

Racine Kenosha Master Gardener Association

Quarterly Newsletter – Spring 2015



WIMGA 2015

The Wisconsin Master Gardener Association (WIMGA) is holding their 2015 Annual Conference in La Crosse, WI July 31-August 1, 2105. The Bluff Country Master Gardener Association is hosting this event. We welcome all Master Gardener Volunteers and anyone who wants to learn more about gardening.



Roy Diblik of Northwind Perennial Farm in Burlington will be the keynote speaker. Roy's thoughtful way to design perennial plantings welcomes fresh contemporary styles and plant diversity integrated with responsible maintenance concerns.



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Plant Sale Season

Spring brings us beautiful bulbs, fragrant blossoms and great bargains at plant sales. Although our established garden centers and nurseries are worthy of your patronage, be sure to also support the Potpourri Garden Club, Wild Ones and Shepherd's College.

The Potpourri Garden Club's Annual Perennial Plant Sale will be held Saturday, May 16th, 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The sale takes place in the east parking lot (Target store end) of the Regency Mall, 5500 Durand Avenue. This is an incredible sale hosted by incredible gardeners who donate their plants and time to raise money for many gardening projects in our community. This year, in addition to the countless perennials being sold at great prices, you may also purchase tomatoes grown by participants in the Green Works program. This sale is held rain or shine and the early bird gets the worm!

The Wild Ones Native Plant Sale will be held Saturday, June 6th, 9 a.m.—3 p.m. at Gateway Technical College in Kenosha. This is a fantastic sale with many hard to find Wisconsin natives at great prices. Proceeds from this sale benefit the Wild Ones. Wild Ones is the leader of the natural landscaping movement—exploring, teaching, and changing the practice of gardening in our communities and around the country by using native plants.

Shepherds College greenhouse plant sale will be held during the month of May. On Fridays, the hours are noon to 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and Memorial Day, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Make your selections from a variety of annuals, herbs and vegetables. Bring your own boxes to transport plants. Cash only is appreciated. The college is at 1805 15th Ave., Union Grove. Proceeds from purchases go toward support training for individuals with intellectual disabilities.



66th Annual Mackinac Island Lilac Festival

June 5-14, 2015

A celebration that blends the Island's historic varieties of lilacs – many of which were brought here during the Colonial era; distinctive equestrian culture; fine food, drink and accommodations plus a range of other activities, the festival is one of the Island's biggest attractions. This year, celebrating equine and canine companions, the Mackinac Island Dog & Pony club returns with the annual Mackinac Island Dog & Pony Show and the Epona & Barkus Parade. Visit www.mackinacisland.org/event/lilacfestival/ for a complete festival schedule.

Lilacs for Cold Climates

“Lilacs have been cultivated for over 400 years originating in Europe and Asia. They were brought to America in the mid-1700s where they've remained garden favorites ever since. Currently, more than 1.800 cultivars of lilacs exist, offering a stunning range of flower colors, blooming periods, intensity of fragrance, and plant size.”

You can download a wonderful publication from the [uwex.learning store](http://uwex.learningstore.edu/assets/pdfs/A3825.pdf) authored by Laura Jull (<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/A3825.pdf>) that helps sort through some of the top cultivar choices and provides advice on how to plant, prune, and care for lilacs. Here, I have excerpted the section on disease management.

DISEASE MANAGEMENT

The following diseases commonly affect lilacs grown in cold climates:

POWDERY MILDEW appears as a white powder on the leaves and develops rapidly during hot, humid weather. This fungal disease is unsightly and may cause some leave loss,

but it won't kill the plant. Prevention is the best treatment: plant resistant cultivars, select sites that receive full sun, and provide adequate spacing between plants to allow good air circulation. Remove and destroy infected plant debris to reduce the amount of inoculum present the following year. Fungicides may be used to treat the disease, but they are not recommended because powdery mildew is strictly a cosmetic problem.

BACTERIAL BLIGHT is a common and serious disease of all lilacs, although white-flowered varieties seem to be more susceptible. During cool, wet spring weather, brown spots with yellow halos appear on leaves and petioles. If the disease occurs before leaves are fully expanded, they will become distorted as they mature. Bacterial blight can also cause black streaking and dieback of twigs. Prune diseased branches 10-12 inches below visibly infected areas. Disinfect pruners between each cut and destroy the plant debris (do not compost). On plants that have a history of bacterial blight,

bactericide treatments in early spring may be necessary.

LILAC WITCHES BROOM OR

DECLINE causes lilacs to produce tufts of short, spindly branches and yellow, distorted foliage. Infected braches often die, with the disease spreading to kill the entire plant. The pathogen is a phytoplasma, a bacterium-like organism that lives in the phloem (the food-conducting tissue) of infected plants. Phytoplasmas are typically spread by leafhoppers. There is no known cure—fungicides will not help. The best strategy is to remove the infected plants as soon as symptoms appear. Avoid planting susceptible lilac species or cultivars.

VERTICILLIUM WILT leads to a sudden wilting and dieback of branches and is caused by a soil-borne fungus. Often, wilting braches first appear on one side of the shrub, but eventually the entire shrub will wilt and die. There is no treatment. If Verticillium wilt has been a problem at a particular site, avoid planting lilacs or other susceptible trees and shrubs there.

INSECT MANAGEMENT

Although you may find other insects on lilacs during the growing season, lilac borers and oystershell scale are the two most important pests of lilacs.

LILAC BORER is the chief insect pest of lilacs. During the immature stage, these small white larvae tunnel into the base of larger branches where they eat the wood. The branches weaken and eventually die, and affected shrubs will produce few if any flowers. The best control for this pest is to routinely prune out one-third of the largest diameter and weak branches back to the base of the plant. The insecticide permethrin can be applied around mid-June to kill the adults as they lay eggs.

OYSTERSHELL SCALE also attacks lilac stems. For most of its life, this pest is motionless beneath a hard waxy shield that resembles a tiny mussel shell. Scales are difficult to control because the covering effectively protects both the adult and the egg masses. In the spring, the eggs hatch and the nymphs (immature scale) emerge to feed. They settle down to

begin sucking plant sap and within 1-3 weeks develop their own protective covering. Feeding damage causes leaves to turn yellow and become distorted. For heavy infestations, the best control is to remove and destroy the plant. For lighter infestations, dormant oil sprayed onto the stems and trunk of lilacs during the dormant season will smother the scale insects.

PRUNING

Newly planted lilacs will not need much pruning for the first 2-3 years.

TIMING

Lilacs are usually best pruned when they're dormant, typically in March or early April. Pruning at this time of year has several advantages: it's easiest to see what you're removing, there's little insect and disease activity, and pruning cuts close faster. The drawback, though, is that you will sacrifice some flowers. The next best time to prune is immediately after flowering but before plants set flower buds for next year's bloom. If you prune too late in the season, you will remove next year's flower buds.

TECHNIQUE—RENEWAL PRUNING FOR SUCKERING SHRUBS.

Lilacs that sucker readily, such as common and early lilacs, should be pruned every 1-3 years to encourage new growth and flowering. Remove approximately one-third of all branches that are larger than 1-1/2 inches in diameter. Cut the branches out at ground level using a pruning saw.

New shoots will develop at the base of the plant. Vigorous young growth often produces more flowers compared to older, larger-diameter branches. Removing larger branches also helps to decrease the plant's susceptibility to lilac borer infestations. This pruning technique allows lilacs to flower each year and maintains the size of the plant.

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/A3825.pdf>

WHY DOESN'T MY LILAC FLOWER?

There are several reasons why a lilac plant may not flower:

- Plants aren't receiving enough sunlight. Lilacs require at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day to produce flower buds.
- Too much nitrogen (N) can lead to lush, green foliage at the expense of flower bud production. Lawn fertilizers are often high in nitrogen; avoid using them around the base of your lilac.
- For the first few years after transplanting, the plant is putting its energy into establishing a root system rather than into leaf and flower development. Water routinely to encourage healthy plant establishment.
- Pruning lilacs in summer will remove flower buds. Prune immediately after flowering to avoid this problem. Prune immediately after flowering to avoid this problem. Pruning during the dormant season is the best time to prune, but be aware that some flower buds will be removed.

Spring Gardening Tips by Gillian S. Holmes

This article was written by Gillian Holmes. She interviewed University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator, Ron Wolford. He offered up many wonderful tips which are presented here. The full article can be read on the web and is referenced at the end of this excerpt. Enjoy!

"Save pantyhose to enclose individual veggies like melons, corn, cabbage, cucumbers and small pumpkins to protect from birds and insects. Tie the pantyhose off at both ends of the veggie to keep insects out. The pantyhose will stretch with growth and dry off quickly after rain."



"Be prepared for late spring frosts. Cover tender plants with row covers, cardboard, blankets, hot caps, or newspaper. Do not use metal or plastic for protection; they can conduct cold to plants. We have had frost as late as Memorial Day."

"Save the mesh bags that oranges come in and use them this summer to dry herbs and gourds."

"Save orange juice and tuna fish cans to use as barriers around newly transplanted plants to protect them from the cutworm," he said. "Cutworms will chew through the stems at soil level. Cut both ends from the cans and push cans about an inch into the soil around the plants. "After two to three weeks, the cans can be removed because the stems will have thickened enough to withstand any cutworm damage."

Wolford suggested making homemade seed tapes for small seeds like carrots, lettuce and beets by following these directions:

- Cut plain paper or copy paper into long one-inch wide strips
- Mix flour and water to the consistency of gravy to make glue.
- Using a small watercolor paintbrush, pick up a small dot of glue, and then touch the brush to a seed and place seed with glue on the paper.
- Space the seeds on the paper according to the directions on the seed packet.
- Air dry the tapes, roll them up and store in a plastic sandwich bag.

"Avoid damping off disease when starting seeds," he added. "This fungus disease kills plants at the soil line, causing them to collapse."

"To head the disease off, use a sterile soil medium. Sterilize pots and containers in a 10 percent bleach solution. Sink the containers in the solution for a few minutes and rinse with water. Keep the temperature around 65-70 degrees F for best germination and provide bottom heat if possible. Most of all, avoid overwatering. Allow the soil to dry before watering and always drain saucers under containers after watering."

"In the spring, never work your soil when it is wet. Tilling or digging when the soil is wet will cause it to dry into concrete-like clods. Pick up a handful of soil before digging and squeeze. If it crumbles easily, it is ready to be tilled. If it doesn't crumble, it is too wet. Allow the soil to dry for a couple of more days and test again before digging."

"Buy healthy vegetable transplants," Wolford said. "Leaves and stems should be green and healthy without any signs of yellowing or browning," he noted. "Yellowing or browning leaves may indicate an insect or disease problem."

"Gently remove transplants from their tray and check the root system. Roots should be white with visible soil. Transplants with brown dead roots should not be purchased. Check for insects such as whiteflies or aphids. Be sure to gradually introduce your transplants to the outdoor

environment over a period of days, especially plants grown and purchased in a greenhouse. When you do plant, water your transplants in with a starter fertilizer that is high in phosphorus that helps to promote root development."

"Harden off cool-season vegetable transplants before exposing them to cool temperatures, wind and sun. Gradually introduce them to the outdoor environment over a seven- to ten-day period. to water around the roots of the plant."

Cut back the foliage of ornamental grasses to about four to six inches. Not removing the foliage will delay the warming of the crown of the plant and will slow new growth. Ornamental grasses can be divided in the spring, especially if the center of the plant has died out or if it has overgrown its space.

"Divide perennials in the spring," he said. "Divide plants when flowers get smaller, when the center of the plant dies out or when the plant outgrows its space. Dig around the plant and lift the clump out of the ground. Break the clump into sections. Larger sections will re-establish quicker than smaller sections. Keep the clumps moist until ready to plant."

Do not plant Zoysia grass, even though you will see glossy ads touting its benefits, said Wolford. Zoysia grass is a warm-season grass more suitable for lawns in St. Louis. It is dormant and brown in the spring and fall. It also forms thatch and has to be de-thatched every year. Zoysia grass is planted using plugs that may take three to four years to establish.

Spring is prime feeding time for rabbits. There are several methods of control that you can use.

"Almost any type of garden center sells rabbit repellents and sprays," he said. "These may work for a short period of time, but will have to be applied often, especially after rains. Remember that new growth since the initial spraying is not protected."

The most effective protection against rabbits is a chicken-wire fence. It may not look good, but it works. Wolford recommended the following:

- Purchase a three-foot high roll of chicken wire
- As you set up the fence, bend the bottom six inches outward at a 90 degree angle.
- Bury this under two inches of soil.

You want to make sure that you follow these steps because this will keep the rabbit from burrowing under the fence. The remaining 2-1/2 foot fence is high enough that even the strongest rabbits can't hop over. Since rabbits won't usually eat squash, tomatoes, or potatoes, they can be planted outside the boundaries of the fence, but if rabbits are really hungry they will almost eat anything.

"Groundcovers can be mowed to remove winter-burned foliage," Wolford said.

"Raise the mower to its highest setting, fertilize and water after mowing to ensure rapid re-growth."

"When your lettuce begins to bolt, consider leaving the plants in the garden," he said. "The bolted leaf lettuces with their flowering stalks make a striking display. Red-leaf lettuces are particularly spectacular. Pull the lettuce in late summer for a second planting for the fall."

Source: Ron Wolford, Extension Educator, Horticulture, rwolford@illinois.edu

<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/state/newsdetail.cfm?NewsID=9819>



©Nancy J. Ondra

This image of lettuce 'Merlot' is from Nancy J. Ondra's website/blog hayefield.com. She is the author of numerous gardening books and her blog is written in an informative and informal style.



The Teaching Garden at the Racine County Food Bank

What is on your list to grow this year? Is it edible? The Garden Writers Association Foundation research found "Edible Gardening Remains Strong!" with 75 million gardening households - 44% grew edible plants in the ground, 15% used containers, 32% grew edibles both ways. Main Challenges- insect and disease control (39%), time (38%), wildlife control (28%), irrigation (25%) and cost,(10%). 2015 Forecast - 58% plan to grow edible plants this year!

If you are interested in learning more about growing food consider attending classes at The Teaching Garden at the Racine County Food Bank, 2000 DeKoven Avenue, Racine (the garden is located behind the food bank and is not visible from the street).

Pre-registration is required for each class by calling the UW-Extension office in Burlington at 262-767-2929.

A name, email and/or phone number are required to register so that they can contact you if the class is not held. Each class has a minimum of 8 participants and a maximum of 30. Heavy rain/thunder/lightning cancels the class as the classes are held outside in

the garden. There is no charge for these classes, but donations to the Racine County Food Bank are appreciated.



Master Gardener Volunteers moving straw bales and pruning grapevines this spring. Contact MGV Linda Graeper (262) 902-0002 or Lisa Malikowski (262) 553-9728, if you are interested in volunteering out their this season.

Classes are held on Tuesdays, from 12:00 to 1:00 pm, and Thursdays, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. Tuesday classes are taught by Dr. Patti Nagai and

Thursday classes are taught by MGV Karen Woolley. They cover the same material in both classes. Other classes may be offered as weather and



time permit. Check their Facebook page at "Racine Community Gardens" for updates.

The Teaching Garden is run by UW-Extension MGVs in partnership with the Racine County Food Bank. Donations can be directed to the garden through the Racine County Food Bank.

Dr. Patti Nagai, Racine County UW-Ext Horticulture Educator
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<http://racine.uwex.edu>
<http://hort.wisc.edu>
<http://www.facebook.com/RacineCommunityGardens>

PRE-REGISTRATION FOR CLASSES BY CALLING 262-767-2929.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">The Teaching Garden 2015 Class Schedule</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Tuesdays 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.; Thursdays 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.</p>	
May 19 & 21	Growing Greens – Cool Crops for Cool Weather
May 26 & 28	Tomatoes and Peppers for the Home Garden (cultivars, planting, & care)
June 9 & 11	Small Spaces - Planting a Beautiful, Edible Container
June 16 & 18	All about All Types of Beans (types, varieties, and growing without using pesticides)
June 23 & 25	Perennials in the Vegetable Garden
July 7 & 9	Organic Methods and Materials in the Garden
July 21 & 23	Vegetables and Herbs for Sweet, Fall Harvest
July 28 & 30	Basic Composting and Compost Bin Choices
Aug 11 & 13	Container Gardens for Fall Beauty and Harvest
Sept 8 & 10	End of Season Tomato Comparison – Which Grew Best?
Sept 22 & 24	End of Season Tasks and Composting



2015 Perennial Plant of the Year: Geranium 'Biokovo'

The Perennial Plant Association membership has voted, and the 2015 Perennial Plant of the Year is Geranium x cantabrigiense 'Biokovo'.

"That is a big name for this excellent groundcover-type perennial that only reaches 6 to 10 inches high," said Martha Smith, a U of Illinois Extension educator.

'Biokovo' is a cultivar of Cambridge Geranium and is a naturally occurring hybrid found in the Biokovo Mountains of the Dalmatia region of present-day Croatia.

Blooming in late spring, 'Biokovo' has delightful masses of five-petaled white flowers, that are about 3/4 inch diameter,

and are tinged pink at the base of each petal and have darker pink center stamens.

"The overall effect is that of a blushing pink geranium," Smith said. "An interesting attraction is the flower 'bud' is somewhat inflated as it is actually made up of the sepals, which are redder than the petals. When the flower opens, the lightly tinged pink flowers provide a handsome contrast to the sepals and stamens."

She added that the aromatic foliage has rounded leaf edges, is a medium green color, and is semi-evergreen in most climates. "This geranium is a spreading, rhizomatous plant, meaning it does spread by sending out runners. However, not being a deeply rooted perennial, removal is not strenuous. Best garden placement is as a ground cover or in the front of the border. It also does well in rock gardens," Smith noted.

'Biokovo' does well in average, medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Smith said it is easy to grow and only requires deadheading (removing old flowers) to keep it looking good. "It forms an attractive mound that offers scarlet and orange fall colors to your garden. Cut away any dead foliage in the spring and 'Biokovo' is ready for the garden season," she said.

Plant 'Biokovo' next to Japanese painted fern. Pick up color echoes between the pink flowers and maroon foliage tones that contrast with the silver streaks in the fern fronds. Smith also noted that this flower pairs nicely with late-spring blooming Penstemon such as 'Prairie Dusk' with clear purple flowers or 'Pink Rock Candy,' offering bright pink flowers on compact stems.

Source: Martha A. Smith, Extension Educator, horticulture, smithma@illinois.edu

Veterans Living in Color

Thanks to the many wonderful Master Gardener Volunteers who toiled in the fall cold, the veterans living at the Wisconsin Veteran's Home in Union Grove were treated to a beautiful and colorful display of spring flowers. The bulbs in the picture on the right were particularly challenging to plant because underneath the rock and thick commercial grade landscape fabric there was dense clay soil not very welcoming to bulbs.



But our Master Gardener Volunteers are a force to reckon with and managed to plant hundreds of bulbs around the cottages and buildings. Please consider joining us on Thursdays as we bring more color into the lives of those who served our country and give those who are still physically able to garden a chance to do so. Contact Meryl Strichartz at 262-498-6639 or e-mail her at meryl.strichartz@ces.uwex.edu for more information and to learn how you can help.

2015 Racine Kenosha Master Gardener Association

Meetings / Educational Programs

Business meetings begin at 6:30 pm
Educational programs start at 7:15 pm
(Field trip times and arrangements to be announced later.)

- May 18 Racine:* Monarch Migration
PJ Liesch, UW-Madison Insect Diagnostic Lab
- June 22 Kenosha:** Organic Gardening Methods
Kate Jerome, Gateway Technical College
- July 27 Field Trip: Kenosha County Center Demonstration Garden
- August 24 Kenosha:** Food Preservation
Christina Ward, UW-Extension Master Food Preserver Volunteer
- Sept.28 Racine:* Native Pollinators
Christelle Guedot, UW-Extension Entomology
- October 26 Kenosha:** Getting Ready for Winter
Jerry Nelson, Classic Gardens Nursery
- Nov.16 Racine:* Growing Grapes & Wine Making
Charles Klimek, Arborist and Vintner
- Dec. 14 Kenosha:** Holiday Potluck, Graduation, Awards

*Racine County Location:

Gateway SCJ iMET Center, 2320 Renaissance Blvd,
Highway H (between Highways 11 and 20)

**Kenosha County Location:

Kenosha County Center, 19600 75th Street, Bristol, WI
(NE corner of Highways 45 & 50)



University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and American with Disabilities (ADA) requirements.



(Above) Master Gardeners attending the February 2015 Landscape & Grounds Maintenance Short course.



(Above) Thanks to our program committee for arranging the field trip and Milaeger's for hosting us, Master Gardeners had a chance to learn about greenhouse growing.