

The Green Patch

January 1, 2015

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Tribute to a Dear Friend

By Marge Holland and Beverly McClure , Cuming County Master Gardeners

Last summer, Master Gardeners Marion Pestel, Bev McClure and Marge Holland remembered their fellow gardener, Fran Schweers, by planting and caring for a bed of bright red vinca, geraniums, and verbena at the front of the United Methodist Church of Christ in Wisner where they are all members. Fran loved red, and the bright blooms reflected her love of nature and her love of all things beautiful.

The four Master Gardeners had been friends for many years, and their friendship was enhanced by the Master Gardener concept of education and community service. The four traveled together to monthly meetings, attended training sessions, and enjoyed garden tours throughout the area. Together they worked the food stand at the annual spring Plant Fair.

Fran's life and her love of nature are memorialized by this special planting.



The ladies together after watching the 60th anniversary broadcast of Backyard Farmer September 2012.

Standing: Marion Pestel and Beverly McClure
Seated: Fran Schweers and Marge Holland

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Beverly's friendship with Fran "blossomed" when they volunteered at Mesa Community College in Arizona each winter. There were, at last count in 2010, over 6000 roses that needed to be cut back in January and February. Every Saturday morning, Fran and Bev loaded up gloves, clippers, and five gallon pails to join many other volunteers who were working to make these beds ready for spring blooming. They sat on their pails and discussed what was going on back in Wisner and other parts of Nebraska. March brought great piles of compost to the area to be spread over drip irrigation. They volunteered at the college for nearly eight years. Local volunteers were quite impressed that two retired ladies from the Midwest showed up faithfully each Saturday to do what they like best ~ Gardening.

How to Repot to Bury a Neck or to Rescue a Violet from Root Rot

By Kent and Joyce Stork

The process of repotting is intimidating and often growers try to do it the "safe way" which is actually why they die. You have to be fairly aggressive in transplanting but then provide the safety net that gets them growing again.

Step 1- Remove all older leaves that are smaller than the leaves above or are faded in color or nicked and damaged. I rarely leave more than about 10 leaves total. Remove all flowers.

Step 2- Use the dull side of a knife to scrape about two inches of the stem (gently) that is just below the bottom row of leaves. You should be scraping to smooth off the stumps of leaves just removed and to remove just the surface of any old dried tissue.

Step 3- Next amputate the top half of the plant by making a straight cut about one and a half to two inches below the bottom row of leaves. Discard the bottom section of the plant, although the pot may be saved and washed for reuse.

Step 4- While you can see the inside of the stem, look to see if there is any sign of rot. A healthy stem will be green with a circle of dots about halfway out from the middle. If the leaves are backed in red, the outside ring may be darker than the middle or even reddish, which is normal pigment. A darkened brown center or dried powdery center is a definite sign. You may also see darkened mushy plant tissue, or note some leaves that seem to be rotting off where they join the main stem. If any symptom is present, clean your knife and cut higher on the stem until you are above the rot. As long as the center leaves are intact, the plant has a chance.

Step 5- Prepare a fresh pot, the same size as before, with a light porous potting mix. Commercial potting mixes are too heavy (even the ones labeled for violets). We recommend a homemade mix made of one part sphagnum peat moss (brown is much better than black), one part vermiculite, and one part perlite. Or, if you can find a commercial mix that has a brown color, try mixing it half and half with either vermiculite or perlite. Water the pot to moisten the soil thoroughly and drain off the excess water that runs through.

Step 6- Set the stem of the violet onto the top of the pot so that stem is in good contact with the potting medium. If that part of the stem is bent, set the stem straight down into the soil. The leaves will soon straighten out and go level. A bent stem under the soil seems to cause the plant to grow oddly for an extended time.

Step 7- Place the plant into a clear plastic bag or container and seal it tightly closed. Set it in a bright location but out of direct sunlight. In about a month, new roots will have formed and the plant will be showing new growth. You will not need to water during this time period.

Step 8- Open the bag or container gradually over a period of two days to equalize the humidity slowly and prevent shock. Then enjoy your rejuvenated plant!

Propagation by leaf cutting

1. Choose a healthy leaf from the second or third row of your African violet plant.
2. Cut stem at 45 degree angle leaving a stem no longer than 1-1/2" and insert in damp porous potting mix. Water lightly.
3. May cut off top 1/3 of leaf. Label with name tag if available. Place inside plastic bag or clear container until ready to divide the clump of plantlets (see step 5).
4. Place pot in indirect light from a window or under florescent lights. There should be some evidence of humidity inside the bag. If so, no additional watering is needed. If not, water lightly and enclose the plant again.
5. Babies often start growing within 4-6 weeks. When babies are about 2 inches tall (about 4 months after putting the leaf down), or have at least 4 leaves per plantlet, separate and put each into individual small pot. Enclose these in plastic bag or clear container for several weeks. Then treat as mature plants.



This Rhapsodie Rebecca was the Best in Show (2013) and grown by our owner, Kent Stork. It's not as fancy as others to look at but it grows easily into a perfect plant. It was about 14" in diameter and one of the larger plants in the show.

Wonderful Gardening Year By Darlene Bennett , Dakota County Master Gardener

What a wonderful gardening year 2014 has been for me. The rain and lower temperatures were ideal. We purchased a house that sits on .6 acres in South Sioux City. We came home from Arizona the first of April and started moving plants. I started with my hybrid peonies and heuchera that went into the bed by the front walk. These really took off and gave me courage to keep going.

I had planted some irises, tulip and daffodil bulbs at the farm orchard in the fall knowing I would be moving them again into the new house. Another grower had given me many irises to replace my own that had seemed to disappear the year before. I blamed in on not enough sun and too much water. The irises and tulips were moved into town next. The daffodil bulbs never took off because of the dry weather this winter so they were a complete loss. This house has an underground sprinkler system which is nice for lawns, but not so much for perennials. We have a large bed in the middle of our circular driveway that is not watered and a small area behind the little barn to plant flowers. I did not look at what was the proper time to move whatever type of plant I wanted, because I needed to remove them to sell that house and property. Some of the first plants moved were daylilies, monarda, bleeding hearts, cranes bill geranium, and kiss me over the garden gate. A pleasant surprise was all the moss roses that had reseeded from the previous owner. It was a great addition to fill in before all the plants grew to their mature size. They bloomed from spring until a hard frost. Lemon balm and chocolate mint made it to my new herb garden behind the barn as well as winter onions from the orchard. A good start was made in rebuilding that area.

The dry winter weather made plants very slow to appear this spring. Anemones, astilbe, true lilies, mums, small catnip, and hibiscus were a challenge to wait to appear. I had two very large patches of hibiscus that did not show any growth at all and I was very sad to lose them. I have some old seed and will try my luck in starting some in the spring.

Some plants that I moved did not grow right away. I was very patient and did not disturb them after I planted them and most of them did start growing in a few weeks. I did try to get a large clump of each plant and that gave it the best chance to grow. Those plants were my best floribunda rose from a garden club sale, astilbe, baptisia, and clematis. The old fashion peonies were moved so late that they have not shown any growth at all in their new home. I put a fence around each one and am waiting for next spring. I hope my wait is not in vain. Some of them came from my mother's garden and can not be replaced.

All the hostas were potted up, because I had no place to plant them at first. We have several large trees with roots close to the surface. I did design a shade garden that presented many problems. I got some planted in the ground, but needed an idea how to plant the remaining pots. I purchased some block material and made a circle to fit each plant right on top of the hard ground and roots. I filled it with soil and planted the remaining pots. I am hoping they will find some way to root and make it in their new location. Time will tell.

There were plants that I chose not to move. They were hybrid lilac, black elderberry, delphinium, ajuga, and aquilegia. Boltonia aster had seemed to take over that garden, so I left that and chose purple dome aster to move instead. It has really put on a glorious show this fall. My mums and asters should really be dug up and replanted every year. I did not have to cut them back and they were a perfect mound of flowers. The neighbors made many compliments on the blooms we had the first year for all our efforts.

We moved more than 300 plants that made for a busy summer along with moving into the house. We are looking forward to next season to see iris and daylilies bloom. Hope you had as happy of gardening season as I had and look forward to seeing my Master Gardener friends next year when I will have more free time.

2015 Spring Training Dates:

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

- February 3:** Waterwise Landscapes and Residential Rain Gardens
February 10: Pruning Deciduous and Evergreen Trees and
February 17: Insects – Beneficials in the Garden and Landscape and Vegetable Insect Pests
February 24: Wildlife Damage Management
March 3: Technology in the Garden and Landscape Photography for Beauty and Diagnostics
March 10: Preparing for Emerald Ash Borer: Identification, Management and Treatment Options and Tree Planting Selections Now and Post EAB

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 and Market

Mark your calendars!

Friday, April 24 and Saturday, April 25, 2015

- ◆ Vendors are invited to rent a space to display/sell their products. 750+ visitors attend this annual event.
- ◆ 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!

Cover Crops for the Home Garden

By Jane Rhebb , Madison County Master Gardener

Cover crops, or often called green manures, are plants grown to improve a soil's physical structure and fertility. They also help prevent soil erosion, reduce weed problems and provide a habitat for beneficial insects. Cover crops consist of grains, grasses and legumes that can be planted different times of the year, depending on your specific goal. They can even be planted between rows to help suppress weeds.

A mixture of seeds will give you the most benefit. The addition of legumes will add nitrogen to the soil. I went to Kaup Forage and Turf to get my seeds for my first trial with cover crops. They have an informative brochure listing over twenty products and their specific benefits. I had two areas of my garden that were finished harvesting in August. After discussing the specific needs of my soil and because this would be a late summer planting, I was advised to plant buckwheat, winter peas, purple top turnip and radish.

After tilling the areas in late August, I raked in the seed and watered lightly. With the abundant rains this year late summer, we saw fresh green within days. The plants really thrived and were enjoyable to look at. I actually harvested some of the turnips and radishes before the hard freezes. Now that winter has arrived, we have a cover in our garden instead of bare soil. The areas will be tilled next spring. I am excited about this opportunity to improve my soil without being concerned about the safety of some animal manures.

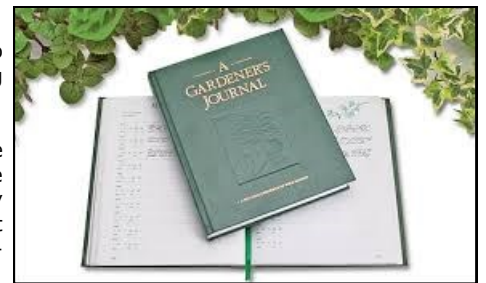
I received additional information on cover crops from articles online by University Extensions.

January Garden Chores

By Jane Jensen , Pierce County Master Gardener

It's cold and snowy, the wind is blowing, but I still want to be outside in the garden! Well, at least my heart is still out there. There are still garden related chores to do while not actually doing what we desire to do the most, working in the soil and seeing things grow.

My garden journal is a hand written diary of what worked, what didn't and what I'd like to try. Notes on a computer are no doubt easier for some and easier for photos to be included, but I prefer pen and paper. I think it is fun and worth my time. I can easily find the name of a plant that a friend admired and may want to try. I readily admit that names escape me and seeing it in print is helpful. I include home and yard improvements, weather and other seasonal aspects.



Walking through your yard when all is bare can often propel thoughts of improvements and new arrangements. A garden is never finished. It is always a work in progress and that involves seeing your little corner of the world in every month of the year. Dream gardening can help alleviate the winter blues.

Check on clematis, roses and other perennials to make sure any mulching you may have done hasn't blown away. If we have another dry winter like last year it may be advisable to get the hoses out on any particularly warm day and water bushes and other young trees. A shower effect is better than a steady stream that may open up the ground and cause dry, cold air to circulate around the roots.



Check your seed supply. Any leftover seed in packets should be closed up and kept dry. I leave cone flowers and such out in the garden to reseed and for Winter interest. These plants and some grasses can be an important source of food for birds. Don't forget to check on stored produce like apples or potatoes and onions.

Rabbits and other critters can wreak havoc on newly planted bulbs and shrubs; a real dilemma if not noticed. Placing chicken wire over bulb plantings is one solution or fencing them out.

Remove heavy wet snow from tree limbs by tapping the underside of the branch with a wide broom. If ice has built up, leave alone. You'll end up doing more damage by breaking limbs and twigs. Let the sun do the job for you even if it is quite a wait.

Garden catalogs come out earlier in the year all the time. What fun to check out new ideas. Clean up any garden tools that may have been neglected. Build a bird house or a trellis. Google your favorite type of plant; perennials and annuals are growing in number all the time. Researching them is great fun. You can learn some amazing things.

If you had a real Christmas tree try stringing it with popcorn, fruit, etc. for the birds. You're providing food and some protection from the weather for the birds in your yard. Isn't it a treat to look out a window and see life even on the coldest, windiest day?



"A garden requires patient labor and attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them."
Liberty Hyde Bailey

Gardeners tend to be impatient with their landscapes. They want growth as quickly as possible – with all the additional perks of color, focus, privacy – and preferably this year, this season, this month, this week, now. But if you've gardened long enough, you've probably learned that the plants that take the most patience tend to be, in the long run, the most long-lived.

There are advantages to slow, or at least unseen, growth. Often it means that plants are putting their energy underground in the form of root growth. Once their roots are established, they will get about the business of growing upwards, but first they concentrate on a solid base.

Most perennials – plants that live for two or more years – are slow starters. A few perennials, like chrysanthemums, do their best when they're transplanted every couple of years, but many are happy to remain in place for 10 years or more. Long-lived perennials include peony, bleeding heart, sedum, Siberian iris, gas plant, Lenten rose, *Epimedium*, goat's beard, *Corydalis* and ornamental grasses.

For the initial planting, it's important to know the plant's mature size and space it accordingly. Placing small, fragile plants a foot or more apart can look silly the first few years but eventually they'll need the space, and deep-rooted plants don't adapt to moving and transplanting as well as their shallow-rooted companions. Planting annuals among them the first few years can help ease the transition and keep out weeds while they get established.

Prairie plants are by nature deep-rooted to withstand drought and competition, and many of them take a few years to reach mature size. Keeping weeds out the first few years is important since most weeds are extremely fast-growing annuals designed to complete their life cycle in the first season. Annual weeds can often grow to 4 feet or more in one year, shading prairie seedlings and competing for water and nutrients.

We're all influenced by appearance and that's certainly true in the nursery, where many prairie plants are overlooked because of how fragile they appear. They simply aren't happy in small nursery pots where their roots can't spread down and out. The stems of plants like milkweed look like wispy hairs early on – they seem far too fragile-looking to place with grasses or other perennials. But give them some time, care and watering and they'll outlive many of their neighbors. Even woody-stemmed plants like *Baptisia* and leadplant look like they couldn't survive in tough soils. But that's precisely what they are accustomed to, and what their roots are waiting for.

So when you're planning your next garden bed, give some thought to future years and do a little research on how long the plants you're wanting to grow are likely to live. If you're thinking about the long run, you may have to be a little patient in the beginning... but it'll pay off.

Source/Writer: Karma Larsen, communications associate, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, 402-472-7923, klarsen1@unl.edu



International Master Gardener Conference
September 22–25, 2015

MID-AMERICA CENTER, COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA, USA

<http://mastergardener.unl.edu/imgc2015>

Registration will open March 1, 2015 or earlier.

In Nature, Every Change Has its Purpose, Place

"Important lessons: look carefully; record what you see. Find a way to make beauty necessary; find a way to make necessity beautiful." Anne Michaels in Fugitive Pieces

The decorations we're putting out for the holidays we will soon pack up again for storage in closets, basements and attics. Meanwhile in the landscape, elements that have been developing all through the growing season are suddenly made visible as the green of lawns, deciduous trees and perennial beds begins to recede.

Every change we see in the landscape has a purpose. To us, that purpose may appear simply ornamental, but very little that occurs in the landscape is wasted. It might not be as dramatic in terms of color or quick-change but everything is there for a reason – primarily as food, propagation or shelter.

Even the beautiful fall color we enjoy is purposeful, a result of the green of chlorophyll breaking down and disappearing to protect against the cold, and giving way to the suddenly visible yellow to orange to red colors.

Almost all the berries and other fruits we enjoy in our gardens are winter food for wildlife. Many of them, including crabapples and some viburnums, are only palatable after a long series of freezes and thaws, ultimately providing essential late winter food at a time when other food sources have disappeared.

The pine cones we use for outdoor and indoor decorations hold seeds in overlapping scales that the beaks of some birds are perfectly angled to remove seeds from. The seeds of lodgepole pine are even more deeply "lodged," only to be released after fires, when new tree growth is most needed.

Milkweed seeds normally burst their feathery pods in June or July, just in time to provide soft, fibrous seeds for the mid-summer nests of American goldfinch and other birds.

The bare bones of tree trunks are exposed in their varied colors and textures. John Burroughs writes that "the rough dry bark of the trees is not such a barren waste as it seems. The amount of animal food in the shape of minute insects, eggs, and larvae tucked away in cracks and crevices must be considerable, and, by dint of incessant peeping and prying into every seam and break in the bark, [birds and insects] get fuel enough to keep their delicate machinery going." And further, "The brown creeper, with his long, slender, decurved bill, secures what the chickadee, with his short, straight bill, fails to get."

Bees, meanwhile, have stored their wealth of honey in strikingly architectural hexagonal combs, the perfect shape for maximum storage—and winter necessity. The honey they hold has its own perfect form as one of the few foods that never rots. With its high proportion of sugar and lack of moisture, there is no room for bacteria to grow.

The seedheads on asters, coneflowers and sunflowers are arranged in arcs or spirals in perfect increments to provide maximum sunshine and growth for new tissues at the base. And the entire heads of some plants in this family turn to follow the sun, almost like a solar panel.

The examples of form following function in the landscape are endless ("Looking Closer" images at www.pinterest.com/nearboretum/looking-closer). So this winter as you're putting things away, do your own inventory of the ways the natural world expends rather than packs away its beauty.

Source: Karma Larsen, communications associate, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, 402-472-7923, klarsen1@unl.edu





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>

Future Trees of the Year:

- 2017—*Quercus shumardii* or shumard oak
- 2016—*Carpinus caroliniana* or American hornbeam
- 2015—*Quercus velutina* or Black oak

Future Evergreens of the Year:

- 2017—*Picea glauca* or white spruce
- 2016—*Pinus ponderosa* or Ponderosa pine
- 2015—*Pinus resinosa* or red pine

Future Shrubs of the Year:

- 2017—*Prunus besseyi* or 'Pawnee Buttes' western sandcherry
- 2016—*Ceanothus americanus* or New Jersey tea
- 2015—*Cephalanthus occidentalis* or buttonbush

Future Perennials of the Year:

- 2017—*Liatris ligulistylis* or meadow blazing star
- 2016—*Oenothera macrocarpa* var *fremontii* or Fremont's primrose
- 2015—*Thermopsis villosa* or Carolina lupine

Future Grasses of the Year:

- 2017—*Andropogon gerardii* or big bluestem
- 2016—*Panicum virgatum* 'Dallas Blues' or 'Dallas Blues' switchgrass
- 2015—*Sporobolus wrightii* or giant sakaton



Articles and information for the April issue of *The Green Patch* are due to Pam Greunke (pam.greunke@unl.edu) by March 1, 2015.

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



We're on the web at

<https://www.facebook.com/NortheastNEMasterGardeners>

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

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What is It?? By Wayne Ohnesorg, Extension Educator

Tammy Furstenau was the only and correct responder for what the April *What is it?* was. The insect in question is known as the "pear sawfly/pear slug" (*Caliroa cerasi*). As noted in the past article the larvae will feed on hawthorn, pear, cherry, cotoneaster, plum, apricot, and mountain ash. Control is straight forward as you can knock them off with a strong blast from a garden hose. Once off the plant they wont be able to crawl back onto the plant.



This insect was brought in for identification this past summer. It came from a cabin in a wooded area of Knox County Nebraska.

If you think you know, you can give me a call at (402) 370-4044 or shoot me an email (wohnesorg2@unl.edu). Please be as specific as you can. 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.

