

North Country Gardeners

UW-EXTENSION COOPERATIVE EXTENSION BURNETT, SAWYER, AND WASHBURN COUNTIES

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Inside this issue

Greetings
Three 'B's
Plant Sale
Air Drying Herbs
Try Something New
Book Review
Hands-On Experience
for Students
Welcome Home Kits
Farm to School
Bugged by Pests?
IPM Measures

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Greetings

Looking back to that blustery March 2014, I was encouraged by Douglas Mallock's poetry. He wrote,

"You have to believe in happiness,
Or happiness never comes. . .
Oh, that's the reason a bird can sing –
On his darkest day he believes in Spring."

For most of us this year the warm spring sun, snow melting, clear blacktop, etc., equals happiness indeed. It is still amazing, isn't it, that perennials keep their promise each year, pushing up through cool soil to grow again, to please us all with color and form.

Fellow Master Gardener Volunteer Russ Parker thinks our "nursery" perennials from last fall's garden clean-up are ready for potting. Perhaps we will have some ready for our plant sale. Speaking of which, the North Country Master Gardeners Volunteer (NCMGV) annual plant sale is Saturday, May 17, at the Spooner Ag Research Station (SARS) starting at 8 a.m. (See article). The seeds that were planted early in April have been repotted and are maturing into choice tomatoes and peppers.

The All American Selections (AAS) display garden, which is part of the larger Teaching and Display Garden at the SARS, promises to "win" your attention again this year with an additional feature: Container gardening. Last year this AAS garden was the recipient of a second-place award in the 2013 National All American Selections Landscape Design Contest. Come to the garden and enjoy the design with these award-winning annuals.

The Teaching and Display Garden continues to see improvements and is a major focus for our group. Last fall the perennial garden was refreshed with thinning and dividing of existing plants. Like Mallock's singing bird I'm looking forward to the new appearance of the familiar yet changed space.

We hope that you enjoyed the new Universal Garden (also known as adaptive) that was started last spring. We will continue to develop this area, and we hope to see you there this year. Summer is right around the corner – come enjoy the growing season with us with a visit to the Garden.

Nancy Reis
President
UW-Extension
North Country Master Gardener Volunteers

Kevin Schoessow
Agriculture Development Educator
University of Wisconsin Extension
Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties

Importance of three 'B's will be explored

BY KATIE CHILDS

Prior to our scheduled MGV meetings, at 5:30 p.m., the following guest speakers are set to speak:

- May 22, Iler Anderson, "The Bat – Their Habits and Habitat"
- June 26, Marilyn Saffert, "Flying Flowers of the Garden – The Beauty and Benefits of Butterflies"

• July 24, "The Secret Life of Bees or The Buzz About Bees"

This "B" series of lectures will highlight the importance of bats, butterflies and bees in our environment, and gardening experiences as well as make us more aware of their

fragility as their survival is sometimes threatened.

The series is sponsored by the North Country Master Gardeners Volunteers organization. The public is welcome to attend, and the lectures will take place at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station on Hwy. 70.



Plant sale: Good enough to eat

Think summer, think vegetable gardening, and what almost invariably comes to mind is tomatoes.

Sun-ripened, fresh-from-the-vine tomatoes so full of flavor they almost make a person swoon.

That is what the North County Master Gardener Volunteers Association (NCMGVA) plan to put into the hands of gardeners on Saturday, May 17, at its 12th annual plant sale. Specially chosen heirloom tomatoes and a variety of peppers will be featured at the sale. Due to spring's late arrival this year, perennials will not be offered.

Heirloom tomatoes were the cornerstone of the group's very first plant sale. Since then, NCMGVA has

increased the number of heirloom choices and added a few of their favorite hybrid varieties. The tomato and pepper plants are started from seed and grown by volunteers specifically for the sale.

Though hundreds of the plants will be at the sale, they tend to sell out quickly, and gardeners are advised to go early for the best selection. The sale begins at 8 a.m. at the Spooner Ag Research Station and runs until the plants are sold out.

The proceeds go toward supporting the Teaching and Display Garden that is open to the public on Orchard Lane, just east of the Ag Research Station; for garden-related grants; for promoting horticulture in Saw-

yer, Washburn, and Burnett counties; and other horticultural projects.

Master Gardener volunteers come together from many backgrounds. They find common ground in their appreciation for growing plants, whether edible or ornamental. They are trained volunteers who assist the University of Wisconsin-Extension staff by helping people in the community better understand horticulture and the environment, and they donate thousands of hours' worth of their time each year toward that end.

Further information about the sale can be found at <http://wimastgardener.org/?q=NorthCountry>.

Air drying is great way to preserve herbs

BY TOM BLUMENBERG

I've tried storing herbs for the winter using a variety of methods including: canning, making pesto, and freezing in ice cube trays and microwaving. I've also frozen chives and garlic scapes. In 2013 I researched the topic, found some interesting articles, and decided to turn to air drying herbs, using a slightly different technique, as one of my annual gardening experiments. I adapted one of the suggestions as a basis for this article.

Air drying herbs may be the simplest and least expensive way to dry

fresh herbs. Also, I found that although microwaving works it seems to cook out some of the flavor of the herb. Air drying apparently preserves more of the essential oils of the plant.

I will explain the process in the next paragraph, which I tried with sage, oregano, tarragon, chives, rosemary, and basil. I found that herbs that don't have high moisture content, like dill, oregano, thyme, and rosemary worked best. I also had good results with tarragon. Basil required more than the minimum

amount of time, and chives did not do well for me.

Here's the process that I followed:

The herbs have best flavor if they are harvested before they flower. Harvest them before they wilt in the heat of the day, so usually mid-morning is best.

1) After cutting the branches from your plants remove any dry or diseased leaves.

2) Remove insects and other items you do not wish to eat.

See Herbs, page 7

Gardener urges: Try something new

BY PAT NEELEY

Over the last several years I have decided to “try something new” in my vegetable garden every year. This idea came about for a few different reasons. I found myself interested in the increasingly popular cooking shows on television and therefore more curious to try some of the recipes they professed to be easy and flavorful. Some of the recipes included vegetables I had not tasted or planted.

For example, I remember several years ago learning about chard. I grew up on a farm in northern Iowa and have a mother who is an avid gardener and cook but I had not ever had Swiss chard. I recall thinking that Swiss chard is a southern food. I pictured chard as being a boiled, gray-green, soggy, bitter vegetable. How wrong could I be? I collected a couple of recipes, searched my seed catalogs

and began my introduction to Swiss chard. Now the “Bright Lights” Swiss chard is in my garden and on my table every summer.

Parsnips were another new vegetable added to my garden a few years ago. I went to a retirement dinner for a neighbor at the Spooner Ag Station and the caterer served a delicious parsnip dish. Bingo! My new vegetable for the following spring. As I write this I am anxiously planning my spring dig to taste those yummy sweet parsnips from under the snow.

Kale has gained popularity and found a place in my garden as well. I am experimenting with different variety’s to decide if I have a favorite. Sometimes my “new” veggie is simply new to me. Last summer I planted the “Velour” variety of green beans. I am simply trying a different variety to test how they do in my garden and my kitchen.

Last year I tried celeriac. Oh what a delightful surprise! I bought a four-pack of started plants at the greenhouse and watched them grow all summer. I read up on when to harvest them and of course collected a few recipes. Most of my garden friends had not even heard of celeriac. Of course I shared one with my mother who was also unfamiliar with celeriac. My four precious roots did not go far but they were so good raw on a salad as well as in a delicious soup.

I am trying to decide what the “new vegetable” will be this year as I skim through the seed catalogs and recipe books. I encourage you to find a corner in your garden for something new this year. You may be pleasantly surprised and delighted with a curious new plant or two in your garden and on your plate.

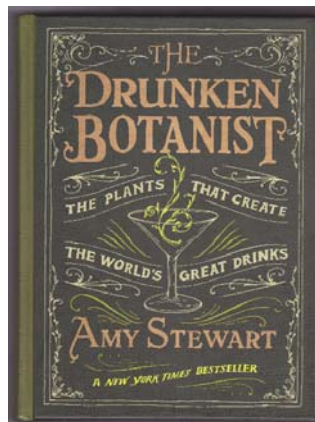
Book Review: The Drunken Botanist

BY SUE REINARDY

The Drunken Botanist is full of information that would be great cocktail hour trivia for gardeners. For example, did you know that the banana tree is not actually a tree but a giant perennial herb? It is disqualified as a tree because its stem contains no woody tissue. The beer banana is grown in Uganda and Rwanda and is a different cultivar from the ones our supermarkets carry.

The author, Amy Stewart, shows her enthusiasm for the subject. This paragraph from her introduction, aptly named “Aperitif” will forever change how I look at a liquor store.

“... we stood in the doorway for a minute and looked around us. There wasn’t a bottle in the store that we couldn’t assign a genus and species to. Bourbon? *Zea Mays*, an overgrown grass. Absinthe? *Artemisia*



absinthium, a much-misunderstood Mediterranean herb. Polish Vodka? *Solanum tuberosum* – a nightshade,

which is a weird family of plants if there ever was one. Beer? *Humulus lupulus*, a sticky climbing vine that happens to be a close cousin to cannabis. Suddenly we weren’t in a liquor store anymore. We were in a fantastical greenhouse, the world’s most exotic botanical garden, the sort of strange and overgrown conservatory we only encounter in our dreams.”

The book is organized alphabetically by plant, herb, fruit or berry and describes how it is used. Also included is some horticultural instruction and a description of the process for making the drink along with recipes. You will never be short of trivia to impress your drinking buddies again. *The Drunken Botanist* is available through the Merlin Library System.

And if you want even more on the subject, try *Drink Your Own Garden: A Homebrew Guide Using Your Garden Ingredients* by Judith Glover. There are 140 recipes from fruit and berry wines to beer and honey mead as nonalcoholic versions. Included are steps and advice on equipment, ingredients, and what to grow. This is a more how-to book than *The Drunken Botanist*.

Students get hands-on garden experience

BY HEIDI RUSCH

"I think that it would be fun. And I will learn more about plants, and helping our environment, and helping our Earth"

Jimmy, fourth-grade student, Spooner Elementary School, regarding his upcoming trip into the garden, fall of 2013.

Jimmy is just one of 474 elementary students who have had the opportunity to learn about plants, healthy foods, and making healthy choices. Students learn these lessons through teachers as well as AmeriCorps Farm to School members.

AmeriCorps Farm to School aims to build healthy communities by improving child nutrition through educational activities and developing strong communities by connecting schools with local farmers and food businesses. Spooner Area School District has had AmeriCorps Farm to School members present since 2007.

One part-time member serves as a community outreach, seeking out local produce to serve and local farmers; the other member serves as a nutrition educator. Together, these members strive to help students realize where their food comes from (eggs come from chickens), the processes of planting a garden, enjoying the produce they have grown, and tasting other unique local foods.

Students are given many opportunities to try new healthy foods. Each month at the elementary school, there is a Harvest of the Month presentation. During these 30-minute presentations to the entire grade, the students learn about a fruit or vegetable. They may hear from a farmer who grows apples, a wildlife biologist who specializes in wild rice, the local grocery store owner about citrus or volunteers performing a mini skit about a farmer who grows squash for squash pie.



Furthermore, there is a tasting of the highlighted product. Each month is something a little different, presented in a new way along with a small connection to their classroom teachings.

Lessons do not stop with the Harvest of the Month presentations. Students are also intricately involved in planting. First-grade students planted Black-seeded Simpson Lettuce indoors in a grow cart. This grow cart was located in the hallway near their classrooms. Each time the students saw us watering they were very curious about how their class lettuce was doing.

We only had to replant one flat, but eventually each class tasted their own lettuce.

Second-grade students tried their hand at planting mesclin lettuce seeds. The grow cart moved each week into a new classroom for the teachers and students to keep watered. This growth was not as successful. However, this is the way students learn about the challenges and successes of growing.

Third- and seventh-grade students have just begun preparing the plants for the garden this year. There is a Helping Hands Garden at the elementary school and Experiences in the Middle [School] garden. The stu-

dents have planted tomatoes and peppers. These little sprouts will then be transplanted by the students and grown in the high school greenhouse until the weather is warm enough for the students to transplant into the elementary and middle school gardens.

Fourth-graders are responsible for harvesting the garden at the elementary school. They pick the produce, weigh, and wash it in preparation for use in the school kitchen.

"Last year when I went in our garden, I first planted flowers. But today I harvested kale. We washed kale and lettuce. It was a lot of fun," wrote McKenna, of Mrs. Peck's fourth-graders.

Kylie thought, "I'm totally looking forward to harvesting. I loved planting last year. I know our garden did good this year! I think I'll love harvesting!"

Middle schoolers are also involved in their garden. The sixth-graders planted the garden in spring of 2013 and as seventh-graders harvested the garden that fall. They also tried some fresh herbs. Several students enjoyed the chives. These same seventh-graders planted the tomatoes and peppers for the garden this year. It was the same seventh-grade stu-

See Farm to School, page 5

Welcome Home' seeds given to veterans

BY KATIE CHILDS

In 2012, W. Atlee Burpee & Co. introduced a new gardening concept, to partner with veterans around the country. According to George Ball, chairman and CEO, the mission of this program is twofold: to honor and express thanks with a "humble present of seeds for their gardens," thereby "helping families connect and heal after the traumatic experience of war." The "Welcome Home Garden" seed kit from Burpee includes 12 packets of seeds: three floral and nine vegetables along with a recipe brochure.

This is the second year University of Wisconsin-Extension Area Agriculture Development Agent Kevin Schoessow and North Country Master Gardener Volunteers (NCMGV) have assisted with the distribution of the Welcome Home Garden seed kits to veterans in Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn counties.

Through the efforts of UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development and WI Operation Military Kids Program, the shipment of seed packs were distributed throughout the state



with NCMGV receiving their kits in early April.

The North Country Master Gardeners Volunteers are very pleased to participate in this great program initiated by W. Atlee Burpee & Co. To further enhance this generous gift pack of seeds, a 9-by-11-inch container along with a four-quart bag of potting soil also were included, thus creating "Welcome Home Garden Gift Pots!" Spooner Ace Hardware contributed towards the purchase of the containers and soil.

Through NCMGV member Russ Parker's efforts tomato and pepper

transplants also were distributed with the ensemble.

The Welcome Home Garden Gift Pots distribution was coordinated through the County Veterans Services Offices and Tribal Veterans Service Offices. Master Gardeners Volunteers Tom Blumenberg, Russ Parker, and Katie Childs will transport the gift pots along with the transplants to the CVS and TVS offices the week of May 12 with a total of 60 gift pots to be distributed. Veterans visiting the offices (on a random first-come, first-served basis) will go home with a Welcome Home Garden gift pot to plant and enjoy!

On behalf of the North Country Master Gardeners Volunteers, it has been our pleasure and an honor to assemble and participate in the distribution of the "humble present of seeds" gift pots to the veterans in Burnett, Sawyer, and Washburn counties. We salute our gardening vets as you sow these seeds from Burpee to grow beautiful flowers and tasty vegetables along with hope and inspiration!

Farm to School creating more connections

From page 4

dents this year because the students learned about plants in their science class and it fit in better with this year's curriculum.

"I love the way it smells and how organized it is. Plus there is usually another person in there waiting for you," said a seventh-grader of their favorite part of being in the school garden. Fifth-grade student Kallieah said, "It is important to have a school garden to me because then you get fresh fruit and veggies for lunch."

Even though there are great successes and excellent student responses, there are still challenges. One of the biggest challenges of Farm to School is getting community and

teacher buy-in. Teachers were tasked this year with meeting new standards. This created limited space for additional guests and lessons.

The other challenge we have faced is getting local produce into the school lunch line. Preparations of fresh produce takes a lot more time and costs more, areas that are already pressed in a budget. Having the buy-in and support from the food service director is key to get and keep produce in the school kitchen.

AmeriCorps Farm to School is an excellent program for exposing students and families to local produce. This unique way of decreasing childhood obesity has proven to be successful in Spooner. However, it would

not be as successful as it is without the extremely helpful volunteers! These volunteers, many of them North Country Master Gardener Volunteers, have helped AmeriCorps members understand the process, timeline, and student involvement of what has worked in and outside of the garden, as well as what has been done in the past. Their knowledge, patience, and love for gardening is shown through the various activities: planting indoor lettuce, preparing the garden for spring or closing it down for the winter, providing material, assisting in school wide events, teaching students about gardening, and much more! Thank you for your continued support!

Bugged by pests? What to do about it

BY SUSAN ARMSTRONG

How to employ IPM in the home garden

Would you like to get away from “revenge” spraying and work to develop an effective program that deters the pests that are bugging your vegetable garden and/or fruit orchard? Check out Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. IPM is based on pest life cycles and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means, and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment. IPM takes advantage of all appropriate pest management options including, but not limited to, the prudent use of pesticides.

IPM’s “4T” approach to pest management is a decision-making tool that considers: Target – Timing – Tool – and Technique. The 4T approach asks that you think in advance of the growing season about the insects that are likely to become an issue in the garden. By thinking ahead, say in late April instead of late May or early June, and tracking the development of insects using insect degree days, a gardener can be more aware of what insect and life stage to look for, when to look for it, and how to be more prepared to respond effectively using the right tools in an effective way.

Following find resources to support your research of the 4Ts.

Target

What species and/or life stage am I targeting?

- **The Ohio State Insect and Pest Series** – <http://ohioline.osu.edu/lines/pests.html>



Flea beetle

- **VegEdgePlant Pest Fact Sheets** - <http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/>

Timing

When do I act? When is my target most vulnerable?

- **Green Noise LLC Insect Pest Walk Through Sheet** - http://theothercolor-green.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/ipm_pest_walkthrough_sheet_1.pdf

Tool

Which tool is the best to use? Which tool is most closely aligned with my values? Options include cultural, mechanical, biological, monitoring/trapping, and chemical.

- **Great Lakes IPM** – <http://www.greatlakesipm.com/>
- **Gempler’s** – <http://www.gemplers.com/pest-mgmt>

Technique

Are there ways I can use my tool to achieve more effective results?

- **ATTRA Biointensive IPM** – <https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/summary.php?pub=146>

Putting it into practice

Target: Let’s use the cabbage flea beetle (*Phyllotreta cruciferae*) as the sample target. There are dozens of species of flea beetles, and although there is some overlap of tastes, each type of flea beetle has a preference for particular plants. Some flea beetles feed only on potatoes, tomatoes, and other members of the nightshade family. Others, like the *Phyllotreta cruciferae*, have a taste for broccoli, cabbage, and other cole crops.

Flea beetles spend the winter in the adult stage, hidden under leaves, dirt or other protected sites. Adults emerge in spring to feed and lay eggs on the roots of plants. They die out by early July. The eggs hatch in about a week, and the larvae feed for two to three weeks. They pupate in the soil, and the next generation of adults emerges in two to three weeks. Many flea beetles are strong fliers and seek out emerging host plants, which they locate by chemical cues that the plants produce.

See IPM, page 7

Air-drying is great way to preserve herbs

From page 2

3) Shake off any soil, and if you feel it necessary you may rinse the leaves with cool water. If you do rinse them, or if they were harvested with dew on the leaves, pat them dry with a paper towel.

4) Remove the bottom leaves of each branch so that the stem has about a half-inch free of leaves.

5) Bundle three or four branches together, but try not to crowd the leaves together.

6) Insert the bundled branches in a small hole in an upside down brown paper bag. I used bags that are used at a wine/liquor store. Using a rubber band or twist tie, secure the stems on



the outside of the bag in order to prevent them from slipping back through the hole.

7) You may insert several bundles into different levels of the bag. I tried to put three or four bundles into each bag.

8) When finished inserting the bundles I stapled the open end of the bag

and then created several more holes in each bag.

9) After labeling, hang the bags upside down in a warm, dry area.

10) Allow the bags to hang for two weeks and then check them for dryness. When completely dry, the leaves are ready to store.

11) I placed freezer paper on my work table in order to catch all fragments, and it helped to facilitate clean-up.

How to store the dried herbs

1) I found it convenient to store the whole, dried leaves in sealed plastic bags. I also store them in glass jars with screw on tops.

2) Don't forget to label and date your product.

IPM measures help control pests in gardens

From page 6

These pests produce up to three generations a year before the final generation of adults settles down for over-wintering.

Adult flea beetles cause the most damage by feeding on foliage, cotyledons, and stems. As flea beetles feed, they create shallow pits and small rounded, irregular, holes in leaves, resulting in a shot hole appearance (see figure). The damage is unique and similar for nearly all species.

Timing: Degree Days (DD) are used to predict insect emergence in a more precise way. The equation for calculating DD is: $DD = [(High\ temp + Low\ temp) / 2 - base\ temperature]$ (A result below $0^{\circ} F = 0\ DD$)

The chart by **Green Noise LLC** will provide us the information for this example, and it tells us adult flea beetles emerge at approximately 150 to 200 DD with a base temperature of $50^{\circ} F$. Temperature details to plug into the above equation can be found at: www.dnr.state.mn.us/climate/historical/lcd.html?loc=msp. Each

day you put the temperature details into the equation and keep a running tally of DD. A result below $0^{\circ} F$ equals 0 DD. After you've predicted adult emergence you can move on to selecting your Tool.

Treatment on all cole crops is recommended when 10 to 20 percent of a stand shows feeding damage. Treatment may be needed sooner where cole crops are started from seed as heavy infestations will destroy seedlings before they emerge. Feeding damage and beetle populations can be spotty through the garden (or along edges) so spot-treatments can be effective, reducing insecticide use and costs.

Tools: Control options for the flea beetle are provided at these sites:

<http://richland.uwex.edu/files/2012/07/Flea-Beetle.pdf>
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/insects/find/flea-beetles/>

With early planning your tool of choice can be put in place prior to predicted emergence.

Technique: Some techniques are better than others for managing in-

sects, and some tools may be used in different ways to achieve more effective results. For example: Spray liquid pesticide solutions, like insecticidal soap, on both sides of leaves and then wash off insecticidal soap after one to two hours to prevent damage to leaf tissue.

Conclusion: If you're up for the challenge, IPM can offer you an effective method to manage garden pests. It is a science-based environmentally friendly approach to protecting ourselves, our food, and our planet from our garden marauders. This article provides but a thumbnail sketch of IPM. Other resources include:

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service (ATTRA). Bio-intensive integrated pest management: fundamentals of sustainable agriculture:

<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/summary.php?pub=146>

UWEX – Dodge County. Integrated Pest Management and Gardening: <http://dodge.uwex.edu/2012/03/integrated-pest-management-and-gardening/>



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