it reaches larger bodies of water. There are many practices known generally as "green infrastructure" that can help. Some examples include the urban forest, specialized gardens such as bioswales, rain gardens, bioretention gardens and green roofs. Innovative products such as permeable concrete and pavers also are being used. Communities are using many approaches to manage stormwater. While stormwater is a broad challenge, it is truly a problem where "every little bit helps."

One way a homeowner can reduce runoff is to install a rain garden. A rain garden is a small garden with deep-rooted plants that is specifically designed to temporarily hold rain water (24-48 hours) coming from roofs, lawns, driveways or other surfaces. The water in the rain garden soaks into the ground, is used by plants or evaporates into the air. A rain garden is not a pond and is not supposed to stay wet all the time. Since a rain garden does not hold water for more than 48 hours, mosquitos are not a problem.

Rain gardens are designed to be aesthetically pleasing and the best rain gardens are ones that tie into existing landscapes. Usually native or near-native plants are used in rain gardens for their deep root systems that help absorb water and open up pore space in the soil, improving its capacity for drainage. These plants also provide important habitat for many beneficial insects. No landscape is no-maintenance. Rain gardens require weeding and cutting back like typical perennial gardens.

Interested in trying your hand at a rain garden?

- University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension has technical information on how to design and install a rain garden:

<http://water.unl.edu/web/landscapes/rain-gardens>

- The city of Lincoln offers a cost-share program and how-to workshops: <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/pworks/watrshed/>

- And Blue Thumb has some great publications and other resources: www.bluethumb.org

3/5/12-DM Source: Christina Hoyt, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

(Continued from page 6) **Growing Zoysiagrass**



removal by mechanical means is required to prevent serious deterioration of the zoysiagrass turf. Scalping the lawn in early spring to remove accumulated growth will also help prevent thatch accumulation. I have burned my grass off in the spring to get rid of the accumulation and with watering, it will bounce right back and start to green up almost immediately. Of course, I live in the country and I don't have the possibility of setting a city block on fire when I do this.

Of course, I only do this when my husband is gone or I end up getting yelled at!!

There are drawbacks of Zoysiagrass. It is invasive. The reason for planting plugs is that Zoysiagrass will crowd every other grass, as well as flowerbeds if not contained. You also have to consider that if they crown out the other grasses, they will also crown out the weeds.

I believe everyone should decide for themselves if they want to grow Zoysiagrass. I have been very pleased with the results of this type of turf. I need to plug the lawn and try to spread it into more of my lawn. Of course, I am growing this in a more out of the way area and it doesn't bother me that it is brown after the first hard frost.

I think one of the best things to share about Zoysiagrass is the fact that it is like walking on a plush carpet when you walk on this grass. You really need to take your shoes off and enjoy the experience.

The Green Patch Contributors

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Articles and information for the July issue of *The Green Patch* are due to Pam Greunke (pgreunke@unl.edu) by May 31, 2012.

Northeast Nebraska Master Gardeners

Meetings held at:
UNL Extension - Madison County
601 E Benjamin Ave, Suite 105
Norfolk NE 68701



Phone:
402-370-4040 Madison County
402-329-4821 Pierce County
402-563-4901 Platte County
402-375-3310 Wayne County

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

UNL EXTENSION—WAYNE COUNTY
510 N PEARL ST, STE C
WAYNE NE 68787



We're on the web at

<http://madison.unl.edu/mastergardenerhome>

What is It?? By Wayne Ohnesorg, Extension Educator

The only person to give an answer and get it correct from the last edition of the *What is it?* column was **Chris Carlson**. He correctly identified the insect in question as a two-spotted stink bug (*Perillus bioculatus*). This species of stink bug is predatory. One of the primary food sources is Colorado potato beetle eggs and young larvae. In light of this, the two-spotted stink bug is one of the few beneficial stink bugs.



What is this insect???

Straight out of my personal collection of insects is where this edition's insect comes from. They are common at porch lights in the summer. What kind of insect is it? Be as specific as you can.

If you think you know, you can give me a call at (402) 370-4040 or shoot me an email ohnesorg2@unl.edu.

Your challenge is to correctly identify the insect and/or plant. The first person to contact me with the correct answer will be awarded one (1) training hour. Everyone that submits an answer will be entered into an end of the year drawing for a free Extension Circular such as the *Landscape Diagnostic Guide for Problems Affecting Woody Ornamentals*. For every *What is it?* column you provide an answer for, you will receive one entry. This offer is available for both the Platte County and Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener groups.

