

North Country Gardeners

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Co.

UW-Extension Cooperative Extension

Issue 22, March 2011

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**University of Wisconsin-Extension
Area Agricultural Agents Office
Spooner Ag Research Station
W6646 Highway 70
Spooner, Wisconsin 54801
(715) 635-3506 or
Toll Free 800-528-1914**

Greetings!

Spring has arrived, although the recent weather may not seem so spring-like. Just another reminder of the benefits of living in the beautiful north country. Time for seed starting, garden planning and venturing out in the garden to do some clean up and pruning. In preparation for our spring plant sale, and the planting of display garden at the Spooner Ag Research Station, we have been dividing out seeds and assigning seed starting duties. Each year we start dozens of transplant flower and vegetable varieties that are either sold at the North Country Master Garden Plant Sale (Saturday May 21, 2011), or planted in the All-America Selections Display garden.

Another sign of spring is the annual offering of workshops and educational seminars. The New Ventures Garden Seminar was recently held at Northwood School in Minong. For many years, Julie Hustvet has put together one of the premier spring garden seminars. This year's event was no exception. Thank you to Julie, Northwood Community Education, the Spooner Garden Club, North Country Master Gardeners, and all the vendors and volunteers who make this event so successful.

The Barron County Master Gardeners will hold their Spring Expo on Saturday, April 2 at the WITC Conference Center in Rice Lake from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. The Keynote Speaker is Vickie Pondell of Bailey Nurseries, speaking on "Small Trees and Shrubs", and "New and Exciting Perennials". Michael Racette owner of Spring Hill Community Farm will speak on "Growing Garlic in the North" and "Growing great Vegetables". There will also be a demonstration of an arrangement in a raised birdbath container by Deb Madsen, a Barron Co. MG and a variety of vendors.

Those looking for some hands-on spring pruning advice can attend the fruit pruning workshop on April 1, the grape pruning workshops on April 8 or the apple pruning and grafting workshops on April 14. There is still room for more participants for the Master Composter Training on April 16 in Spooner. If you are aware of any other educational events in the area please let us know and we would be happy to help promote them.

Finally we would like to thank all the Master Gardener Volunteers who not only contribute to this newsletter, but who volunteer towards dozens of community projects all across northwestern Wisconsin. Your time and talents are greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions about any of the upcoming workshops or volunteer opportunities, please give us or any of the North Country Master Gardener Association Committee Members a call or email. As always we thank you for your continued interest and support of UW-Extension and the UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

Happy Gardening,

Kevin Schoessow
UW-Extension Ag Development Agent
kevin.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu

Sandy Hoecherl
President
North Country Master Gardeners Association

In Memoriam

Dennis Schraufnagel

The North Country Master Gardener Volunteers lost a valuable member, Dennis Schraufnagel, on January 28, 2011. Dennis took the Master Gardener course in 1992 and was inactive for a number of years. He reinstated himself as an active member around 2007. Since then, Dennis was an active member providing countless volunteer hours. He spoke with the 2008 master gardener class and made quite an impression as approximately ten members of that class became active volunteers. Dennis built one of the benches for the demonstration garden, built the tables for the NCMG green house, built one of the raised square foot gardens in the demonstration garden, helped set up the irrigation system, constructed bumble bee nesting boxes for a display for natural pollinators and helped erect signs designed by Vicky Zalatoris for the butterfly garden in Shell Lake as well as the Spooner Agriculture Research Station. He assisted the Spooner elementary garden by teaching and helping students build raised square foot beds for it. He willingly helped educate members of the community about gardening if asked by Kevin Schoessow, our Agriculture Development Agent and advisor. He provided in-service education to members and gave a presentation at the Shell Lake Library on square foot gardening.

Dennis was a well spoken, witty member of the NCMG association. He touched many master gardeners hearts and made an impression that will be remembered for years to come. When you visit the demonstration gardens or work in the green house, feel his presence.

Terrie Strand

Happy Tonics was blessed to have Dennis Schraufnagel as an environmental advocate and friend. One of Dennis's last volunteer assignments was to assist the non-

profit organization with plan identification stakes. He recruited his network for companies that had tiles and cedar wood and Dennis obtained a donation of materials. Then he called his woodworking friends. The workers made 10 plant stakes based on the design of the plant identification stakes at the UW-Wisconsin Demonstration Gardens in Spooner. Fifty stakes will go in the Monarch Butterfly Habitat this summer and 50 will go to the Wild Butterfly Habitat.

That isn't all. Right from the start in 2008, Dennis helped us obtain a Master Gardener's grant of \$500 to build a shelter for the art sign in area two of the habitat. He also helped and taught young people how to plant staghorn sumac in the Memory Tree Grove. The trees came from his land. Then he helped a Master Gardener Victoria Zalatoris with the placement of her art sign at the main entrance into the habitat in 2010.

He was a staunch supporter of Happy Tonics through the many hurdles we faced. I can't say enough good things about Dennis Schraufnagel. He was all of this and more. The officers and board members of Happy Tonics are deeply saddened to know that Dennis is no longer with us. We will miss him dearly. We have decided to honor Dennis with a memorial paving stone placed at the foot of the wild black cherry tree in the memory tree grove this spring.

Mary Ellen Ryall

Bob Dreis

Bob Dreis, a former North Country Master Gardener, died on February 16, 2011. He was instrumental in getting the NCMG association started, serving as one of the founding members. The NCMG volunteers became an association in 2001. Bob was very interested in wild life habitat. He gave presentations for the master gardener training classes on back yard wild life. He was very interested in forestry, often bringing trees to sell at the NCMG spring plant sale. Professionally, Bob

was a wild life biologist with the DNR. He was active in the Ruffed Grouse Society and was on the advisory board for the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute. He was a great supporter of Crex Meadows. As master gardeners, we are grateful for his help in getting the NMG Association started.

Terrie Strand

Watch for the April Window

Sandy Hoeberl

Master Gardener Volunteer

A record winter freeze in southwestern United States and Mexico damaged 80% of the produce used in the US market. This has led to the sharpest rise in produce prices in 60 years. Bell peppers, for example, surged from \$14.95 a box to \$48.00. Roma tomatoes went from \$8.95 to \$32 in one week.

We have a real incentive to grow our own vegetables this year. And while we have to wait a long time to plant peppers and tomatoes outside (remember the average latest frost date in Spooner is May 27), there are a number of cold weather vegetables that can be planted outside during what I call the April window.

There is usually time during the last two weeks in April when the garden is dry enough and the temperatures are warm enough to do your early spring planting. Don't let it go by because if you miss this opportunity, it may be weeks before its warm and dry enough for you to get into the garden. But if you have used that April window, the cold weather crops will be growing happily all through May.

Our garden journals state that cold weather crops can be planted when the soil temperature reaches 40 degrees and the night air temperatures are above 45 degrees. We won't always meet those temperatures in this area, but the cold weather crops still grow if temperatures don't get below 28 degrees.

Cold weather vegetables include broccoli, beets, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, chard, lettuce, kohlrabi, mustard, onions, parsley, peas, potatoes, radishes and turnips.

You probably won't have time to plant all of these in those few good days in April but with produce prices rising, it is good to get an early start.

Come on a Journey - Garden Tips and Tricks

Learn what works, what doesn't, and some fun facts and lore about gardening at the Sherman & Ruth Weiss Community Library in Hayward on April 28, 10:00 to Noon. UW Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Sue Reinardy will be sharing her secrets. For pre-registration call 715-634-2161 or email the library (email: hlibrary@hayward.nwls.lib.wi.us) with your name, phone number, email and number attending. There is no fee for this program.

For a Spring Treat...Try Dandelions

Sue Reinardy

Master Gardener Volunteer

Most of us think of dandelions as a weed, and if you use the definition of the "wrong plant in the wrong place" it qualifies. As with 90 percent of weeds, Dandelions were originally brought from Europe to North America to provide food for honeybees and as an ingredient for medicine. Even today Herbalists use the root for medicine, roasted and ground for coffee and sliced for salads. The tender leaves of young plants are used like spinach in salads or steamed. Dandelions are rich in Vitamin A, more potassium than bananas, rich in Thiamine, riboflavin and calcium.

If you want to try edible weeds, this would be a good plant to start with. Follow these guidelines whenever you forage weeds in your yard:

- Be sure to correctly identify the plant and know exactly what parts are edible.
- Avoid eating plants where herbicide or road salts have been used or where pet waste is present.
- Young leaves are best.

Some interesting facts are identified in Jack Sanders book *The Secrets of Wildflowers*.

- In England, children well into the 20th century believed the flying seeds were fairies. If you caught one, you made a wish. But you had to let the fairy go on its way for the wish to be granted.
- The bloom is 100-200 rays – tiny tube-shaped flowers. One flower is actually a composite of many little ones.
- A German scientist counted 93 species of insects that visited dandelions.
- There are five native dandelions in North America.
- "Dandelion" is a corruption of the French *dents delion* "tooth of the lion" – may be connected to the yellow color. The French called the plant *pissenlit* – politely translated as "wetting the bed" –because of the belief among children of many European nations that eating or even picking the flowers would cause them to wet their beds. This may be related to the fact that in the middle ages dandelion root was used as a diuretic.
- Dandelion juice (milk) contains latex but it is not commercially feasible.

The young tender leaves can be eaten raw or steamed until just limp and tender (about 5 minutes). They can be added to soups, omelets, and casseroles. Chop them finely and eat on toasted French bread with a bit of tomato sauce and grated cheese. For something different try fried dandelion blossoms.

Fried Dandelion Blossoms

Using fully opened blossoms (no bitter stems), dip in batter and fry in hot oil.

- 1 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 1 cup flour
- ½ t. baking powder
- ½ t. salt



For Asparagus Lovers...

Terrie Strand

Master Gardener Volunteer

Spring is on the horizon and is a good time to think about committing to having an asparagus bed. If you are an asparagus lover there is nothing like fresh asparagus from the garden, yum! It is a commitment because asparagus is a perennial vegetable crop, so it will be a permanent bed. When you decide to plant asparagus be aware you will need to be patient, as you will have to wait two to three years to harvest spears.

Asparagus crowns are usually shipped and set out in April. It is best to plant crowns in the spring 60-90 days before your last frost. You will need to pick a sunny location. You will need a well prepared deeply dug bed with lots of organic matter. Asparagus needs fertile, well-drained soil around the roots. Dig a trench no deeper than five to six inches and a foot wide. Fill the bottom of the trench with compost or well rotted manure mixed with some native soil. I've read it is wise to add superphosphate (0-20-0 or 0-45-0) in the partly filled trench as this affects future production. Put the crowns in the trench on top of the fertilizer, it will not burn the roots. Space the crowns 12-18 inches apart. If you plant more than one row, the rows should be three to five feet apart. The crowns should be two inches below the surface when you finish planting them. Back fill the trench with your soil and compost mixture and fill to the original soil level. Do not pack the soil. I have read that in the past asparagus trenches were filled in gradually, but a new information show that method tends to place the crowns too deep and reduces production.

Now comes the hard part. Asparagus is a perennial and needs a year or two to grow a strong network of roots, so do not harvest spears during this time. Just let it grow the first two years and let it produce those airy

fern like clouds. Once the roots are well established, our asparagus plants will produce for 12-15 years or longer. In the third year and beyond you will enjoy harvesting spears when they are 6-8 inches long and finger width sized. Break them or cut them at ground level. Stop harvesting when the spears look spindly. Let these smaller ones develop the airy fern. Cut the ferny fronds when they turn yellow.

Be sure to fertilize established beds in the spring and after harvest. They are heavy nitrogen feeders. I have read that the varieties that have "Jersey" in their name will be mostly male plants. Male plants produce 25-40 percent more spears. Female plants sap the energy of the plant by making seeds when mature. "Martha Washington" plants are largely female, 3 to 1.

In future springs look for those green heads pushing up and enjoy your harvests. Happy gardening!

Hot Piles, Cold Piles, and Worms...Oh My!

Susan Armstrong

UWEX Summer Hort Assistant

Master Gardener Volunteer

Hot, cold, or wormy... brew up some compost!

To my mind, composting is a lot like cooking. You add a little of this, a touch of that, a dash of patience, stir, and voila! You have a batch of compost. The word compost comes from two Latin roots, *com* meaning "together," and *post*, meaning "to bring." To make edible "fruit composte" (or "fruit compote"), for example, is to mix together different kinds of fruit, along with sugar and other ingredients in a jar or crock, and allow it to ferment for several days. It isn't particularly important how long it sits or exactly how much of each fruit you add. You'll find that there are as many recipes for fruit compote as there are fruit compote makers. And the same is true with compost.

By composting we reduce, reuse, and recycle! One of the easiest ways to REDUCE yard trimmings is to leave grass clippings where they fall. Clippings work their way into the ground to improve the soil and feed the lawn. Shredded leaves, grass clippings and chipped wood can be REUSED as organic mulch. Mulching protects the soil, conserves moisture, and helps suppress weeds. Backyard composting and vermicomposting are both easy ways to RECYCLE organic excess into valuable soil amendments. It's all future soil.

There are several common approaches, but ultimately everyone develops a recipe that works for them according to their resources and environment. A little effort, the willingness to experiment, and a basic understanding of the life forms and processes at work within a compost pile will lead you to success. No matter how many little mistakes are made along the way you'll probably still end up with good, usable compost. The biggest secret to successful composting is to select an approach and technique that suits you. Your choice will depend on things such as available space, available materials, how you plan to use the compost, how much time you want to spend, and how neat you want your compost pile to look. If you only need a little compost, want to expend minimal effort, and have a small area to work in, your best choice might be a commercially available bin. If you have plenty of space and want large quantities of compost quickly, you may want to build a deluxe three bin unit. If you want to compost vegetative food waste separately, you may find it easiest to use trench composting or vermicomposting.

Vermicomposting is a unique and interesting method of composting a portion of your kitchen waste that's generated and disposed of daily. The primary agents of this process, worms, convert organic waste to a black, earthy-smelling, nutrient-rich humus.

There's a financial incentive to composting. You can reduce your gardening budget by replacing expensive chemical fertilizers and soil amendments with this organic alternative which is a nutrient rich, slow release fertilizer. Compost makes soil healthy, vibrant, and alive!

Any recipe you choose to follow, composting is an easy and effective way to convert organic waste into the finest soil amendment known to man. For detailed information, please refer to the resource guide that can be found at:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/shwec/publications/cabinet/composting/Master%20Composter%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>

Heart of the Farm Report— February 2, 2011

*Mary Burnham
Master Gardener Volunteer*

The Heart of the Farm Conference Series is a UW-Extension program committed to addressing the needs of farm women by providing education on farm business topics, connecting them with agricultural resources, and creating support networks. The conference addresses issues relevant to both large and small operations. Since 2002, a total of 30 one-day conferences held across the state reached over 650 participants. I attended the first Heart of the Farm Conference offered in NW Wisconsin. The event was held at the Lodge in Siren and was organized by Kevin Schoessow and Otto Wiegand, Area Ag Agents from the Spooner Area UW-Extension Office.

We hope that this will become an annual event. The conference opened with introductions around the room. It was enlightening to see how many women who were farm managers also had farm based entrepreneurial businesses.

“Is it a three ring circus or a balancing act?” was a funny insight into managing a business and running a home and a personal

life simultaneously. Chris Peterson, Four Cubs Farm, spoke about her 700 cow dairy farm which she runs with the help of family and hired hands. She told some of the challenges of having foreign language employees and of the rewards from having these same employees for many years. Christ is also a successful children's author. Many of her books are farm or animal based, such as her wildly successful book “Clarabelle.” Chris said that the biggest secret to all that she accomplishes is to be organized and set priorities. In order to keep her writing a top priority, she felt that it was important to hire a house-keeper. I think we can all agree with that!

Linda Degner, Bashaw Valley Farm & Greenhouse, started with cattle and graduated to the nursery and farm crop business. She has a one acre plot of blueberries that can be bought fresh or frozen or u-pick. Bashaw Valley also has some of the biggest, juiciest, raspberries I've ever eaten. To offset the winter months and maintain a balanced income, they have storage rentals on the property.

Theresa Depies, Springbrook Organic Dairy, has her own organic cheese and milk business. The cheese is still produced mainly by hand. She has a 68 gallon cheese vat in which the cheese is stirred and cut by hand. She bottles both white and chocolate milk which was served at the luncheon. I usually drink skim milk, so I'd forgotten how good real milk can taste!

Kate Stout, North Creek Community Farm, started farming with five acres of vegetables, four in rotation, using Norwegian farm horses. Kate has a total of 65 acres and runs the farm with the aid of friends, neighbors and interns. She runs a co-op business in which people pay “up front” and then get a parcel of veggies each week depending on “Mother Nature.” She delivers her produce with a horse drawn cart.

These women all had similar advice: be organized, know what you need to accomplish, hire and train dependable staff and let

them take on some ownership. You will be much happier if you train others to be able to take over your load. Think vacation.

“Finding, Developing and Keeping Good Employees “ was presented by Trish Wagner, UW-Extension Ag Agent from Jackson County. This was an insightful presentation about discovering your own management style and finding the “right” employees to match/complement your style. Determine how you want to train, whether it's an intense two day seminar or many weeks of side by side work. Farm meetings, in which everyone can air their views or share ideas for better performance can be helpful. Written job descriptions and requirements are essential. Even if you choose to hire your brother-in-law, having a set of standards that everyone follows, is the best road to harmony and excellence on the farm. Recognize that people hear and receive messages differently, so be able to adapt your verbal skills to have the most impact on each individual. Praise and honest feedback are often valued as much as monetary rewards. If you have a bonus system, be sure it is attached to real accomplishment that can be seen and understood by all.

Evie Moore, executive director FSA Washburn County, was on hand to give advice about available resources. Jenny Vanderlin, assistant director of the Center for Dairy Profitability, spoke about available sources for grants to improve production or the size or efficiency of your dairy farm. Since many of the attendees were in dairy farming, these were important contacts. These offices will help you submit appropriate grant requests. The money is available — you just have to know where/how to go about applying. Web page for grant material is www.datcp.state.wi.us. There are many more types of grants that you will be able to locate at this same site.

The final program of the day, “Wine Pairing Event” was a tasting event in which many small local specialty producers brought samples of their excellent goods:

Clover Meadow Winery of Shell Lake brought examples of excellent fruit based wines. Smoland Prairie Homestead Inn of Alpha, a bed and breakfast, brought a combination of excellent red and white wine with a variety of homemade bread.

Burnett Dairy Cooperative of Alpha provided cheeses, including artisan cheeses.

Nancy's Country Kitchen and Indulgences of Granstburg provided truffles to die for.

I would like to thank all of the sponsors of this event, the UW-Extension, the Center for Dairy Profitability and the Wisconsin Marketing Board as well as the Lodge at Crooked Lake. The goal of this conference was to address the needs of farm women by providing education on pertinent topics, connecting them with agricultural resources and creating support networks. These goals were met! We look forward to next year and perhaps seeing some of you participating.

Growing Buckwheat Greens Indoors

Sherri B. Roman
Gardening Enthusiast

Those of you who enjoy vegetable gardening in the summer may also enjoy the bounty of growing your own harvest of buckwheat greens indoor. Growing buckwheat greens can add a special "homegrown touch" to your smoothies or salads, especially during the winter months. It is easy to do.

Supplies needed

- buckwheat seeds
- glass jar with screen lid
- two growing trays
- organic soil



Steps to take

1. Measure 1 cup of buckwheat seeds and add to the glass jar. Affix lid and pour a generous amount of purified water into jar to cover seeds.
2. Soak seeds over night or 8 hours.
3. Drain the soaked seeds and rinse them again, within the jar.
4. Set the jar of drained and rinsed seeds aside to allow the seeds to sprout. I also lay the jar on its side so the seeds are spread out and cover with a hand towel to simulate darkness. Do not prevent the airflow through the lid. NOTE: Air circulation is important in step four
5. Rinse the buckwheat each day until they sprout (this is where the screened lid will come in handy). It will take about 2 days. You know they are sprouted when little tails form.
6. Prepare your growing tray with organic soil. After your buckwheat is sprouted, rinse one last time and spread them out on the soil. It is not necessary to cover the sprouts with soil. Water generously, but gently.
7. Cover the tray with another tray to simulate the darkness and set aside for approximately 5-7 days. NOTE: Check your buckwheat daily and add water if needed.
8. As the buckwheat grows tall enough to lift the lid, set them under a grow light until they form two leaves.

So there you have it! Homegrown buckwheat greens ready for your next salad or green smoothie!

Calendar of Events

April 1, 2011: Fruit Pruning, Bashaw Valley Farm and Greenhouse, 1-3 p.m.

April 1, 2011: Commercial Fruit Seminar, Spooner Ag Research Station, 6-8:30 p.m.

April 2, 2011: Garden Expo - Barron County Master Gardeners at WITC in Rice Lake.

April 8, 2011: Wine Grape Pruning, Spooner Ag Research Station, 6-8 p.m.

April 14, 2011: Apple Pruning and Grafting Workshop, see article pg. 8.

April 15, 2011: Discussion on composting food waste at institutions - 4 - 5:30 pm in the Spooner Elementary School Auditorium.

April 16, 2011: Master Composter Training - Oscar Johnson Center in Spooner.

April 23, 2011: Earth Day event at Shell Lake from 1-5 p.m.

April 28, 2011: Come on a Journey - Garden Tips & Tricks - 10 a.m. -Noon at the Hayward Library.

April 28, 2011: North Country Volunteers meeting - 6 p.m. at the Spooner Ag Research Station.

May 21, 2011: North Country Master Gardeners Plant Sale at the Spooner Ag Research Station.

May 23, 2011: CHARAC Art Scholarship Fundraiser - 5-8 p.m. at the Comfort Inn and Suites, Hayward.

June 18, 2011: Think Pink Fundraiser for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

August 5-7, 2011: WIMGA Annual Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

Gardening Accommodations

Sue Reinardy

Master Gardener Volunteer

The garden industry is beginning to recognize that all of us are getting older. Just like the housing industry has developed universal design that helps us stay in our homes longer, there are simple strategies that we can use to keep on gardening in spite of aches, pains and chronic conditions.

At the 2011 Wisconsin Public Television's Garden Expo there were six sessions covering topics such as: Exercise and Health for Gardeners, Landscaping Tips for Elderly Living, and Hands, Hips and Knees – Tips for Gardening with Ease. These sessions were well attended because we all have experienced difficulty with gardening from something as simple as a pulled muscle to more serious health conditions. According to Bill Wright, one of the presenters from Brown County Extension, twenty-seven percent of Wisconsin residents have a doctor's diagnosed arthritis. That is just one of many conditions that may prevent us from outdoor activities.

This should not deter us from enjoying gardening's many benefits. It's a great form of exercise. For example, according to a University of Arkansas study, gardening ranks high as a weight training activity for strengthening bones. It also provides exercise, fresh air, activating the senses, mental stimulation, social skills and for many a spiritual experience. And did you know that gardening burns about 270 calories an hour, that's equivalent to walking at a very brisk pace (about 3.5 miles per hour.)

A study of the longest living people in the world found that they had in common a purpose in life, were physically active, ate locally grown food, and were socially engaged. The quest for growing the perfect tomato for your summer BLT sandwich would naturally fulfill all these elements to a long life. So what can we do when we are sidelined by our aches and pains? Here are some tips that are timely as the spring season starts.

- Don't try to do everything in one day.
- Take a 10-15 minute break every hour or more frequently if you need.
- Plan your activities—gather tools, seeds, and supplies to avoid unnecessary trips.
- Stretch before you garden.
- Wear gloves and slip resistant shoes.
- Make sure your tools are sharp to make the job easier.
- Obtain assistive devices to reduce stress on hands, hips and knees. Some equipment you might want to consider: ergonomic tools or retrofit your own using pipe insulation on the handles, a four wheeled wagon rather than a wheelbarrow, a PVC pipe cut to a comfortable height as a seed planter, or a kneeling bench.
- Put resting places throughout your garden, a bench with a back will allow a better rest than one without.
- Place a watering source close to your gardens.
- Create pathways preferably 5 feet wide to accommodate you and your equipment.
- Install appropriate plantings, shrubs are generally lower maintenance than perennials, natives lower than exotics.

Check out the Brown County Extension's webpage with many links to resources at: www.gardeningandarthrititis.info and for more information just put "Accessible Gardening" in your web browser's search box.

Master Gardener Volunteers Recognized

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

Each year North Country Master Gardener Associations recognized individuals for their efforts. This past year the following MGVs were recognized for their cumulative hours of volunteer time; Susan Armstong (Webster), Larry Axelson (Frederic), Tom Blumenberg (Hayward), and Katie Childs (Webster) for 150 hours of total cumulative volunteer time. Sue Reinardy (Hayward) and David Schminsky (Webster) for 250 hours, Ed Jacobsen (Spooner) and Chris Weyh (Spooner) for 500 hours and Russ Parker (Spooner) for 1000 hours.

The following people recently became "certified" MGV by completing their training, passing the exam, and completing/reporting their volunteer time: Gayle Blake (Hayward), Mark Gagan (Hayward), Kayla Kemp (Shell Lake), Susan Menzel (Hayward), Amy Young (Spooner).

Master Gardener Volunteer Summary

Below are the number of volunteer hours reported to UW-Extension by certified Master Gardener Volunteers for the period Oct 1, 2009 through Sept 30, 2010.

Washburn Co. 22 MGVs reported 208 hours of youth education, 89 hours of adult education and 859 hours of community support, for a total of 1,156 hrs. of volunteer service.

Sawyer Co. 11 MGVs reported 196.5 hours of youth education, 121 hours of adult education and 369 hours of community support, for a total of 686.5 hrs. of volunteer service.

Burnett Co. 11 MGVs reported 12 hours of youth education, 71 hours of adult education and 394 hours of community support, for a total of 477 hrs. of volunteer service.

Several Workshops Offered This Spring

Kevin Schoessow

Area Ag Development Agent

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

Commercial Fruit Growers Seminar - April 1

Those interested in learning more about what it takes to establish and start a small commercial fruit business are invited to attend an introduction to commercial fruit production seminar on Friday April 1 from 6:00 to 8:30 pm at the Spooner Ag Research Station. The purpose of this seminar is to provide participants with information about starting a small scale commercial fruit operation on their property.

Dr. Rebecca Harbut, UW-Extension Fruit Specialist will be the featured speaker. She will discuss some of the important considerations to think about before you get started, including site requirements, irrigation needs, start-up and production costs, time, labor, wildlife damage and regulations. She will also touch on some of the likely fruit crops suitable for growing in Northwest Wisconsin.

Understanding your markets and marketing option will be presented by Kevin Schoessow, Area Agriculture Development Agent. Local commercial fruit growers have also been invited to share their experiences with participants.

Cranberries are perhaps the most noted large scale commercial fruit crop grown in northwestern Wisconsin; however, with careful planning and proper marketing there maybe opportunity for other small scale fruit operations. This seminar is intended to introduce participants to the realities of commercial fruit production and to explore both production and marketing options.

There is no charge for this seminar; however, participants are encouraged to pre-reg-

ister. For more information contact Kevin Schoessow at the Spooner Area Ag Agents Office at 715-635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914.

Spring Pruning Workshops

Are you anxious to get started in the garden? Although it's too early to begin many outdoor garden chores, it is the perfect time for pruning fruit trees and other woody ornamental trees and shrubs. Pruning has many benefits if done correctly, in young trees it helps establish proper form and can improve overall plant structure. In fruit trees proper pruning can improve fruit quality and fruit size and help control the size and shape of the tree. Removing dead, diseased or broken branches reduces the spread of disease, and the danger of injury and or damage to property.

There is no absolute foolproof guide to pruning. Instead, a combination of basic pruning principles and knowledge of how the plant grows must be considered. No pruning is worse than poor pruning.

While there are many well written books and publications devoted to pruning perhaps the best way to understand the principles of pruning is to see it done first hand. To help gardeners understand these principles and to demonstrate proper pruning techniques the Spooner Area UW-Extension Office will be hosting a number of fruit pruning workshops in the coming weeks.

Fruit tree pruning Friday April 1 from 1-3 pm at Bashaw Valley Farm and Greenhouse

located one mile north of Shell Lake on Hwy 63. Dr. Rebecca Harbut, UW-Extension Fruit Specialist, will be on hand to discuss the proper pruning techniques for fruit trees. The program will include a short indoor presentation followed by a hands-on pruning demonstration out in the fruit orchard. The emphasis will be on cherries, plums and pears. Hosts Steve and Linda Degner have been growing and marketing blueberries for over 20 years and have recently added raspberries, strawberries, cherries, plums and pears.

Wine grape pruning Friday April 8 from 6-8 pm at Spooner Ag Research Station located ½ mile east of Spooner on Hwy 70. Kevin Schoessow, UW-Extension area ag development agent, will discuss proper training and pruning techniques for grapes. The program will include a short indoor presentation in the Station meeting hall, followed by a hands-on pruning demonstration out in the horticulture display garden.

Apple Pruning Thursday April 14 from 2:30-4:30 pm at Wood River Garden Store

located ½ mile west of Alpha on Hwy 70. Dr. Bob Tomesh, will discuss proper pruning techniques for mature apple trees, and training and pruning techniques on younger apple trees. The program begins with a short presentation at Wood River Garden Store, followed by a hands-on pruning demonstration at two separate sites. Mature tree pruning at Mike and Donna Chell's farm and younger tree pruning at Joe and Virginia Hennessey farm.

Apple Grafting Workshops - April 14

A whole orchard of fruit from one tree! Well, probably not – but northwoods residents with home orchards or perhaps just an interest in fruit production can learn the basics of successful grafting at an Apple Grafting seminar at the Wood River Garden Store east of Grantsburg on Hwy 70 on Thursday, April 14 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

These hands-on workshops will allow participants to learn the art of combining bud wood (scion) with a branch or rootstock. Several different techniques for successful grafting will be reviewed.

Each participant will receive three hardy apple rootstocks. Apple scion wood from different varieties will be available for grafting or participants can bring their own scion wood. Rootstock and scion wood for pear and plum may also be available.

For those wishing to collect their own scion wood for grafting purposes:

The best time to collect scion wood for grafting is late March through early April while trees are dormant. Scion wood is the twig or branch from last years growth containing buds which developed last growing season. Buds from one-year-old water sprouts about ¼ to 3/8 inch in diameter (pencil diameter in size) have the best vigor. To keep the scions in a dormant condition after collecting and until needed, store them in moistened newspaper, wrapped in a plastic bag and stored in a refrigerator at 35 to 39 degrees.

If interested in participating with on-site grafting activities, please bring a pair of leather gloves and a sharp knife. The course is open to the general public. Cost of the workshop is \$15.

Space is limited. You must pre-register by calling the Spooner Area Ag Agents Office at 715-635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914.

Master Composter Training to be Held

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

A Master Composter “Train-the-Trainer” workshop April 16 in Spooner will provide training for anyone wanting to teach others about home composting, including backyard composting and vermicomposting with earthworms. The training will take place at the Oscar Johnson Center on the Washburn County Fairground on Saturday April 16 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The program is designed specifically to provide basic knowledge, skills and tools for people who want to teach others about composting. This program is not for the general public to learn about home composting.” For those wanting to learn more about backyard composting, Schoessow recommends checking out the list of home composting resources on the UW-Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education

Center’s website at <http://www4.uwm.edu/shwec/> or to call your county Extension Office.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center, the Spooner Area UW-Cooperative Extension Ag Agents Office and the Northwest Regional Recycling Commission are sponsoring this training program in order to encourage broader adoption of composting by area residents. Composting keeps unnecessary materials out of landfills while providing a valuable soil amendment for gardens.

In addition to the workshop, participants who are seeking certification as a Master Composter must take an open-book examination based on the Master Composter Home Study Course. There is a \$35 fee for the program, which includes the home study course, refreshment, lunch and exam.

The registration deadline is April 8. To register, send a check payable to UW-Extension and mail to Master Compost Training, Spooner Area UW-Extension, Spooner Ag Research Station, W6646 Hwy 70, Spooner, WI 54801. For more information, contact Kevin Schoessow at 715-635-3506 or 1-800-528-1914 or kevin.schoessow@ces.uwex.edu or see <http://www.cals.wisc.edu/ars/spooner/>

Horticulture Brown Bag Program

The Brown Bag Programs are a monthly educational program primarily for MGVs. Each program includes a presentation and time for questions from the listening audience, and covers a different topic each time. The program is broadcast from noon to 1:00 p.m. by WisLine. You must contact your local UWEX office for information on connecting to the WisLine in your area.

If you are unable to attend the live program, you can access **archived audio files** of these programs at your convenience on the Wisconsin Master Gardener Brown Bag Program website.

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/brownbag/>

Upcoming topics include: Beekeeping March 25, Organic Backyard Fruit Tree Management April 29, and Trellising Vegetables May 20.

2011 All America Selection Winners



Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

Sandy Hoecherl
Master Gardener Volunteer

There are four new AAS vegetable winners for 2011 and four new AAS flower winners for 2011.

‘Hijinks is a small (6-7 lbs) smooth skin decorative pumpkin. Also new is the sweet orange bell pepper called ‘Orange Blaze, and two cherry tomato varieties, an extra sweet red cherry named ‘Terenso’ and a compact low growing small cherry called ‘Lizzano’, which is ideal for containers.

The flowers include an apricot colored gaillardia called ‘Arizona Apricot’, a continuously blooming dwarf salvia with bright red flower spikes called ‘Summer Jewel Red’, a early flowering low growing and spreading viola with deep marina blue flowers named ‘Shargri-La Marina’ and a fringed leaf, shiny leaf ornamental kale called ‘Glamour Red’.

Look for these new varieties in the display garden this summer. Last year’s Shiny Boy watermelon (AAS 2010) was one of my favorite as was the Mesa Yellow gaillardia, and the Double Zahara Cherry zinnia (both 2010 winners).



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Spooner Agricultural Research Station
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<http://www.cals.wisc.edu/ars/spooner>

North Country Gardeners Newsletter

A publication for gardening enthusiasts from the
Tri-County area of Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn