

# From The Ground Up

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INFO@MINNEHAHAMASTERGARDENERS.ORG WWW.MINNEHAHAMASTERGARDENERS.ORG

## Don't Be Afraid of the Dark

By: Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

Some individuals consider shady sites in their landscape to be a challenge. My yard has quite a bit of shade and as I looked into shade tolerant plants, I learned that there is a nice scope of possibilities.

The first step to planning your shade garden is to assess the types of shade found in your yard. You'll find many different descriptions of shade but here a few often used terms. *Light shade*, which refers to 2-4 hours of shade during the day. Plants preferring full sun generally can handle this amount of shade. *Part shade* consists of 4-5 hours of shade. Most sun-lovers may survive in part shade but won't bloom at their best. *Filtered or dappled shade* is sunlight that filters through the tree canopy throughout the day. *Full shade* is no direct sunlight throughout the day. This type of dense shade can be created by large evergreens or tall buildings. A few plants such as some ferns and hostas can tolerate full shade.

Plants sold in garden centers typically come with a tag that has information about their light preference. Plants described as "shade to part shade" can generally thrive in heavy shade, dappled light or morning-only sun. Shade-lovers tend to scorch in too much direct or intense sunlight. It is best to avoid planting them in hot, direct noon-time or afternoon sun.

When planning your shade garden, keep succession in mind. You can plant sun-loving, early bloomers before trees or tall shrubs leaf out. Follow with plant varieties that are more shade tolerant. Mix annuals, perennials, and bulbs to achieve continuous color all season long.

Flowering annuals do not bloom well in heavy shade but I have enjoyed wonderful color in part or dappled shade with coleus, begonias,

nasturtium and nicotiana, also known as flowering tobacco.

Many perennial varieties bloom well in light shade but some will blossom in fairly dense shade. Most perennials flower for just a few short weeks. However, when not in bloom, they may still present remarkable foliage adding attractive form and texture to your garden. I tend to plant my shade-loving perennials in clumps as often their flowers are on the delicate side and not as visible on their own. Light colors stand out in the shade but don't be afraid to add dark colors such as reds and purples for added richness. Some of my favorite perennials for shade are astilbe, cardinal flower, bleeding heart, coral bells, hostas, lungworts, wild columbine, Virginia bluebell and woodland phlox. Be mindful of soil moisture needs when selecting plants. Astilbe and cardinal flowers, for example, like moist soils.

If planting under shade trees, remember that a thick canopy of trees can deflect rainfall from the ground directly beneath it. Also, trees and shrubs can compete with smaller plants for moisture as well as nutrients. Adding several



Red columbine, Photo: [igrow.org](http://igrow.org)

inches of natural mulch will help conserve moisture and add nutrients back into the soil.

For problem areas such as those with a thin, rocky soil layer or prone to erosion, I have found success in planting perennial groundcovers. Many do extremely well in shade including pachysandra, periwinkle, lily-of-the-valley, bungleweed, and dead nettles.

If planning a shade garden, take a stroll through the woods. We have many beautiful woodland perennials that are shade-loving natives. Notice nature's subtle way of blending their colors with leafy textures in a way that is unique from plants in sunny locations. Use nature as your guide to create a shady retreat in your yard.

## Eye Spy...birds making nests



The [National Wildlife Federation](http://NationalWildlifeFederation.org) (NWF) reminds us that spring is the time many songbirds are busy building nests. Even if they take up residence in a birdhouse, they will still build a nest inside.

If you are interested in providing some handy nesting material for these master crafters, NWF tells us there are two basic ways we can do this: grow plants that offer good building materials or offer the raw materials yourself.

A list of materials that help fit the bill (no pun intended) include:

small twigs (under four inches in length); soft plant material or material with a little fluff (for those birds who enjoy lining their nest with a little greenery and comfort); dry grass or moss.

Other materials that birds may use are hair, snakeskins, string, yarn, or strips of cloth. Remember to keep the materials less than six inches in length and strips of cloth to no more than an inch wide.

A material *not* to use is dryer lint. It may absorb water plus contain chemical residue from laundry soaps and fabric softeners.

To learn more about providing nesting materials for our feathery neighbors, click on [NWF's article](#). Happy birding!



## From The Ground Up

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Minnehaha Master Gardeners  
2001 E 8th St.  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Phone 605-782-3290  
info@minnehahamastergardeners.org  
www.minnehahamastergardeners.org



# May 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6 Leave foliage of bulbs until it yellows and dies	7	8	9 <a href="#">Click here for information on apple scab</a>	10 Plant sale at fairgrounds, MGs arrive 8:30am
11 Mother's Day	12 Monthly Master Gardener meeting, 7:00pm	13 Remember to thin your seedlings, especially root crops	14	15	16	17
18	19 Remember to start fertilizing houseplants regularly	20	21	22 Plant warm-season vegetables after threat of frost has past	23	24
25	26 Memorial Day	27	28	29	30 <a href="#">Prune spring blooming shrubs after flowering</a>	31

## The Herb Garden

*The herb section highlights herbs that can be grown in the South Dakota region*

*By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener*



**Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)** is a perennial (zone 3) from the **Boraginaceae** family. The purple-pink flowers hang in a bell-like cluster from the tips of the stems and bloom from May to September. The leaves are tall, rigid and prickly to touch. The stems are hollow. The roots are long. It tolerates partial shade to full sun and propagates readily from the root. It is difficult to eradicate once established. Comfrey can produce 4 to 10 harvests in one season with frequent cuttings.

The leaves of the comfrey plant are high in potassium, which helps with producing flowers, seed and fruit. The leaves will assist as a compost activator with the extra nitrogen from the leaves. The leaves can also be placed in the garden as mulch and the nitrogen released gradually as the leaves decompose.

Comfrey has been used medicinally to decrease inflammation, assist with wound healing or

wrapped around a torn ligament, sprain or broken bone. Many salves have been made to treat hemorrhoids, rashes, arthritis, lower back pain or skin problems. For culinary use, leaves can be steamed as a vegetable or made into a tea. However, when ingested, use in moderation.



Photos by Priscilla Jurkovich



## *Difference between long day and short day onions*

*Excerpt from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Yard and Garden: Growing Onions*

*By Richard Jauron and Willy Klein*

What is meant by the terms long-day and short-day onion? Onion bulb formation begins when a certain day length is reached. Short-day onion varieties (cultivars) begin to form bulbs when they receive 10 to 12 hours of daylight, intermediate-day onions need 12 to 14 hours of daylight, and long-day cultivars require 14 or more hours of daylight.

Bulb size is largely determined by the number and size of the leaves at bulb initiation. The larger the tops (foliage area) at bulb initiation, the larger the size of the mature bulbs. (The size of onion bulbs also depends on weather, soil conditions and other factors.)

Long-day onion cultivars are the best choice for gardeners in states in the upper midwest. Short-day cultivars generally produce small bulbs when grown in northern areas because of the small amount of foliage present at bulb initiation. Long-day cultivars, however, are able to produce large tops before bulb initiation occurs. As a result, long-day onion cultivars typically produce the biggest bulbs.

Suggested onion varieties (cultivars) for home gardens include:

‘Candy’ – yellow-brown skin, globe-shaped, short-term storage

‘Copra’ – main season, yellow-brown skin, excellent storage

‘Red Burgermaster’ – bright red, globe-shaped, good storage

‘Red Zeppelin’ – deep red, globe-shaped, excellent storage

‘Stuttgarter’ – flattened globes, light brown skin, excellent storage, from sets

‘Walla Walla Sweet’ – late season, yellow-brown skin, short-term storage

‘White Sweet Spanish’ – late season, white skin, short-term storage



Candy onion. Photo: Marg. Murphy

## *'Primal Scream' Hemerocallis hybrid*

*By Ann Larson, Master Gardener Intern*



[http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/dazzling\\_daylilies\\_spice\\_up\\_your\\_summer\\_garden](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/dazzling_daylilies_spice_up_your_summer_garden)

One of the most sought-after daylilies and winner of the 2003 Stout Medal (the highest honor a daylily can receive). It sports a large, 7 1/2 to 8 1/2 inch, tangerine orange blossom. Officially classified as "unusual form", the tepals are narrow, twisted, and re-curved with loosely ruffled edges. These gigantic blossoms show-up in midsummer.

With such a distinctive presence, it is sure to steal the show in the garden when in bloom. It spreads 18 to 24 inches and reaches 34 inches high. This flower definitely lives up to its name 'Primal Scream' and has a "WOW" factor that you have to have in your perennial bed!

## *Weed of the Month* *By Paulette Keller, Master Gardener*

### **Field sandbur**

Field sandbur is a warm season annual grass that grows in lawns, roads, waste places, cultivated fields and rangeland in poor condition. It prefers sandy, dry soil, as the name implies, but will tolerate a wide range of growing conditions. It has spiny little burs that enclose the seeds. The grass may grow upright or flat to the ground. The leaf blades are flat, twisted or folded and are 2 to 5 inches long. They taper to a point and are rough to the touch.

**Uses and Values:** Field sandbur can be grazed by cattle in the early growth stage and before the burs are produced. The spiny spurs cause damage to soft tissue of grazing animals.

**Other:** Field sandbur is a nuisance when it attaches itself to your clothing, especially socks and shoelaces. They can be removed with a pocket comb or by wetting your fingers before removing the burs. They are less likely to stick to your wet fingers.

**Control:** Field sandbur can be controlled in lawns using a pre- or post emergent herbicide.



Photo: www.colostate.edu

## *Garden Fun Facts* *Strawberries*



- Strawberries are a member of the rose family
- The flavor of a strawberry is influenced by weather, the variety and stage of ripeness when harvested
- On average, there are 200 seeds in a strawberry
- Strawberries are grown in every state in the United States
- There is a museum in Belgium just for strawberries
- Eight strawberries will provide 140 percent of the recommended daily intake of Vitamin C for kids
- Over 53 percent of seven to nine year olds picked strawberries as their favorite fruit

From the [University of Illinois Extension](http://www.illinoisextension.org)

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 was April 30**, after which the conference fee increased 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**.

## Beautiful Annuals

By Ann Larson, Master Gardener Intern

### New for 2014

This vigorous group does well in both in sun and shade and gives you nonstop color up to a hard frost.

Spreading Sunpatiens reach a height of 20 to 6 inches with a mounding spread of 24 to 36 inches. Some of the colors are Carmine Red, Corona, Salmon and White. The foliage on Salmon and White is variegated.

Sunpatient Compact is 16 to 32 inches high and spreads 14 to 24 inches. This variety is best for smaller containers and have great disease resistance. Colors include Hot Coral, Electric Orange, Magenta and Red. If you haven't tried these new beauties, buy some this year! See the [University of Illinois Extension](#) for more information on these beauties.

### Impatiens Sunpatiens



"SunPatiens Compact Blush Pink" Photo: Colorado State University Extension.edu

## STEM Kitchen & Garden Educator Workshops in July

By Chris Zdorovtsov, SDSU Extension



<http://igrow.org/4h/stem/plant-science/>

This summer, SDSU Extension and the SD Discovery Center are hosting S.T.E.M in the Classroom, Kitchen and Garden, a two-day training for in Rapid City and Sioux Falls to demonstrate creative ways to connect science, technology, engineering and math with garden-based learning and food

science and nutrition education. The program is designed for PreK through middle school educators and program leaders.

The kitchen training day will discuss resources available to implement programs to promote children's consumption of fruits and vegetables. Attendees will learn about the Harvest of the Month program, food safety science, tools and tips for cooking with kids, Pick It! Try It! Like It! resources and USDA Team Nutrition curriculum activities to take back to the classroom.

The Garden education day will feature specific curriculum and lesson

ideas to incorporate into a program. Garden to table, biodiversity, math in the garden and garden-based science experiments will be featured. Additionally, participants will tour the site of a local garden education program.

Participants can attend one or both days of the training for no charge, however on the garden training day, there will be an \$8 fee to cover the lunch program.

#### Training dates and locations:

**Rapid City, S.D. - SDSU West River Ag Center, 1905 N. Plaza Drive**  
June 24, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. MDT (STEM Kitchen)  
June 25, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. MDT (STEM Garden)

**Sioux Falls, S.D. - Sioux Falls Regional Extension Center, 2001 E. 8th St.**

July 9, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. CDT (STEM Garden)  
July 10, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. CDT (STEM Kitchen)

One *undergraduate or graduate credit* is available through SDSU for \$40. *Two Continuing Education Credits* are also available for \$5. Attendance at both training days is required and homework assignments must be completed to receive this credit. A limited number of \$100 *scholarships* for those traveling more than 100 miles are available to attendees who intend to implement the featured curricula.

Registration forms are available at [igrow.org/events](http://igrow.org/events), under the event posting. These trainings are funded by the S.D. Dept. of Health and SDSU Extension.

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