

From The Ground Up

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INFO@MINNEHAHAMASTERGARDENERS.ORG WWW.MINNEHAHAMASTERGARDENERS.ORG

Potatoes: An American Staple

By: Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

I believe we are all familiar with the saying that potatoes should be planted on Good Friday. Though the weather may not always make this possible, it is a nice reminder that potato planting time is near.

Most gardeners have a favorite type of potato they plant year after year but potato cultivars have come a long way. There is now a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and colors to choose from. A few that grow reliably well here include the early maturing varieties 'Irish Cobbler', the red-skinned 'Norland' and the 'Yukon Gold'.

There is also the early to mid-season potatoes such as the 'Russet Norkotah' and 'Superior'. If wanting a late maturing potato, try the 'Red Pontiac' and 'Kennebec'.

There are also cultivars that offer uncommon colors such as the 'All Blue'. This potato has deep blue skin with light blue flesh.



extension.oregonstate.org

Potatoes are started from seed tubers not true seeds. Since potatoes are susceptible to a number of diseases, always start with certified seed potatoes. Prior to planting, mix in a general garden fertilizer unless a soil test indicates differently. Avoid amending the soil with large amounts of organic matter since this may increase the occurrence of potato scab. With large seed potatoes you can cut them into sections. Make sure each seed piece has at least

one "eye" or bud. Cut pieces at least one day before you plan to plant. This allows the cut edges to dry. The drying helps create a disease-protective callous on the surface. Plant the seed pieces cut side down or "eye" side up. Small seed potatoes can be planted whole.

Cover the seed pieces with several inches of soil. Remember to keep rows about three feet apart as potatoes need room to grow. When the plants reach about eight inches tall, begin to mound soil around their bases to form a hill. "Hilling" encourages additional tubers to form. Tubers develop on thin stems called stolons that come off the main stem.

Keep the stolons covered with soil to prevent the tubers from being exposed to sunlight. Sunlight can cause the formation of green spots on the potato. The green color itself is chlorophyll, which is not toxic; however, when the tuber is exposed



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to light a colorless alkaloid called solanine is produced. Eating a large amount of solanine can make you sick.

Full-sized potatoes are harvested usually in August or early September, about two weeks after the vines die down. Smaller or "new" potatoes are harvested earlier about seven to eight weeks after being planted. These immature tubers have thin skins so do not store well. Remember to cut off any green areas before cooking.

Eye Spy...a spring blooming perennial



www.unce.unr.edu

Candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*)

This is one of my favorite perennial spring bloomers. The crisp, cloud-white flowers pop against its dark green, evergreen foliage. Candytuft is slow growing. It has a mounding habit and only reaches about eight to twelve inches in height. This makes it a good choice for border plantings.

Candytuft is native to southern Europe. Plant it in full sun to part shade with some protection from winter winds. It prefers slightly alkaline soil but grows well in almost any type of soil. It is easily propagated by seed, cuttings or division. Cut back every other year to avoid legginess. Candytuft is considered to be deer resistant.

Look for it this spring!



www.uky.edu

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Minnehaha Master Gardeners
2001 E 8th St.
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Phone 605-782-3290
info@minnehahamastergardeners.org
www.minnehahamastergardeners.org



APRIL 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Rake the lawn to remove twigs, leaves and trash	10	11 Remove mulch from strawberry beds before new growth begins	12
13	14 Begin fertilizing houseplants, lightly	15	16	17 Plant bare-root trees and shrubs before bud break	18	19 Dye Easter eggs using natural dyes
20 EASTER	21 Plant a tree this week	22 Earth Day	23	24	25 Arbor Day	26
27	28	29 Plant cole crops and potatoes as soon as soil can be worked	30			

The South Dakota Herb Garden

By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener

Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) is from the Lamiaceae (mint) family with leaves opposite and square stems. It is an upright plant with ovate shaped leaves that can grow to four feet tall. This perennial blooms July through September. The beautiful flowers are a distinctive shape and have been referred to as “firework flowers”. Bee balm thrives in full sun and likes well drained soil. Bee balm is propagated by cuttings and division. As a perennial, it should be divided every 3-5 years to stimulate circulation and plant health. Bee balm is a great companion plant because it attracts beneficial insects and pollinators.



Photo by Priscilla Jurkovich from her garden

These plants have anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. It has been used for infection, digestive disturbances and to bring on delayed menses and move circulation in the reproductive tract. The tea (leaves steeped for 20 minutes) can be used to freshen the breath and used for infections in the mouth and gums. Externally, it can be used as a poultice, wash or in a salve for burns, scrapes or rashes. The applications can be as a tincture, tea, vinegar, syrup or added to your dinner recipe. *Safety precaution:* should not be used in pregnancy because of its blood-moving characteristics. When harvesting, use the flowers and the leaves fresh or dried. The flowers are great tasting, spicy and highly effective. The plant has been called “wild oregano” since it has similar attributes and is as strong as oregano.

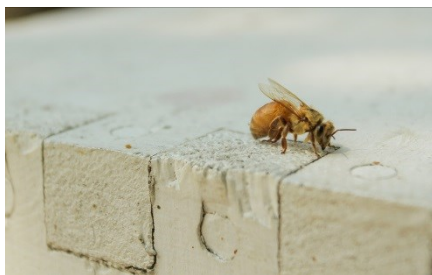
The Buzz on Honeybees

By Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

With the cold and flu season still at hand, many of us have been dealing with the sniffles and chronic coughs. If you're like me, to feel better you might take refuge in a nice hot cup of herbal tea sweetened with a dollop of honey.

In our region, we are fortunate to have several folks who keep honeybees and sell their honey locally often at farmers' markets. I had the pleasure of visiting with one beekeeper, Marlene Boernsen, onsite where she and her family keep bees in Ocheyedan, Iowa. I was amazed at the wonderful things bees do.

According to Marlene, the limiting factor for how many hives to keep at one site comes down to the amount of available flowers bees need to collect nectar. Bees don't work every flower. They focus on yellow, purple and white colors. Marlene noted that for her hives some of the bees' favorite flowers include sweet clover, white Dutch clover and golden rod. Bees need to gather nectar from roughly two million flowers to create a pound of honey!



The hive has one queen and several drones (whose job it is to mate with the queen) but mostly it contains worker bees that do all the work. Within 15 seconds of emerging from her cell, the worker bee is doing her first job. They collect the nectar and build the honeycomb where the

honey is stored. The honeycomb consists of perfectly shaped hexagonal cells. Cells for honey storage are filled one drop at a time. It takes 12 bees an entire lifetime to make one teaspoon of honey. Some of these busy worker bees will fan the nectar with their wings to dehydrate it. When it's at just the right moisture level (about 18%) the cell is capped

with wax. The honey will keep indefinitely inside the honeycomb.

As if producing honey wasn't enough, the worker bees, while out collecting nectar, are also busy pollinating many of our fruit and vegetable crops. "Bees pollinate our food. It's the most important thing they do. Honey is a bonus!" says, Marlene. As the bees travel from flower to flower they are busy transferring the pollen from one flower to the next while gathering additional pollen along the way. One honeybee can visit up to 5,000 blossoms in a day!



If you are interested in attracting pollinators such as honeybees to your garden this summer, here are a few helpful tips. Select a variety of flowers for the garden. Plantings that offer a mixture of colors, fragrances, and shapes throughout the growing season will entice a range of pollinators to your yard. Consider leaving clover that may spring up in your lawn. Limit pesticide use. As many garden pesticides are toxic to honeybees, don't spray plants while they are in bloom. If pesticides are needed, use those that are less toxic to bees and apply very early morning or late evening when bees are the least active. It's best to apply pesticides only after the flower petals have fallen. Keep in mind, that formulas such as granules and emulsifiable concentrates are safer to pollinators than wettable powders or dusts.

Remember to always follow good cultural practices in your yard and garden as the first step in preventing or minimizing pest problems. For help with determining whether insects you may encounter this growing season are indeed pests, visit www.BugGuide.net.

Weed of the Month

By Paulette Keller, Master Gardener

Pineapple Weed

Growth: Pineapple weed can be found in the Great Plains in roadsides, lawns, gardens, barnyards, picnic areas and cultivated fields. It grows very well in neglected lawns. The leaves are numerous and alternately positioned on the stem of the plant. They are 1-5 centimeters long and 5-20 millimeters wide. The flowers are yellow to yellowish-green disk florets that are 4-5 millimeters wide. The stems are upright and branch out from the lower part of the plant. Pineapple weed has a taproot, which supports the one inch height of the plant.

Duration: Pineapple weed is an annual plant and blooms from May to August.

Uses and Values: Livestock and wildlife do not graze on pineapple weed very much. Folk medicine suggests that a tea was made from the leaves to calm nerves, as a sedative or to cause sleep.

Pineapple weed is scented like pineapple.



<http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/images/ipm1007pineappleweed03.jpg>

Garden Fun Facts Potatoes



- Did you know that human use of potatoes dates back at least 7,000 years to the Andes Mountains in South America? The Incas worshipped potatoes and even buried potatoes with their dead.
- The Irish are probably best known for their love of potatoes and the blight that destroyed their potato crop.
- There are over 5,000 varieties of potatoes in the world. In the United States, one of the most common varieties is the red potato.
- Potatoes were once so valued for their vitamin C content that miners traded gold for potatoes. In fact, there is even a potato called Yukon Gold!
- A single medium-sized potato contains about half the daily requirement of vitamin C and provides complex carbohydrates needed to fuel our brains and bodies.

Source: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/food/farm-to-school/toolkit/promoting-food/promoting-potatoes.html>

Don't miss the Upper Midwest Master Gardener Conference **June 25-28, 2014** in Bettendorf, IA at the Quad-Cities Isle Center and Waterfront Convention Center.

Speakers include:

- **Scott Ogden and Lauren Springer-Ogden**, authors of *Plant-Driven Design* and *Passionate Gardening* will both be speaking at the conference.
- **Felder Rushing**, author of *Garden Hearts*, *Bottle Trees*, and *Slow Gardening*.
- **Melinda Myers**, contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and author of more than 20 garden books.

See the full listing of classes, speakers, and tours on the conference [web site](#)

- **Early registration deadline is April 30**, after which the conference fee will increase by \$50.
- Call 1-800-843-4753 and provide the group code **WMG0618** for reservations or reserve your room at the Isle Casino Hotel Bettendorf through the [conference room reservation site](#) to receive the discounted conference room rates.
- The block of rooms will be held until **June 1**.

You can also "Like" us on [Facebook](#)

Beautiful Annuals

By Ann Larson, Master Gardener Intern

New for 2014

Calibrachoa Superbells "Pomegranate Punch"

Wow – what a beauty! The tag says "These COLORS never fade." Rich, velvety red flowers with a black eye. Long blooming - continuous or re-bloomer, until hard frost.

Characteristics

- Requires sun
- Heat tolerant.
- Medium height (6 - 10 inches)
- Mounding, trailing (12 to 24 inches)
- Best in containers or landscapes with excellent drainage
- Is subject to root rot if not in well drained soil
- Is a great spiller in a container
- Easy maintenance

When planting Calibrachoa give the plants a slight trim, using a sharp pair of scissors or pruning shears. While not a necessary step, it will increase branching and may help the plants look even fuller. Trim this plant again in July or August, and the blooms will reappear better than ever!

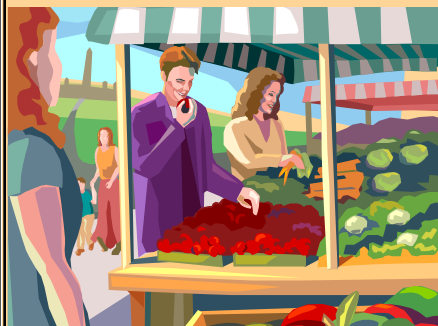


www.provenwinners.com

Introduction to Farmers Markets in South Dakota Online Guidebook

Written collaboratively by Sierra Blachford and Chris Zdorovtsov,
SDSU Extension

SDSU Extension has begun adding articles that make up the South Dakota Farmers Market Online Guidebook available on igrow.org. Content for the guidebook will continue to be added over the season. A direct link to posted material can be found at: <http://igrow.org/community-development/local-foods/south-dakota-farmers-market-online-guidebook/>.



In April of 2013, approximately 60 communities in South Dakota had a farmers market. A farmers market provides many benefits to the residents living in and around the community. In addition to providing access to fresh food that is grown locally, the farmers market concept

supports the development of local economies, the nurturing of community interaction and fosters an entrepreneurial spirit.

The farmers market provides an effect marketing system for agricultural producers that include part and full-time farmers and backyard

gardeners alike. Consumers are able to develop relationships with the people who produced their food. Farmers markets provide an opportunity for educational events. Retailers and others in the business district may benefit from the farmers market, because the increased foot traffic in the area can lead to larger sales. The community benefits from the taxes and fees collected from the farmers market. Finally, farmers markets create a meaningful way for citizens to be involved in community life. Farmers markets can be a vibrant place!

Farmers markets start as an idea. A few local growers, a community group, the local Chamber of Commerce, or even a single individual realizes the benefits of having a farmers market in their own community. Once this idea has taken root, planning can begin.

This guide was not created to be a step-by-step process, because we recognize that each process will be unique. Instead, use this online guidebook as a reference manual. Don't worry about going in perfect order, the process of creating a farmers market is dynamic—the steps are often interchangeable and may overlap. One person might be working on filing for permits while another creates a market logo. We suggest that you scan through these pages quickly. Then, get started searching for like-minded individuals in your community. Revisit the pages as questions and topics develop for the new market.

Established markets can use this guide to help strengthen the weak areas of their market. Search the articles for ideas and inspiration for the market in your community.

For questions on farmers market development contact Christina.Zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu

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