

Gardener's Newsletter

Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Co.

UW-Extension

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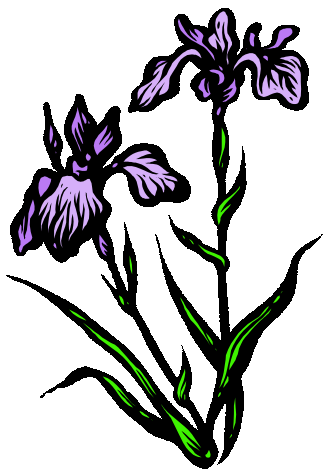
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Welcome

For those of you that have not had a chance to meet me yet, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Kevin Schoessow, I am the new Ag Development Agent with UW-Extension for Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties. Besides my duties working with production agriculture and promoting alternative value-added ag enterprises, I also make time to work in the area of home and commercial horticulture, which includes coordinating the local Master Gardener Program. As such, one of my goals is to get to know those of you that have taken the MG training, and let you know that I am here if you need any assistance. You do not have to be a MG to be on this mailing list. You are receiving this newsletter because of your interest in gardening.

With that said, I would like to update those of you who could not attend our meeting on March 6 at the Spooner Ag Research Station. Eighteen people attended. A Wisconsin Gardener Video entitled Back to Basics was shown, Rodger Erickson brought in surplus seeds for anyone interested, and he also organized group ordering of onion plants. I spoke about the Spooner ARS demo garden, and variety selection. A vegetable cultivars guide for Wis Gardens – 1999 was handed out. I also promoted the 1999 Home Garden Variety Trials and an upcoming MG Workshop on Propagating Native Plant that UW-Extension is offering.

A name sign up sheet was passed around and everyone received a copy of the list. This was done to encourage everyone to get to know each other and keep in contact. In the end the group felt it was worth their time. I hope it was. It was certainly worth mine. I left my wife and newborn baby (Emma Louise, born March 5) at the hospital to make the meeting, and I'm glad I did. I welcome your comments.

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent

Where do we go from here???

After the meeting Rodger Erickson and I sat down and went over some ideas to help keep the group informed.

Quarterly Newsletter

This newsletter is one attempt at that. I have volunteered to help initially, but I do hope some others in the group would pick up a pen and help out. I welcome ideas, subject matter, calendar of events or any suggestions on activities. It doesn't have to be much, but from past experiences, if a group is going to stay functioning, communication is key. So here goes--we will see how this works. Any ideas for a group name?

Group Field Trips or Site Visits

This would be an opportunity to carpool and go see something interesting. Here are some ideas that have been suggested.

MN Hort Experiment Station in Grand Rapids, MN

Winter Greenhouse in Winter, WI

MN Arboretum in Chanhassen, MN

Hunt Hill Conservancy in Sarona, WI

Trip to Bayfield

If you would like to help organize a trip or have suggestions, please call Rodger or Kevin.

Meetings

Face to face meetings are perhaps the best way to meet and get to know others with gardening interests. These could be held at the Spooner ARS, or other central locations. If the group wants to view a video or slide set, Extension has an extensive media collection of gardening related topics.

Volunteer Activities/Projects

One of the most rewarding experiences of gardening is to share the “fruits” of your labors with others. I don’t know a gardener who doesn’t take pride in the beautiful flowers, tasty fruits or fresh vegetables they grew from their own gardens. Besides the physical “fruits” we also have a bountiful harvest of knowledge, experience, and talents to share with others. Why not help others enjoy gardening?

For those of you needing to record volunteer time for your Master Gardener requirements, helping organize this newsletter, field trips or meetings certainly qualify. As a group or individually, there are some unique opportunities for volunteering. Many may be doing several already. It doesn’t take much to share your enjoyment of gardening with others. There is a list of some of the many volunteer activities you might consider.

- 1 Offer to help a local church youth group, 4-H club or civic group plant flowers, landscape plants or trees for beautification projects.
- 2 Ask a senior citizens housing unit if you can bring garden fresh produce in to share with the residents, or maybe you do some container planting of flowers and vegetable for residents to enjoy.
- 3 Volunteer as a 4-H plant science project leader.
- 4 Help organize a farmers market.
- 5 Help answer a friend or neighbors gardening questions.
- 6 Help with the Master Gardener Training Program.
- 7 Give a gardening presentation to a local civic group.

The list of activities is as long as your imagination. Many of you are already helping educate and sharing your gardening talents, let’s keep up the good work!



Calendar of Events



May 19, 1999 Propagating Native Plants workshop, 9 a.m. - Noon, Spooner Ag Research Station

May 19, 1999 Planning session for demo garden at the Spooner Ag Research Station.

May 26, 1999 Propagating Native Plants workshop, 9 a.m. - Noon, Spooner Ag Research Station

May 26, 1999 Planting flowers and vegetables for demo garden at the Spooner Ag Research Station.

June 2, 1999 Propagating Native Plants workshop, 9 a.m. - Noon, Spooner Ag Research Station.

June 17, 1999 Master Composter Training Program, Eau Claire Fairgrounds

Public Radio Garden Show, Friday mornings 11:00a.m. to 12:30 p.m. 88.3 on your FM radio dial.

Master Gardener Brown Bag ETN series - last Friday of the month.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please call 800-528-1914 to request removal from our mailing list.

Preparing Container Soil Mixes

Container plantings offer many advantages over traditional in-ground gardens. Mainly, they do not require much space and they allow you to add color and variety to your porch, deck, sidewalk or patio. Container gardening may also be an alternative to planting in disease or insect infested soil. Some of the disadvantages of container planting is they require more water and often additions of fertilizer are required. Planting in containers can also be more expensive than in-ground gardening.

You may purchase pre-mixed container soil, however, it maybe cheaper to mix your own. It is also important to understand the components of these mixes so we know how to water and fertilize them.

All good soil mixes have several common characteristics – they provide essential plant nutrients, they hold adequate moisture, and they allow excess moisture to drain. The two types of soil mixes used are either soil-less mixes or soil containing mixes.

Soil-less mixes have the advantage over soil containing mixes because they are sterile, their composition is known and they can be mixed according to desired plant requirements. A germination mix is formulated to be more porous than a growing mix for instance. Disadvantages of soil-less mixes are that they dry out quicker and require more fertilizer than soil containing mixes. Soil-less mixes are a combination of organic material such as peat moss or shredded bark mixed with inorganic materials such as washed sand, perlite, and/or vermiculite.

Below is an example of a soil-less potting soil mix you might try for container plantings:

1 Part peat moss or shredded bark.
1 Part perlite or vermiculite.
Add ¼ cup of dolomitic lime stone to each two gallons of mix.

Mix the preceeding ingredients together in large tub. A good rule of thumb is to also add ¼ cup of 10-10-10, or a similar analysis of slow release fertilizer, to each two gallons of mix.

Soil-containing mixes on the other hand, contain soil in the mix. The advantage of soil containing mixes is that they require less fertilization and less water than soil-less mixes. The disadvantages of soil containing mixes are they can contain insects, weed seeds or diseases if sterilized soil is not used, and they are heavier than soil-less mixes.

Soil containing mixes typically contain;

2 Parts pasteurized potting soil.
1 Part peat moss or shredded bark.
1 part perlite or vermiculite.

It is important that sterilized soil is used to avoid problems with insects, soil-borne diseases, or weeds that may be in backyard soil. Limestone and fertilizer may be added to the mix; however, this depends on the fertility of the sterilized soil that is added.

Remember the container you put your soil in must have drainage holes. Mulching the containers also helps retain moisture.

Peat Moss: readily available baled or bagged, sphagnum peat is recommended.

Shredded Bark: readily available baled or bagged, longer fibers are recommended for growing mixes, finer fibers for germination mixes.

Vermiculite: is a sterile, lightweight mica product. Vermiculite will hold large quantities of air, water and some nutrients needed for plant growth.

Perlite: is a sterile material produced by heating volcanic rock to 1800 °F. This results in a very lightweight porous material that is white in color. Its principle value in soil mixtures is for aeration. Perlite does not hold water and nutrients as well as vermiculite.

Sterilized Soil: soil that is heated to kill bacteria, disease organisms and weed seeds.

Sterilizing Potting Soil

High quality soil-less mixes are sterilized before they are packaged, but fungi and bacteria can quickly move in after the bag is open. As long as the bag is kept in a dry place contamination by microorganisms need not be a worry. However, if the mixture was open the previous year and took on moisture, it is a good idea to sterilize it before using it to grow seedlings or tender young plants.

To sterilize a questionable soil-less mix or to make your own sterilized soil, follow these instructions.

Place the soil in a metal or glass pan, sprinkle lightly with water to moisten the material, and cover the pan tightly with foil. Place it in an oven set at 200 °F for at least one hour, so that the accumulated steam can kill any life forms present in the soil. Allow the soil to cool completely before using it. Store in an airtight container.

Upcoming Workshops

There are two Master Gardener sponsored workshops being offered. Both workshops qualify for the 10 hours of annual continued education requirements. You do not have to be a MG to attend, however MG will be given preference.

PROPAGATING AND UTILIZING NATIVE PLANTS IN THE LANDSCAPE

This is a nine plus hour training program for Master Gardeners and others interested in re-establishing native plants into their landscape. The course is being taught by Dr. Robert Tomesh, State Horticulture Specialist for UW-Extension, and is being coordinated by the Spooner and Ashland Ag Research Stations. This is the first time this workshop is being offered.

The dates are May 19, May 26, and June 2. The workshop at Spooner is in the MORNING from 9a.m.-Noon. The workshop at Ashland is in the AFTERNOON from 4p.m.-7p.m.

Course outline:

Session One: (3 hours)

Overview of course

Identifying plant communities and the plants associated with the specific communities.

Initiate a plan for incorporating native plants into a landscape.

Session Two (3 hours)

Collecting and starting seeds of native plants.

Vegetative propagation of native plant materials.

Hands-on propagation techniques.

Session Three (3 hours)

Invasive plants.

Re-establishing the riparian zone along waterways.

Developing landscape and management plants for your site.

A \$25 per person fee will be charged to cover resource materials and other costs associated with the program. This fee will be collected at the first session.

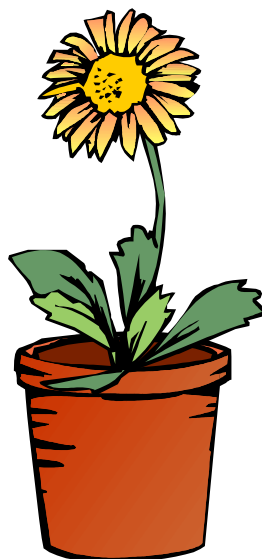
If you are interested in this workshop **YOU MUST PRE-REGISTER** by May 7, 1999. Call Kevin Schoessow (635-7710 or 1-800-528-1914) if you want to attend the Spooner location. Call John Markus (715-373-6104) if you want to attend the Ashland location.

NOTE: Several people signed up at the March 6 meeting. If you are still planning on attending, please call Kevin at the Spooner number to confirm this.

MASTER COMPOSTER TRAINING PROGRAM

This program is designed for enthusiastic volunteers and professionals that want to promote and teach environmentally sound home yard waste management practices in their communities. It includes a home study course and attendance at one workshop.

The home study course will be sent to course participants upon acceptance into the program. Participants are asked to complete the course and exam, if possible, prior to attending the workshop.



Volunteer Opportunities

Have I got a proposition for you!! How would you like to be part of the team that makes the Demonstration Garden at the Spooner ARS the best it has ever been? I have received permission from Bob Rand, Station Superintendent, to have local MG and other interested gardeners take an active roll in the planning, planting, evaluating and eventual harvest of the Demo Garden here at the station. This is a unique opportunity to showcase some flower and vegetable varieties that you would like to share with others in northwestern Wisconsin.

For those unfamiliar with the garden (sometimes referred to as the deer exclusion area) at the station, it contains five 230 ft. rows that are seven feet wide. Three of those rows are dedicated to perennials (some experimental) and two are available for annual plantings of flowers and vegetables. There is enough space to plant over 200 different varieties. It is mainly a demonstration garden, although observational data is collected from the area.

We would like to get more people like yourselves involved in gardening activities here at the Station. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about new varieties, see what plants work and don't work in Northwestern Wisconsin, and be part of a regionally sponsored gardening educational team.

If you are interested in planning, planting, helping maintain, and evaluating the demo garden at the Spooner Ag Research Station, please give myself (635-3506 or 800-528-1914) or Rodger Erickson (635-8634) a call.

We have selected many varieties for the garden, but we still have room for a few more. Maybe one of your favorites could be included. We are planning to meet in the afternoon on May 19 and May 26 following the Propagating Native Plants workshop. Let us know if you would like to be involved.
