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"Let food be thy medicine, and let medicine be thy food." Hippocrates

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July Events:

- 2020 Master Gardener & Home Horticulture Online Training from July 6th to August 28th
- McCrory Gardens are now open: <https://www.sdstate.edu/mccrory-gardens>



“Consider conserving water by allowing your lawn to go dormant in the heat. It will bounce back once it rains, or when the temperature cools. If you do water, be sure to follow the city ordinances on watering. It is best to water 1” once per week rather than a light watering daily” Pam Conklin

“I’m Done Weeding!”

By Arlene Brandt-Jenson

....said no gardener ever! The job of weeding is an endless one, but there’s something satisfying about completing the job, at least for a while. Sometimes it’s hard to tell the weeds from the desirable plants. Here are a few perennial weeds that can be troublesome and some pointers for identification

Field bindweed or Creeping Jenny, *Convolvulus arvensis*

This vining broadleaf can invade lawns and garden spots. If soil material with creeping jenny rhizomes is brought into a garden spot, this weed will take hold. Established creeping jenny patches have VERY deep root systems, up to 30 feet deep! Patches are enlarged by rhizomes. The leaf is somewhat arrowhead-shaped to heart-shaped, similar to wild buckwheat (an annual). The flowers are small (1” diameter), funnel-shaped, and white or pink. I once had a garden spot with creeping jenny in it. My husband worked on it with the potato fork, digging the roots as deep as possible, and he pulled out this plant with a 39” long rhizome.





Canada thistle, *Cirsium arvense*

This broadleaf perennial is a common agricultural weed, found in pastures, old farmsteads, disturbed sites, or road ditches. The flower heads are purple and turn white when seeds mature. When Canada thistle patches go to seed in the late summer, the white fluff can travel with the wind and new plants can show up in your garden bed. New seedlings are relatively easy to pull, but established plants have deep roots and spread rhizomatously. The leaves have short spines on the margins; wear leather gloves for protection when weeding. One good thing about Canada thistle: the seeds are eaten by songbirds.





Perennial sowthistle, *Sonchus arvensis*

At first glance, perennial sowthistle can be confused with dandelion, especially in the rosette stage, as the leaves look similar, but perennial sowthistle has small weak spines on its leaf margins. The yellow flowers of perennial sowthistle and dandelion are also similar; they are both in the Asteraceae or Sunflower family. Perennial sowthistle can also be confused with prickly lettuce, an annual, but prickly lettuce has a spiny midrib on the back of the leaf; perennial sowthistle does not. This perennial weed spreads by shallow rhizomes; small root pieces can create new plants. The Dandelion-like seeds can be carried on the wind, allowing new infestations.



Don't confuse perennial sowthistle with this (annual) prickly lettuce, which has a spiny midrib on the back of the leaf.



Quackgrass *Elymus repens*

I tried to find out how quackgrass got its name and was unsuccessful. Quackgrass is an aggressive grassy weed that invades gardens and yards and spreads through shallow rhizomes. If a quackgrass patch in an ag field is tilled, the problem just gets worse. Broken segments of rhizomes can form new plants. Quack can be identified by its clasping auricles, finger-like projections that wrap around the stem at the base of the leaf. Another distinguishing characteristic are the sharp pointed ends of the white rhizomes.





Leafy spurge *Euphorbia esula*

When leafy spurge is small, it can look like maretail, an annual weed, or somewhat like an asiatic lily. A distinctive characteristic of leafy spurge is the milky white sticky sap. Just pull off a leaf and if a white thick liquid appears, that's a positive ID. Leafy spurge patches can be seen in road ditches and disturbed areas (including the ditches of I-29 and I-229!). The yellow hue of a leafy spurge patch is not from the flower, but the bracts which surround the flower structures. Leafy spurge has a very deep root system which extends laterally. Bringing in soil material unknowingly contaminated with leafy spurge root segments can cause an infestation.



References:

Weeds of the Great Plains; Stubbendieck, Coffin, and Landholt; Published by Nebraska Department of Agriculture

South Dakota Weeds 2017 Edition; SDSU Extension and South Dakota Department of Agriculture

Photos by Arlene Brandt-Jenson, except for (*) from ediblewildfood.com

Primrose (Primula)

Family: Primulaceae

By Roine Klassen

This family of flowers generally prefers soil that is moist but not waterlogged. An equal mixture of soil, sand, and peat moss can be used. Flowers planted along a waterway or stream will do well. Since they don't really like hot temperatures, choose a shaded area. Since they come from wide varieties and in 500 species, it is difficult to generalize their care. They are suitable for zones 4 or higher. Primroses can also be used indoors for their colorful flowers.

When planting, space them 6-12 inches apart and 4-6 inches deep. Mulch will help retain moisture. Continue to water them well during the summer months; In hot weather, the plant will go dormant early in dry soil. Primroses are self-seeding.

Be sure to read the label of the plant that catches your eye while shopping for perennials. Height, width, color (white, yellow, pink, rose, lavender magenta, etc), and fragrance will vary with the variety selected. Flower stalk height and patterns will also vary—from one cluster of flowers to some that have three clusters on a single stalk.



Primrose denticulate



Primrose polyantha



Primrose japonica

In the Herb Garden

By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener

The herb section will highlight an herb that can be grown in the South Dakota region.

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) is a biennial herb in the Scrophulariaceae (figwort) family which live for two growing seasons in zone 4. The first year is a green rosette. In the 2nd year, the tall and stately foxglove plants can grow to 6 feet in height. Foxglove flowers are clusters of tubular shaped blooms in colors of white, lavender, yellow, pink, red, and purple depending on variety. Foxglove thrives in a sunny area, but for hotter summer areas they prefer partially shaded, well-drained soil. The eye-catching, bell-shaped and tubular flowers are great to attract pollinators and beneficial insects for the garden. Hummingbirds love the nectar.

The entire plant, including roots, leaves, and seeds can be toxic to humans and animals if ingested causing nausea at first, then visual disturbances like halos and lights. *Digitalis* is a drug used for heart conditions but needs to be monitored regarding dosage. The foxglove can regulate the heart rate, act as a diuretic and decrease the fluid accumulated in the body and around the heart.



Helleborus hybrids

By Roine klassen

One of the earliest spring flowers to bloom is the Lenten Rose even while there may still be snow on the ground. They may share the spotlight with snowdrops which are considered harbingers of spring in my garden. The variety known as the Lenten Rose was given the name since it will make its appearance at the time of the Christian observance of Lent. There is also a variety called the Christmas Rose (*H. niger*) which will have white blooms.

There are at least 20 varieties of the *Helleborus* with a range of colors from white to black. It is found in the family of *Ranunculaceae*. The “flowers” are more correctly called blooms since the colorful petals are the septals (membranes) that protect the true flowers. The foliage with hand shaped leaves is considered evergreen except in the coldest region. The blooms are down-facing so one gardener planted them in a raised bed so they could be enjoyed.

Hybrids tolerate a wide range of growing conditions but the preferred location is in a partially shaded area with well-draining soil. The plants like to be well watered in the spring and later in fall during the active growing season. When transplanting from a nursery pot, shake off the dirt and free any bound roots. The crown should be slightly beneath the soil, according to one source. Foliage of an established plant should be trimmed before new growth emerges; it can protect the plant during the colder season. While the plant can be started from seeds, it may take 3-4 years before blooms can be expected.

Beware that due to the alkaloid toxins in the plant, it may be poisonous to children and pets.

Zone hardiness varies with different sources: the range is from 4-9. Be sure to read the information that is included with the plant. At planting and yearly, put compost or manure around the plant but avoid too much nitrogen as it can reduce the number of blooms. Allow space about 2 feet wide per

plant. Bloom spikes can be 12-18 inches tall. Division of the plant can be done in spring after it blooms.

Many new varieties are being developed with varying plant height, colors, outward-facing blooms and exotic patterning.

Extensive information is available @ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellebore and www.plantdelights.com/blogs/articles/hellebores



Your Questions Answered

Have a question or comment for Master Gardeners? Email us at mcmgnewsletter@gmail.com or post questions to our FaceBook page, [Minnehaha Master Gardeners](#).

Q - Every year I like to plant something new. This year I tried borage. It's a beautiful plant but now comes the question, what do I do with it?

A - From the Permaculture News (<https://www.permaculturenews.org/2011/01/21/all-about-borage/>) The leaves and the flowers are edible. "With a taste comparable to that of cucumber, borage has various culinary applications. The leaves can of course be used as a salad green and the flowers as edible decorations, but to stop there would be an insult to the wide variety of uses for borage. This herb can be used in soups, salads, borage-lemonade, strawberry-borage cocktails, preserves, borage jelly, various sauces, cooked as a stand-alone vegetable, or used in desserts in the form of fresh or candied flowers, to name a few."



Thank you to all Master Gardeners that contribute articles for the Newsletter!