

The Green Patch

Cottage Gardens

By Robin Jones , Madison County Master Gardener

January 1, 2014

Volume 6, Issue 1

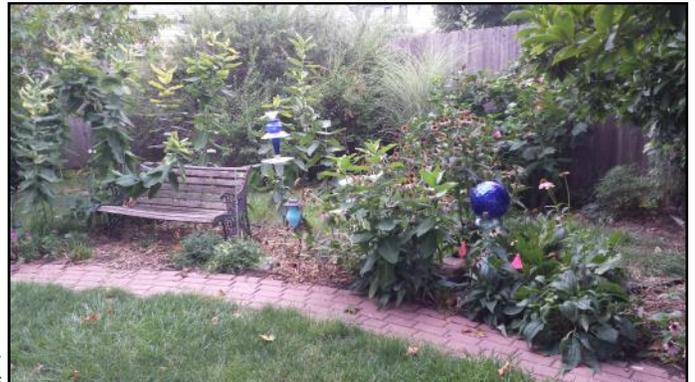
Old-fashioned plants and flowers have been making a big comeback recently. For someone like me who loves historic homes and Victorian style, this is right up my alley. With a little creativity and planning, you can design a cottage garden of your own.

Cottage gardening started in England and was originally meant to oppose the very ornate, formal grandeur of English estate gardens. Cottage gardens are informal and densely planted. Their charm is that they look unplanned and rustic. Imagine flowers and vines weaving together as though they sprung up on their own.

You will need to choose flowers, greenery, and traditional materials when you plan your design. Flower-lined paths, shrubbery and borders that go right up to the house, vine-covered fences and arbors all contribute to your look.

The most common flowers in a cottage garden are roses. After that, diversity is key to creating the cozy, inviting charm of this style. Lavender, daisies, hollyhocks, foxglove, peonies, phlox, and snapdragons are good choices. You'll want to choose flowers that grow tall and look a little wild. By selecting two or three hues and working with the various shades along their spectrums, you will have a harmonious color scheme that doesn't look too deliberate. Purples, pinks, and blues with occasional pops of bright yellows and oranges make a good mix.

Next you will want to work in your greenery. Hedges are the traditional border for a cottage garden. Densely planted flowering bushes such as lilacs, rose of sharon or hydrangeas work well, as do any deciduous shrubs. Consider adding some ground cover. Cottage gardens are not about a well-manicured lawn so work in hostas, lady's mantle, ornamental grasses, and even areas of moss.



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Finally, you need to add in your non-plant materials. Weathered wood and stone work best. Arbors and picket fences should be overgrown with vines. Create meandering stone paths covered with moss. Design some cozy seating areas with mismatched furniture. Accessorize with window boxes, birdhouses, and unusual planters.

Your cottage garden should be as unique as you are. When you're done, it ought to be playful, warm, and delighting.

(pictures are of Robin's Cottage Garden)



Plan Now for Your Spring Attack

By Janelle McIntyre , Platte County Master Gardener

As another Nebraska winter bears down on us, what can a master gardener do now to quench our burning desire to grow something? What helps me is planning my attack for spring. The question I ask myself is "what can I do that is different?" I've tried so many plants. What is new?

My best bet is to go back to the 'Perennial Plant Association Plant of the Year' (PPY) list and use these plants as the foundation for new choices. After all, the most important quality in a plant is to survive our winters and summers and still thrive. These older varieties have many new cultivars that can update our gardens. Lists from 1990 to present can be seen by going to the home page of BlueBird Nursery <http://www.bluebirdnursery.com> In the list on the left column, click on Plants of the Year and then select Perennial Plant Association.

1996 PPY 'Husker Red' penstemon is a good place to start. Bred in Nebraska for Nebraska, how can this be improved upon? Well it has! The newer version 'Dark Towers' has been a breath of fresh air in my garden. I mistakenly planted a very vigorous zinnia in front of them. When the zinnias were pulled out this fall, I was holding my breath to see if the five new penstemons were still alive. No worries. Larger, happy plants were still there, smiling up at me. What a relief! Of course, the dark purple stems and leaves are a real bonus in any garden. I highly recommend this one.

This year my husband Rod and I redid the coneflower bed. The 1998 PPY 'Magnus' coneflower was replaced with 'Ruby Star.' This has a bigger, darker and less droopy flower head. Their vigor was great! I had to dead head them constantly to keep them from blooming the first year. Also, I planted the new dwarf 'Pow Wow' coneflower. The three plants did just what they were supposed to do: stay small, have multiple branching stems and bloom. I didn't keep them dead headed (maybe it was because they were so short) and they put on some of the biggest coneflower blooms I have ever seen. A word of caution, the new orange and gold coneflowers will not likely survive our winters, not a good bet.

Lastly, the first PPY 'Purple Palace' heuchera has been a major player in my shade garden for many years. Its large shiny purple leaves make a statement. I will always have room for this cultivar. That being said, there are many newer varieties. I like 'Purple Petticoats' almost as well. It has good vigor and color but is considerably smaller, only about 10 inches. 'Amethyst Myst' has cool silver veined leaves with bright magenta undersides, another good choice if you are looking for a lighter color in your shade garden. So many new kinds of heucheras, I will always be trying something from this family. A warning, I did try the 'Snow Angel' introduced by our own BlueBird nursery. It was very disappointing. I don't recommend this one. No vigor.

Some of the PPY's that I will always keep the original of are: 1995 'Russian Blue' sage, 2002 'David' phlox, 2004 'Japanese Painted' fern, 2005 Helleborus, and 2012 'Jack Frost' brunnera . These plants are so well behaved and beautiful, I love them just the way they are.

The 2014 PPY is 'Northwind' an upright blue/green grass. Its coldest zone is 2, so it will probably outlast our Nebraska winters. It is drought tolerant but can be used in a rain garden. Sounds like a winner to me, I think I'll try it. There is always a spot for a tough, beautiful plant in my garden, how about yours?

'Northwind' Picture from Bluebird Nursery website



Upper Midwest MG Conference

By Deb Daehnke, Wayne County Master Gardener

Instead of just dreaming about next year's garden, you might dream and plan to attend a conference or tour. One such conference held in even-numbered years is the Upper Midwest Master Gardener Conference. The states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin alternate holding this event. Titled "Growing Along The River" for 2014, the conference will be held in the Quad Cities area at the Waterfront Convention Center in Bettendorf IA, June 25-28. It will be hosted by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Master Gardener Program.

According to a news release written by my Amanda Heitz, the conference will feature speakers, seminars, tours, vendors a silent auction and more.

Felder Rushing from Jackson Mississippi is one of the keynote speakers. Mr. Rushing has a weekly call-in radio program, started the state of Mississippi's Master Gardener program, and has authored numerous books and garden articles including *Garden Hearts*, *Bottle Trees*, and *Slow Gardening*.

Lauren Springer-Ogden and Scott Ogden are two of the other featured speakers. The husband and wife duo make their home between Austin and Colorado. Both are garden designers and have co-authored many books including the *Moonlit Garden*. Lauren's garden designs feature diverse natural plants and Scott focuses on plant diversity and ecological attunement.

Educate Inspire Connect



If you are a Facebook user you can find information about the conference on Facebook, 'Growing Along the River, Upper Midwest Regional Master Gardener Conference.' <https://www.facebook.com/iowamg2014> The page is updated as new information is available. Registration will be available early in 2014. If you don't use Facebook, the following website should have all the same information when available. <http://www.aep.iastate.edu/iowamg2014/>

This is a beautiful area. I attended a conifer conference there several years ago and the caliber of gardens featured for the tours was fantastic. There are also lots of other fun attractions within a two hour drive of the Quad cities. If you are looking for a good conference or a little vacation, this might be what you're looking for. But do keep in mind that registration for the individual seminars fill quickly, so if you seriously consider going, register early.

Save the Date!

June 25-28, 2014
Waterfront Convention Center | Bettendorf, Iowa

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

Daylily Facts

By Tom Surber , Madison County Master Gardener

1. The Daylily is now in it's own family, Hemerocallidaceae. No longer is it considered a "lily" in the Liliaceae. Note: Kaul, "Flora of Nebraska" 2006, does not separate the genus Hemerocallis out into its own family. Nor does "Flora of the Great Plains," 1986, or Britton and Brown "An Illustrated Flora of Northern United States and Canada" 1912, or Rydberg 1932, or Gray 1950.
2. The darker colors tend to absorb heat and fade late in the day, unless they receive some afternoon shade.
3. In some dictionaries and other reference works, this plant may be referred to as a "day lily," but the spelling was consolidated into a single word in 1923 upon the recommendation of the American Joint Committee on Horticultural Nomenclature, as reported by the publication *Standardized Plant Names, 1923* edition, Preface, p. x and p. 199.
4. The genus *Hemerocallis* is native to Asia. It consists of 20 species, distributed in Eurasia, particularly in Japan. Since 1930 it has been hybridized in the United States and elsewhere.
5. The colors range from near-whites, pastels, yellows, oranges, pinks, vivid reds, crimson, purple, nearly true-blue, and fabulous blends. There are no true whites or true blue daylilies.
6. Modern daylilies display a complex variety of color patterns that were unknown in the original wild types. The patterns include: self, blend, polychrome, bitone, bicolor, eyed, edged, tipped, dotted, dusted, midribbed, diamond dusting.
7. Currently, the [AHS](#) officially recognizes the following flower forms for exhibition purposes: [single](#), [double](#), [spider](#), [unusual form](#), and [polymerous](#) flowers. Several other terms are on the registration forms, but not used in exhibitions.
8. The cold-hardiness of daylilies is quite variable. Some are iron-clad hardy. Others are extremely tender. Cold-hardiness is not determined by the foliage habit. Evergreen, dormant, and semi-evergreen can be anything from extremely cold-hardy to extremely tender. To avoid risk of losing a cultivar, choose daylilies which others have already grown successfully in your climate.
9. While we consider the daylily very hardy, early spring planting in Nebraska is best. Fall planting can be fatal as the plant does not have time to set roots. Hot weather planting, July - August, can lead to crown rot. However to be sure of variety obtained, I have bought most of my plants in late June and early July, while flowering, and had no difficulty.
10. Like most plants, daylilies show maximum performance in soils with good aeration, fertility and microbial activity. The ideal soil holds sufficient moisture to sustain the plants, yet is at the same time well-drained. These characteristics can be improved in soils that have too much sand or clay by amending with compost.
11. Daylilies have their own specific aphid which feeds only on daylilies. Control requires a mild systemic pesticide. Do not use Kelthane, which may harm the daylily.

Most material is from the American Hemerocallis Society (AHS) webpage <http://www.daylilies.org/> which is an excellent source of information on daylilies.

TLC Country Floral Garden Tour

By Corrine Weihe , Madison County Master Gardener
Pictures By Bonnie Smith, Madison County Master Gardener in Training

On September 25, nine Master Gardener members visited the gardens near Hooper NE.

It was a beautiful, warm day. There were flowers everywhere. The lawns around the flower islands were well manicured.

We began by having our sack lunch under a gazebo surrounded by exotic potted plants.

There were not many plants that we were familiar with. Most of the plants are annuals and gathered from all over the world. Each fall they take cuttings and gather seeds for the next year.

They have six acres of land. There are many nice trees and vines. All sorts of small buildings each with a seating area dotting the landscape. Each building has many treasures, antiques, and plants. The vine covered pergolas and gazebos are just lovely. A new addition is a grain bin that they brought to the middle of the garden with a crane. It has tables and chairs converted for luncheons.

This was fall so most of the plants were sold, except the plants they would use for cuttings and there were many.

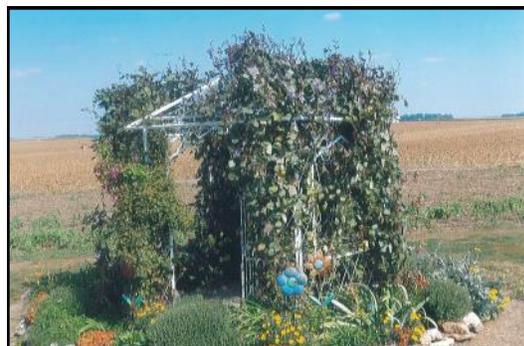
They plant their flowers in many interesting containers. All of which add interest and whimsy to the plantings. Shoes, dishes, colanders, light fixtures, and other found objects are used as pots.

There is a gift shop that we all loved. The shop sold antiques, arrangements, pictures, and pottery.

In addition to live plants, Sue Fase dries flowers for arrangements. There are two freezing-drying machines. The end product of the flower appeared to be freshly picked.

Next we went to the greenhouse to purchase succulents. It was a wonderful day and many want to return in the spring.

They are on Facebook with wonderful pictures - TLC Country Floral. Be sure to check it out!



Frost Flowers

By Jane Jensen , Pierce County Master Gardener

We've all seen the handiwork of frost on window panes in Winter, but this "flower" is not a flower, but yet comes from a flower. You are probably just as confused as I was when I read an article on this winter occurrence while on a Google search for perennial flowers. The Wikipedia site went into even more detail. These flower formations are also called needle ice, frost pillars or frost columns, as well as describing the unrelated window frost.

For these chilly flowers to form requires precise weather conditions. The ground is not yet frozen but when the sap expands in a plant in freezing air, it can cause long, thin cracks to form along the stem. It freezes then when coming into contact with the cold air. The water in the plant pushes through, causing a thin "petal" to form. This can also happen in woody plants and tree branches forming long strings of ice that look like hair, which is then termed hair ice or frost beard. When the sun comes up warming the air, these flowers disappear.

Frost flowers can even form on the sea and the photos I saw show formations that look very much like a meadow covered with spiky "flowers". These formations can sometimes be two to three inches high. The calm sea looks like it is in blossom. It really is striking to see these creations. Just type in "Frost Flowers" on a Google search.

Examples of plants that form these flowers are white crownbeard (*Verbesina virginica*, common in Texas), frostweed, yellow ironweed (*Verbesina alternifolia*), and *Helianthemum canadense*.

Frost flowers have been observed falling from conifer branches and had enough power or water weight in them to strip bark from a tree.

If you are an early riser, bring your camera along on your walk. If you see this white flower, take a photo before the sun shines on it. These flowers disappear around nine o'clock AM.



Garden Tools

By Jane Jensen , Pierce County Master Gardener

Those cold, blustery days of January and February just might be the right time to check over garden tools, mowers and other machinery. After Christmas has been put away and our yards and gardens are covered in snow, there it is, that wish to be out in the warm sunshine working in the soil. Rusty and dirt covered trowels and shovels just don't work as well. Maybe a landscaping idea has come to mind. Having our tools and machinery in good condition and ready to go can be one less thing to think about when warm weather comes. You know how time flies and the work grows! Taking care of this issue might be a chilly job but inside the garage or shed out of the wind isn't all that bad. Perhaps that garden shed or building needs a clearing out or more organization. It's a great feeling to start the new garden season with that out of the way. Don't forget a thermos of your favorite hot beverage.

Tip on Spraying Plants

By Karen Zierke , Pierce County Master Gardener

Recently I noticed my rabbit-fern house plant wasn't looking as 'happy' as it normally does. So I moved it to a different location, but I admit, I didn't REALLY look at it. A couple weeks later as I was doing some frantic house cleaning in my over-loaded with plants sun room, I knocked it over and broke the lovely painted clay pot it resided in. (It's now awaiting a glue job). As I attempted to clean up my mess, I found out why my fern was ill, it was covered with scabby scales, ugh! I took it to the sink and attempted to wipe them off with soapy water and then rubbing alcohol.

Then I remembered a friend (who is not really into plants and gardens) telling me at church, where I was threatening to toss out a large plant because of those nasty spider mites, to place the whole plant and pot into a large garbage bag, spray with a house-plant insecticide, tie the bag shut and wait!! That plant needed two garbage bags, but her remedy worked. So out came a trash bag, in went the plant, sprayed it, tied it shut and left it for 24 hours. The plant is still quarantined but in slow recovery and the scales are gone.

Plant and kitchen waste is often composted to produce a soil amendment for gardens. Compost is referred to as black gold because of its many benefits in improving soils for plant growth.

Decomposition in compost piles can continue during winter if a few steps are taken. Decomposition will be at a slower rate; however, if a pile was active prior to winter then decomposition can continue during winter.

An active pile is one where microbial decomposition, the process that produces heat, had started prior to cold temperatures arriving. If active, the pile's center will feel warm and/or steam can be seen around the pile on cold days.

On actively decomposing piles, speed winter (and summer) decomposition by turning the pile and checking for moisture content at least once a month. And don't overlook adding the right type of safe organic waste to fuel microbial activity.

A compost pile is turned when un-composted material is moved from the top and sides of the pile to the center. Turning compost provides fresh fuel and oxygen for microorganisms. Turning insures composting continues and all material is composted.

Decomposition occurs more rapidly at the pile's center due to warmer temperatures and increased moisture. When turning compost, check the moisture content by squeezing a fistful in your hand. It should feel moist but no excess water should drip out.

If dry, add just enough water by sprinkling with a watering can to barely moisten the pile. A compost pile should never feel wet; only as moist as a squeezed out sponge. If too much water is added, the pile may freeze and stop microbial activity.

The right size pile helps maintain warmth. A compost pile should be at least 3' x 3' x 3' and no larger than 5' x 5' x 5'. Smaller piles have difficulty staying warm. Larger piles may hold too much water, allow too little air into the center, or be cumbersome to turn effectively.

To maintain warmth, cover the top two-thirds with a dark-colored waterproof tarp to keep out excess moisture, absorb sunlight, and provide some insulation from the cold and wind. Leaving the bottom third uncovered allows for airflow. For extra insulation, place bales of hay around the compost pile.

The right balance of organic waste speeds decomposition. Organic waste needs to consist of a mixture of shredded browns (dried leaves and grasses) and greens (vegetable and fruit kitchen scraps, coffee and tea grounds, egg shells, and stale bread).

With live Christmas trees and greens soon to be recycled, avoid placing highly resinous wood and needles from pine, juniper, spruce and arborvitae in compost piles. The resins protect these materials from decomposition and extend the time needed for composting.

Animal wastes (meat, bones, grease, whole eggs and dairy products) may cause odors and attract rodents. Do not add these to compost piles. Human, cat or dog feces may transmit diseases and should not be used. Do not add wood ashes to compost piles as they can negatively increase alkalinity of Nebraska soil.

Fresh manure is warm and gardeners might consider adding it to compost piles to increase temperature. Animal products that can be used as organic sources of nitrogen (greens) include blood and steamed bone meal and livestock manures from plant-eating animals (cows, sheep, rabbits and chickens).

However, manures may contain new strains of *E. coli* and other bacteria that cause human illness. The use of fresh or poorly composted manures added directly to vegetable or small fruit gardens is not recommended.

Research shows that two to 10 percent of bacterial pathogens survive the composting process. If manure is to be used in food gardens, a two - to four-month curing process followed by effective composting is needed to reduce pathogens.

Source: Colorado State University

2014 Spring Training Dates:

6:30-9:00pm Lifelong Learning Center, Norfolk

February 11: Integrated Pest Management Options in Landscapes

February 18: Disease ID of Herbaceous Landscape Plants

February 25: Turfgrass Care and Management

March 4: Pollinators in the Landscape & "Pollinator Friendly" Plant Material

March 11: Plant Propagation Concepts and Tomato Grafting

March 25: Landscape Weed ID and Herbicide Update

New Master Gardener Interns can begin (or continue) their education certification while current Master Gardeners can recertify. For non-Master Gardeners, there will be a charge of \$5 per person for each training session attended. All six training sessions can be attended for \$25. All members of the Northeast Nebraska Master Gardeners do not have to pay.

Any questions, contact Wayne Ohnesorg, Extension Educator at 402-370-4040.

Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Plant Fair

Mark your calendars!

Friday, April 25 and Saturday, April 26, 2014

- ◆ Vendors are invited to rent a space to display/sell their products. 750+ visitors attend this annual event.
- ◆ New, larger location— NECC Chuck Pohlman Ag Complex.
- ◆ Guest speakers present on various horticulture related topics.
- ◆ The Master Gardeners volunteer their time to make this Plant Fair a success. Proceeds help fund a scholarship to Northeast Community College students in Horticulture.
- ◆ Free Admission, Great Plants, Vendors, Speakers, Door Prizes, Lunch Stand and a Children's Activity Corner all make this Plant Fair a special must attend event!

Fall in My Yard

By Tom Surber , Madison County Master Gardener

In my opinion this has been one of the most beautiful falls in my memory. The sharpness and depth of the colors has been fantastic. Thus, I went into my yard and took pictures of several of the plants in their fall mode. Some might think that pictures of plants going into their winter hibernation is melancholy or just not quite right, like pictures of the dead and dying. Yes, these images are of living creatures, not at their prime, but doing necessary things in their life cycle. So, like the gentle, handsome pictures of the aged people, these pictures of aged plants are part of life. And there is beauty in them.

Most years, my hosta just slowly lower themselves to the ground, turn brown and wait to be removed. This year, many of the hosta stood up, turned a nearly transparent yellow. I expect they will fall over eventually. I will wait until that stage to remove them.

The burning bushes and the eastern wahoo bushes this year are especially bright red. Driving around town I am greeted from many yards by the bright red show of these bushes in their fall coloration. It is gaudier than many birds or insects in their mating season.

My red stemmed dogwood, and the service (June) berry have been especially colorful this year. And the color has lasted weeks. These are on a berm at the back of my yard. I have left them grow naturally, filling out from ground to the top.

I feel fortunate to have an aspen variety in my back yard. Many years ago, traveling the back roads from the North Bass Trailhead on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, in September, the roads were lined for miles with this bright gold. During September hikes into the Collegiate Peaks in Colorado the aspen groves stood out with their beautiful golden yellow spots on the mountain sides. Mine has been bright gold for over three weeks. Magnificent, both for itself and for the memories.

Never have I seen the solomon's seal turn this luscious butter yellow as the leaves aged to fall for the winter. These are down between a bench and a rock wall making a spot of true beauty.

Even though I have big and little blue stem grasses, and other natives, this has not been a good year for the native grasses. Thus no pictures. Other years, they have been their usual proud, tall, magnificent selves, but not this year.

The huge leaves of the rhubarb have turned nearly black, and give a Halloween appearance as they threateningly surround the still green creeping phlox. Just a reminder of the dark forces out there.

And today, the albino winter variety of the fruit flies are swarming, leaving their beautiful white blanket over everything. This is why I live in Nebraska.





The goal of the GreatPlants program is to bring superior ornamental landscape plants into gardens to meet the challenging growing conditions of the Great Plains.

For more information about the plants or the program contact Bob Henrickson at (402) 472-7855 or rhenrickson2@unl.edu <http://arboretum.unl.edu/greatplants/index.html>

2014 Tree of the Year

Tuliptree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*

Yellow-green flowers with orange base bloom May into June; cone-shaped fruits persist into winter. Leaves & flowers are large and tulip-shaped. Foliage turns bright yellow in fall. Prefers moist, fertile soil in full sun. Zone 4. 60-90'h x 30-50'w



2014 Evergreen of the Year

Korean fir, *Abies koreana*

Soft needle texture & cones are a beautiful purple. Prefers rich, well-drained soil in full sun. Zone 5-7. Small size is great for urban landscapes. 15-30' h x 6-12' w



2014 Shrub of the Year

Purple beautyberry, *Callicarpa dichomata*

Showy fall display of lilac/violet berries on arching branches. Can tolerate drought and full sun or part shade. Yellow fall foliage complements berries. Zone 5-7. 3-5' h x 4-6' w



2014 Perennial of the Year

Showy black-eyed susan, *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *speciosa*

Abundant blooms! Similar to 'Goldsturm' but tolerates drought better and it's taller & longer-blooming. Zone 3. 2-3'h x 2'w



The Green Patch Contributors

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2014 Grass of the Year

Gray's sedge, *Carex grayi*

Wonderful sedge for winter interest—large leaves are semi-evergreen and spiky seedheads last through winter. Can grow in light shade and in wet soil on edges of ponds. Zone 5-9. 2-3'h x 1-2'w



Articles and information for the April issue of *The Green Patch* are due to Pam Greunke (pam.greunke@unl.edu) by March 1, 2014.

Northeast Nebraska Master Gardeners

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We're on the web at

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

What is It?? By Wayne Ohnesorg, Extension Educator

I have no correspondence that I can find for anyone that correctly identified last edition's *What is it?* as a carpenter worm (*Prionoxystus robiniae*). The caterpillars bore into black locust, cherry, cottonwood, elm, fig, green ash, lilac, maple, oak, pear, poplar, and willow. When fully grown the larvae are 2-3 inches long.



I caught this insect back in 2010. At the time the pictures were taken it was just barely alive. The colors are still too vivid for it to be dead.

What kind of insect is it?

The common name for the group will not count for this one. So this time you must be specific.

If you think you know, you can give me a call at (402) 370-4044 or shoot me an email (wohnesorg2@unl.edu). 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 and Herbaceous Perennials*. 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.

