

From The Ground Up

VOLUME IV ISSUE III EDITOR: MARGARET MURPHY, MASTER GARDENER JUNE, 2012

MINNEHAHAMASTERGARDENERS@HOTMAIL.COM

WWW.SDSTATE.EDU/SDCES/DISTRICTS/SOUTH/1/HORTICULTURE.CFM

Here Comes Peter Cottontail



By: Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

Awhile ago, I ran into a friend who was out shopping for a young fruit tree. She had just planted one the year before but lost it over the winter to rabbits. This got us, and several other shoppers, swapping stories about all the plants we lost to these hungry creatures. It also led to a discussion on how to best keep rabbits out of the garden.

The diet of the eastern cottontail is quite varied and depends largely on what is available. In the home landscape, we all know how they enjoy many flowers and vegetables in the spring and summer. The good news is, together with garden fare, rabbits also eat clovers, crabgrasses, chickweed, dandelions and quackgrass. During the winter months, they make the switch to woody stems and twigs.

Over the years, I have heard numerous tips on how to protect plants from rabbits. Some of the most common suggestions have to do with an odor-

based deterrent. Rabbits have a well-developed sense of smell. Applying a repellent that offers an offensive, if not biting, aroma can keep rabbits away from plants.

There are also a number of plants considered rabbit resistant due to their taste or texture. Marigolds are among the most popular. Plants with tough leaves or thorns are included on the list. In my experience, however, a hungry rabbit will eat just about anything even my marigolds.

Scare tactics are another way to go. People will set out motion detectors that turn on lights or sound. My dad placed a plastic owl in the garden that hooted every time something passed by. It did not keep the rabbits at bay but gave mom and me a few good laughs. A device intended to scare rabbits may work for a while but, in time, they will most likely

become desensitized to it and ignore it (unless the scary object is a dog or a cat).

You can also try changing the habitat to make it less rabbit friendly. Remove brush piles, weed patches or debris that make good hiding places.

Hands down, however, the most effective way to keep rabbits from enjoying your vegetables or flowers before you do is to put up a fence. Usually a two foot high fence made from chicken wire is sufficient. Fencing young trees, especially during the fall and winter, can save you from having to replant.

Rabbits are often represented in folklore as tricksters that are cunning and outwit their enemies. Perhaps by using one of the above mentioned techniques or a combination of them, you will be the one to outwit your furry garden nemesis this growing season.

2012 Garden Tour

Tour some of the most beautiful gardens in the Sioux Falls area by attending the Minnehaha County Master Gardeners' Annual Garden Tour. The date for this year's tour is Wednesday, July 11th with a July 12th rain date.

The event consists of community gardeners who volunteer to open their gardens to the public for tours. This year the tour will showcase five gardens with many wonderful perennials, annuals, shrubs, and water features.

Tickets are \$10 and go on sale June 18th. They are available through the Regional Extension Office at their new location: 2001 East 8th Street, Sioux Falls and can be purchased on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. only. Tickets can be mailed out if you include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with payment. Unfortunately, due to demand, no reservations will be taken.

So whether you are an avid plant enthusiast or just looking for landscaping ideas, this tour's for you!



From The Ground Up

is published monthly during the growing season by the

Minnehaha Master Gardeners
2001 E 8th St.

Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Phone 605-782-3290

minnehamastergardeners@hotmail.com



JUNE 2012



Calendar

By Kathy Osterloh, Master Gardener

Lawns

- For summer lawn mowing, make sure that no more than 1/3 of the blade length is removed each time. Keep mower blades sharpened to avoid shredding the grass.

Trees and Shrubs

- Water new shrubs and trees adequately to avoid stressing them.
- Mulch to conserve moisture and prevent weed competition.
- Prune spring flowering shrubs - those which bloom before June 15.

Flowers

- Deadhead flowers as needed to keep production up and flowers looking nice.
- Fertilize and water annual flowers regularly to promote growth and an abundance of blooms.
- Divide spring-blooming perennials, but avoid doing so during hot, dry spells.
- Make sure climbing plants are staked or on a trellis before they get too large.

Vegetables/Herbs

- Thin young vegetables as needed to assist in growth and for healthier plants.
- Stop harvesting asparagus and rhubarb by mid-June.
- Regular irrigation of tomatoes will help prevent or reduce problems with blossom-end-rot.

Fruit

- Renovate June-bearing strawberry beds immediately after final harvest.
- Remove 3 to 4 inches of shoot tips of black and purple raspberry canes to encourage branching.

General

- Spend a little time weeding your outdoor plants each day to keep ahead of the weeds.
- Begin to take note of which weeks we receive less than 1 - 2" of rainfall and water plants accordingly.

Herb Garden

By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener

Herbs that can be grown in the South Dakota region.

Chamomile: *Matricaria recutita* is from the Compositae family. The flowers are small and daisy-like with white petals surrounding a raised, yellow center. It has been commonly called "Mayflower" since it is known to bloom in May with flowering continuing through July. The leaves are fine and feathery. The plant is an annual, but if you let the flowers go to seed, it re-seeds itself. Because of the height of the stem, it is commonly grouped with plants that help support each other.

Chamomile has salicylate in its constituents, which is a pain reliever and has anti-inflammatory qualities. It has been used as a poultice dressing for puffy eyes and skin swelling from allergies. It is an immune booster and has been studied for anti-tumor activity.

The chamomile flowers can help soothe indigestion, anxiety and insomnia. Take five flowers in a tea infusion for nervousness, indigestion, and headaches. You may change the tea flavor with some lavender or spearmint leaves. In the children's book, Peter Rabbit's mother gave him chamomile tea to calm him down and soothe his stomach after eating in Mr. McGregor's garden.

Chamomile tea was found to prevent the progression of diabetic complications and hyperglycemia. Not recommended in pregnancy or for people allergic to asters, ragweed, or marigold.



Photo: Priscilla Jurkovich

Weed of the Month: Giant Foxtail

By Paulette Keller, Master Gardener

Growth: Giant foxtail arrived in North America in the 1920s and has spread to all of the eastern two thirds of the United States and Canada. It is not fussy about what type of soil it will grow in but it needs heat to germinate and grow. It rarely grows in the shade and is frequently found in vegetable gardens and flower beds where the soil has been worked.



bttny.purdue.edu

The seed is an opportunist and will grow anywhere it can make contact with soil and moisture. Each seed sends up many stems that can reach up to 5 feet in height. The grassy leaves are about 1/4 inch wide and often have short hairs or bristles on the surface. Each stalk sends out a drooping fuzzy seed head that gives the plant its name. These seed heads start out green in the summer and by fall they turn brown and can be up to 7 inches long. One single giant foxtail plant has the potential to produce up to 10,000 seeds in its annual lifespan. Luckily not all of these seeds make it to the ground because birds find the seeds tasty.

Control: The roots of giant foxtail are shallow but they spread out like an anchor in the soil. Giant foxtail is easy to pull or hoe when it is young but take a little more effort when they are bigger and older. The plant can be controlled by spraying it with glyphosate herbicides. Just be sure to spray before it sets its seeds.

Plant a Tree for Dad!

By Deb Wallin, Master Gardener

Planting a tree is a wonderful way to celebrate Father's Day. With care, a tree can last centuries as a testimony to Dad's enduring strength, wisdom and character. The following are a few trees to consider.

Aspen, Quaking (*Populus*): Renowned for their golden autumn foliage. The fluttering leaves can be observed in even the slightest breeze. Individual aspen trees live only 100 years. However, aspen trees reproduce by sprouting shoots from their roots. Thus, a grove is actually a single living organism which can reach several thousand years in age. The Aspen tree stands for determination, harmony and balance.

Birch (*Betula*): The birch is popular in gardens and lining of streets because it tolerates the poorer air of the city. The beauty of birch trees is due, in part, to the contrast between their white bark and their green summer leaves or yellow autumn leaves. The birch tree branches were used for sweeping and as a tool for discipline because they are strong and flexible. The birch also has medicinal properties. The birch represents purification, cleansing, strength and flexibility.

Catalpa (*Catalpa*): This tree is known for its large heart shaped leaves, and string bean like fruit. Large white clusters of flowers occur in June. The catalpa is a deciduous tree that is fast growing reaching about 50 feet in height. The large leaves provide a good canopy and shade.

They are popular with birds as they provide them with good shelter from wind and rain. The catalpa symbolizes heart, protection, growth and adaptation.

Maple (*Acer*):

Maples are important as source of syrup and wood. Dried wood is often used for the smoking of food, creating musical instruments and small household tools. Sugar maples have strong hard wood with a typical life span that can exceed 200 years. Maple trees symbolize balance, promise, strength, practicality or longevity.

Oak (*Quercus*): Oaks can have a massive trunk and broad branch arrangement giving the tree a picturesque appearance. Large oaks are often more than 200 years old and some 300 to 500 year old trees can be found. Known as the mightiest of trees, oaks symbolize strength, courage, wisdom and authority.

All these trees and more are available through the County Conservation District and your local retail garden center.



Catalpa blossom: coopext.colostate.edu

A Sanctuary for Monarchs

By Jo Scott Cannon,
Master Gardener

Known by friends and neighbors as the "Butterfly Lady", Joyce Stephens of Sioux Falls, witnesses dozens of Monarch butterfly "births" each week from late May to early September. She adopts eggs and caterpillars into her own "safe house" to ensure the completion of each stage to the final metamorphosis of the adult butterfly. I recently visited Joyce's Monarch sanctuary and found myself surrounded by dozens of gleaming green cocoons resembling jade jewel cases with bright gold trim.

This fascinating indoor nursery system ensures that each Monarch

will take wing after approximately ten days in its pupa stage, avoiding predators

(ants, mites, spiders, and wasps) that feed on butterfly eggs and larvae.

Over a hundred plastic containers cradling a chrysalis occupy Joyce's dining room table and spare room. Each container is dated for the release of the butterfly as soon as it emerges and dries its delicate wings. Fresh milkweed leaves in Joyce's fridge feed voracious young caterpillars until they "spin" their cocoons. It would be good to see a few more milkweed plants left growing in Sioux Falls neighborhoods to attract the black



extension.iastate.edu

and orange beauties and eventually boost Monarch population.

Stephens started her butterfly project about eight summers ago after taking a class at the Outdoor Campus. This July, the Outdoor Campus will present a similar class to teach folks more about Monarchs, and provide details on habitat for butterflies.

The class, *Monarch Magic*, includes a brief introduction to the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly as well as information on how to raise and collect monarch caterpillars. The class is on Saturday, July 28th from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Class size is 25 so, reserve your spot. For more information, you can visit their website at: www.outdoorcampus.org or call them at 362-2777.

Upcoming Events

Sioux Falls Garden Tour

Wednesday, July 11, 2012;
Rain date is July 12, 2012

Rapid City Garden Walk

Sunday, July 8th, 2012

State Update Meeting

"Seasons in the Garden," the 2012 Update, at the new McCrory Gardens Education Center on Sept. 14-16, 2012.

Keynote speakers: Sandy Uecker, discussing native grasses and forbs, & Carter Johnson, SDSU professor and director of EcoSun Prairie Farms.

Breakout topics include Beekeeping, Grapes 101, Landscaping, Back-yard ponds and a tour of Norm's Greenhouse.

For more details about these events call 605-782-3290 or email minnehahamastergardeners@hotmail.com

Ornamental Grass

By Jayne Wessels, Master Gardener

Phalaris arundinacea

"Ribbon Grass "

This easy to grow ornamental grass has its pros and cons but I still use it where I can contain it. The west coast states have banned it and it is reported as an invasive weed in the mid-west.

Did you know it was first offered in American catalogs in 1792? So, it's been around a long time. The variegated green and white blades of this cool weather grass are 18-24 inches high with bloom heads appearing in late summer to early fall. Mow it down if it starts looking tacky and you'll have fresh growth for fall. It works great in hard to maintain areas if it is contained. If you want to use it in the garden, be sure to plant it in a container then sink the container with the rim about 2" above the soil line. Be sure to check it periodical to make sure it isn't creep out and spreading in the garden.

It's hardy from zones 3b to 9a and grows well in mildly acidic to mildly alkaline soils. Plant it in full sun to light shade. It seems the more moisture it gets the better it grows. I have mine planted on the north east corner of the garage not far from the down spout so it stays good looking all summer. To propagate just dig up a plug and replant where you want it to lighten up a place in the yard.



Photo: Jayne Wessels

Local Foods Corner

By: Chris Zdorovtsov, Community Development Field Specialist, SDSU Extension

Safety Tips for a Teaching Garden

When starting a school garden, planning for safety is important. Here are some safety tips to consider:

- If using compost that contains manure, make sure it has aged 6 months.
 - Professionally prepared compost is your best option because their large piles allow for more heat to be generated. This will reduce the number of weed seeds, plant disease-causing organisms and human pathogens. Plus, non-composted manure is very high in nitrogen which can lead to salt build-up and plant damage.
 - If the school is utilizing a compost system, then only use plant waste in that pile. (Avoid, meats, oils, manures)
- Mulch, such as lawn clippings or straw can be a great addition to the soil surface for holding water, moderating soil temperatures and keeping weeds down. Be sure the lawn clipping you utilize were not sprayed with herbicide, since the residual could be transferred into the garden.
- Avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides unless you can ensure that re-entry intervals and post-harvest intervals are followed. With a garden sitting on a high traffic school lot, this could be extremely difficult to control, and it might be best to avoid the use of these products.
 - Have staff and volunteers receive a basic food safety training.
 - Have access to a hand-washing sink or prepare a hand-washing station which students can utilize before harvesting. Harvest all produce into food grade containers. Keep these containers as well as harvesting tools cleaned and sanitized.
 - Wash produce with water before consuming it.
 - Know the allergy risks of the participating students.
 - Schedule garden activities in the morning or evening if possible to avoid the heat. Don't forget water bottles, sunscreen and hats.
 - Require closed-toed shoes to avoid injury. This is especially important when working in an in-ground garden vs. a raised bed garden.
 - Keep a first aid kit on hand.



<http://business.nmsu.edu/2008/10/13/roswell-students-learn-healthy-habits-through-extension-vegetable-garden/>

South Dakota State University, South Dakota Counties and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating South Dakota State University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer (Male/Female) and offers all benefits, services, education, and employment opportunities without regard for ancestry, age, race, citizenship, color, creed, religion, gender, disability, national origin, sexual preference, or Vietnam Era veteran status.