

The Green Patch

July 2015

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New Garden Year Observations

By Jane Jensen, Pierce County Master Gardener

As of this writing at the end of May, I hear lots of folks talking about how cool and wet the ground is. Should we be planting this or that? Is it going to be another strange and difficult year? Some bushes and trees are very slow in leafing out. A neighbor's smoke tree is finally getting some leaves. Another neighbor's weeping cherry looks like it is done for. Other flowers have already bloomed and are a memory.

I have not planted my begonia tubers yet due to the cold ground and cool, wet rainy conditions. Begonias like to be moist but not the humid air around them. Last year's wetter conditions caused most of my begonias to fail. They had lovely lush leaves but little in the way of blossoms. I'm hoping soon this rainy spell will be over and we can have days of bright sunshine. Most of our flowers need that.

Last year my three yuccas out front did not bloom. I happened upon this very question when looking at some old Garden Gate magazines. The answer to that question was that it takes a tremendous amount of reserves to push up that tall flower spike. If this plant blooms every three to four years, that is considered good. Maybe this year the lovely bell shaped blooms up and down the flower spike will return.

I installed a new trellis system last fall for the two clematis out front. Of all my flowers this year, they are just loaded with blooms and buds. I guess it helps to cut them back now and then. I should have provided a taller trellis for them. They have reached the top and have fallen over. Sadly, one of my three red Avant-Garde clematis I planted last year did not survive the winter, despite protection. They even bloomed the first year, small red flowers. Two other clematis are really prolific.

I believed I had my iris beds thinned out, given away and consolidated in two places. Wrong! They are growing but are coming up in shaded areas so there are no flower stalks. So there will be more to give away this August which is the time to move them.

These few disappointments will be forgotten and we'll move on. Gardening is in our blood and we won't give up that easily. As they are wont to say on Backyard Farmer, when a tree or plant dies it is just an opportunity to try something new.

Garden's Rules for Life

Shared by Pearl Laycock, Pierce County Master Gardener

Inside this issue:

Horticulture Contests	2
Plant Fair & Market Pictures	3
Children's Corner	4
Table Decoration Winners & Wagon Helpers	5
Picking out your Favorite Friendly Trees	6
Tranquil Shade Gardening	7
What is It?	8

5 Rows Peas:

Preparedness
 Promptness
 Perseverance
 Politeness
 Prayer

3 Rows of Squash:

Squash gossip
 Squash criticism
 Squash indifference

3 Rows of Lettuce:

Let us be faithful
 Let us love one another
 Let us be truthful

No garden is complete without turnips:

Turn up for church
 Turn up for a smile
 Turn up with a new idea
 Turn up with real determination



Youth had the opportunity to test their Horticulture knowledge by participating in Contests.



First row: Gregory Perrigan and Sara Thomsen

Second row: Allison Perrigan, Sarah Perrigan, Max Carlson, Sam Carlson

Third row: Katherine Perrigan, Laura Perrigan, Katharine Schudel, Michaela McWilliams and Rachael Thomas

As part of the 23rd annual Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener plant fair & market Saturday, April 25th, a youth horticulture plant identification contest was held. Area youth were invited to participate in the competition. A total of eleven youth participated with seven in the junior division, two in the intermediate division, and two in the senior division. Each contestant was asked to identify 50 plants. Rachael Thomas of Stanton County placed first in the junior division with Gregory Perrigan placing second and Sam Carlson placing third both from Madison County. In the intermediate division, Sarah Perrigan finished in first place with Laura Perrigan placing second both from Madison County. Katharine Schudel of Valley County placed first in the senior division with Katherine Perrigan of Madison County placing second. Special recognition goes to Katharine Schudel for identifying all 50 plants correctly. The other participants were Allison Perrigan and Max Carlson from Madison County and Michaela McWilliams and Sara Thomsen from Pierce County. Wayne Ohnesorg, Nebraska Extension Educator and local Master Gardener coordinator presented the awards. Thank you to Jim Laycock of Mulch N More, the Master Gardener Plant Booth, Wayne Ohnesorg, and Don Liedman for providing plants for the contest.

On June 10, 2015, a competition was held for 4-H youth, their parents, and Master Gardeners to test their horticultural identification knowledge at Jane and Ron Rhebb's acreage northeast of Norfolk. A total of eight youth participated representing Pierce and Stanton Counties. First place was Alysan Wurdinger. Placing second was Aryana Wurdinger. Tying for third place were Rachael Thomas and Anton Wurdinger. In the Master Gardener/Open division, Marjorie Jansen of Norfolk placed first with Jenn Thomsen of Pierce coming in a very close second. Thank you to Jane and Ron for hosting this event. Also thank you to Master Gardener, Jim Laycock and Nebraska Extension Educator, Wayne Ohnesorg for taking each group around for the contest and then explaining the various plants.

Front Row: Alton Wurdinger, Alysan Wurdinger, Lydia Hilbers, Anton Wurdinger, and Sara Thomsen

Back Row: Emalee Hilbers, Rachael Thomas, and Aryana Wurdinger



Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Plant Fair & Market

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The Green Patch



Children's Corner



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Table Decoration winners



First Prize: Karen Zierke ~ Second Prize: Ellen Glanzer ~ Third Prize: Robin Jones

Northeast Nebraska Master Gardener Plant Fair & Market

Wagon Helpers



Picking Out Your Favorite Friendly Trees

July 2015

By Tom Surber, Madison County Master Gardener

You are out walking your property. What you see next door is birds, butterflies, flowering trees, shade over a beautiful patio, and beautiful flowers of several kinds. You look at your own yard – half an acre of grass you have to, ugh, mow almost weekly, Ugh Ugh, and a picnic table which you seldom use, Ugh, because it is in full sun. That evening you are sharing a beer with your neighbor next door on his comfortable, cool patio. He serves you fresh apples from his trees and the table is graced with fresh flowers from his yard. The hot sun is still shining on your picnic table making it unusable. In talking, you realize with the same size and general house floor plan your cooling bills are twice that of his. You also realize you do not ever get fresh fruit or fresh flowers from your acre of grass. Something has to give.

You go out and buy and read the tree books. You have read several excellent discussions of the various kinds of trees out there. You have an understanding of which trees are “large,” or “medium” or “small” or “flowering” and/or “fruit bearing.” You have figured out that some trees grow in your area and others for various reasons do not grow well or at all in your area. You know that some trees are fast growing, but weak and brittle, while others are slower growing and stalwart and strong, standing up better to the high winds.

Now What??

Take a piece of blank paper. On the top half draw a rectangle the same dimensions as your lot. Place an outline of your house as it sits on your lot. This need not be a fancy diagram. But it should include the various corners and angles of your house. The proportions of the house and the lot should match. Mark streets, sidewalks and names of your neighbors. Now make some copies so as you change your mind in the following process you can easily change your paper. Understand the scale of your drawing so you can draw in trees in proportion. In other words, how big a circle will you draw to represent a 40 - 50 feet tree, and a 25-30 feet tree, and a 10 - 15 feet tree. How big a square or rectangle or triangle will you draw to represent vegetable and flower gardens.

Now, on a hot afternoon, go outside onto your property. Dress lightly and comfortably and carry some water with you. Take your lot diagrams with you with a pencil. While you really liked the fresh fruit and the colors of the flowering trees and shrubs and flower gardens of your neighbor, your main objective is to reduce your cooling bills in the summer. A second objective is to get a comfortable, cool patio you can use and enjoy without baking yourself. A third objective is to have fruiting trees and shrubs and flower beds to attract butterflies. A fourth objective is to increase the value of your lot so when you sell it (and you or your heirs will some day), it will bring more money.

First, go to the south side of your house. Here you will want some large trees for shading the house to keep it cooler. Perhaps you really want medium size trees so as to have more room for other items on your wish list. Medium trees will generally mature to cooling size faster. Do you need shrubs for a sound barrier and visual barrier from the street or neighbor? Draw in circles to shade, not overhang your house. Remember the mature size of medium to large trees, and plan for it. Put large trees 25-30 feet from the house. Put medium trees 15-25 feet from the house. Don't worry about exact species right now.

Now, go across the street from your house and consider it's “curb appeal.” If your house faces south, you already have large trees in your front yard. Look at the terrace, the space between your sidewalk and the street. Do you need smaller trees there? If so, draw them in. What are your city's regulations for clearance over the sidewalk, over the street? Look at the foundation of your house and plan for shrubs and flower beds there. How much grass to do you really want to leave? Draw in the trees and the shrubs and the flower beds to increase the attractiveness of the front of your house. This will be a big factor in pricing your house later. Remember that at first the beds will be full sun, and gradually mature into shade areas.

Now go to the back of your house. If this is the north side, you have ready made shade areas for shade shrubs and a rock or woodland garden. If this is the south side, you already have large trees here. Decide where and how large a patio area you want. Decide how private you want to make this patio with sound barriers and sight barriers of shrubs and small trees. The patio can be right up next to the house, or a ways out. Do you want a play area of grass for kids of all ages to play on?

Hopefully you have room clear to the back of the lot for vegetable gardens, flower gardens, and a few fruit trees. Arrange the tree circles to allow for these areas. Mark the size of the trees you want. Most fruit trees have “dwarf” varieties that fit into city lots better. Consider and respect your neighbors' landscaping.

Finish off your plan as it suits you, suits the lay of the land, controls the amount of sun on the various areas, and does not affect your neighbors adversely but blends with their landscaping.

Now go back inside. Sit down and on the bottom half of the sheet of paper list the sizes of trees and how many of each size you have slotted into your property. Now, review those tree books and the articles on the various tree species, including your plant zone. List trees you want to plant and where.

Now, go back outside. Stand at the center of each tree circle for quite some time visualizing the effects of each tree you have plotted. You may change some of the choices. Lay the plan aside for at least a week. You will want to go to a local arboretum to see mature specimens of the species you like. Go back outside and again stand at the center of each tree circle you plotted, visualizing and feeling the ambience of your choices. Sit where you plan your patio. Move around the property considering the effects and affects of your tree choices.

Now, go to your local nurseries. Not all tree species and varieties in the books are available in the local nurseries. You may have to adjust your choices to what is available. Some trees can be special ordered. Check how good their plants look. Check how well they mark the plant zones of the plants. Check how clean and well kept the nursery is. Yes, there will be water and dark dirt. This is plant nursery. Look for locally grown or slightly more northern grown (a plant zone one north of yours) species. Cheap plants never grow into better plants. Check for good looking stock. Talk with the nursery people about the trees of your choices. The nursery people should be knowledgeable and helpful and friendly. If they are not all three, go elsewhere. Discuss maintenance both long term and after planting of the plants. See what they charge for planting, unless you plan to do it all yourself. You are going to have to live with those trees, hopefully as friends, for the rest of your life, so get the best you can buy. It might save money to buy younger, small diameter trees, but not necessarily.

Buy your trees. Be sure not to buy more than you can plant in a reasonable amount of time. You can spread the work and purchasing out over several weekends to several years. The nursery people tell me that late summer to early fall is the most successful times to plant trees.

Be sure to water and care for your trees. Protect your trees from the minibears like mice, voles, gophers, rabbits, deer. Plan to prune them every year to better shapes. Put mulch and irregular shaped flower beds in the drip zones of your trees. Trees should not grow directly from a grassy area. Trees need some care every year. Good luck and have fun.

Tranquil Shade Gardening

By Janelle McIntyre, Platte County Master Gardener

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Gardening in the shade is often touted as difficult and rather dull compared to gardening in the sun. I used to think that myself. True the color of flowers in the shade may be a bit limited but everything else being equal, the foliage variation far surpasses what can be grown in the sun (in my opinion). I find it peaceful on a hot sunny day to spend time in one of my shade gardens pattering around.

A favorite shade loving plant of mine is the hosta. A dark spot can really pop with the sharp contrast of the unique leaves. I have a special fondness for the hostas that are vigorous. There are so many pretty ones it is hard to count, but the ones that are pretty and vigorous are few and far between. Those are the ones that are truly amazing. On a rather negative note, I have a hosta called "Great Expectations" whose name is misleading. It has wonderful contrasting variegation. Every year I wait with "expectation" for it to grow. So far it has grown at an alarmingly slow rate almost imperceptible. I have decided it got its name because the breeder waited with great expectation for it to do something/anything. I am sure after a few more years it will be spectacular or not. Who knows!

Two years ago in the fall, I talked my husband into building a lattice shade structure. A "Red Jewel" crabapple had winter killed so we replaced it with a weeping mulberry. Still, some of the shade was lost and I felt more was needed for the short term. On one of our MG tours I had seen just such a lattice cover and I thought why not. Of course, what I think and what my husband thinks are often worlds apart. He did agree to help me put it up as long as I came up with the plans and the materials. It did help to have taken a picture of it on the tour. A picture is worth a thousand words. And so we began.

At this time, I decided to make it into a "hosta of the year" bed. Wanting to have vigor as well as beauty I searched for the hostas that had won this award. I did mulch it to high heaven to keep moisture in and weeds out but that is the only real effort put into it. It is next to a cattle shed and catches the runoff from it, so it gets its share of moisture. When it woke up this spring it was quite remarkable, both my husband and I were impressed. The really big hostas are in the back: Regal Splendor, Sum and Substance and Sagae. The conditions must be perfect for they are growing better there than where their mother plants are. This year I purchased a "Victory" hosta at a local farm store. It is this year's hosta of the year but the label didn't say so. I think they didn't know what they had, lucky for me. I also added two more hostas "June" and "Blue Mouse Ears". Both are small. One is totally blue with thick leaves and the other has chartreuse variations and really lights up a dark corner. Part of the joy of this bed is the hunt. I won't ever really be done because every year they choose a new one. That suits me just fine.



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



We're on the web at

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What is It?? By Wayne Ohnesorg, Extension Educator

Tammy Furstenau was first to correctly respond to the January *What is it?*. Jane Jensen also answered correctly. The insect in question is known as a "large milkweed bug" (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*). The adults and nymphs feed on milkweeds. Unless they are in very high numbers, they rarely cause issues with milkweeds in gardens.



I photographed this insect on a small, understory, woody plant on June 2, 2015 near Manhattan, KS. The nymphs feed on sap from tree roots while the adults will occasionally feed on tree sap from branches.

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.

