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Month Events

Be sure to visit the Minnehaha County Master Gardener [Facebook page](#) and [Website](#) for gardening tips and resources.

Contact: www.helplinecenter.org or contact the Helpline Center at 211

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.



Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*) is an upright herb in the Asteraceae (Sunflower/Daisy) family that grows up to 6 feet. It has an overall conical shape. The leaves are oblong with spiny edges like most thistles. The leaves are hairless, shiny green and with milk-white veins. Milk thistle is drought tolerant and prefers dry, acidic soil with full sun. In South Dakota zone 4, it is an annual that can self-seed but in zones 5-9 may overwinter. The dense, prickly flower head has purple tubular flowers.

Health benefits: The active ingredient in milk thistle is silymarin which has anti-viral, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. The seed of the milk thistle is used for medicine as it supports non-alcoholic and alcoholic liver disease, treats the effects of alcohol and fatty foods, and

manages poor liver function. Milk thistle may promote healthy skin, reduce cholesterol, improve asthma symptoms, support diabetes management, and boost a person's immune response.



Knot in My Yard!

by Pam Conklin, Master Gardener

Does natural lawn care have you in knots? Let's talk, because I have this thick mat of wiry weeds spreading throughout my lawn. I pulled some of it out to discover that it smothered out all of the grass. I am left with a bald patch of earth that measures about 2 feet by 1.5 feet.

This undesirable plant is Prostrate knotweed, *Polygonum aviculare*. An annual weed in South Dakota that's found growing along sidewalks and driveways. It has alternating leaves and coarse stems that spread out from a central taproot. It has tiny, inconspicuous, white or pink flowers that stay almost hidden in the leaf axil (point on stem where leaves or buds develop).

Prostrate knotweed thrives in compacted, dry soil. The best natural lawn care strategy for dealing with knotweed is to water your lawn on a regular schedule, taking care not to over water. Next, aerate your lawn in the fall. After aerating, you may want to consider applying a pelletized form of gypsum to your lawn. Gypsum helps improve soil in many ways, but the main benefit for applying gypsum to an aerated yard, is that after about 3 months, the gypsum will actually help breakup heavy clay soil, and one application will be all you need for 3 - 5 years. Follow up with a pre-emergent, like corn meal gluten, if not over-seeding grass. If your lawn is overtaken by knotweed, like mine, and you are not applying gypsum, you may want to consider aerating 2 or 3 years in a row. Stick to a watering schedule and regular pre-emergent herbicide applications. Continue to pull out knotweed, as you see it growing. Over time, with good cultural practices —

watering, fertilizing, aerating, over-seeding grass, and regular pre-emergent corn meal gluten in spring through summer - knotweed will be banished.





Did You Know ... It's almost time to plant your garlic!

By Debi Ulrey-Crosby, Master Gardener

Did you know that fall is the best time to plant garlic for those living in our tundra-like climate? You can plant garlic anytime now until the ground freezes.

And now is the time to get things ready to plant garlic for a summer harvest next year. Let's review a little bit so you can choose which garlic is best. If you need more details, check back to last month's article. For our climate, hardneck garlic is the best to grow due to its better cold tolerance. Soft neck garlic can also be grown here but it's not as cold tolerant so needs a little more care, but certainly worth growing. Get your garlic from a nursery or other reliable source but **DO NOT** plant garlic that you get from the supermarket. The garlic is often treated with a growth inhibitor since they don't want garlic sprouting in the stores. They also haven't been selected for disease resistance, size, or other characteristics that gardeners and farmers want for growing purposes. If you have friends that grew garlic and saved bulbs you can plant those. And of course, each year that you grow your own garlic be sure to save back the biggest and best bulbs for the next planting. You can also plant the small bulbils - the small "seeds" from the hardneck garlic scape that you allowed to flower from your current harvest. There are a variety of online resources for garlic as well.



Photo by: greyduckgarlic.com



Photo by: Garlicdelight.com



Photo by: Backyardboss.net

SOIL PREPARATION

Garlic prefers a soil pH between 6.0 and 7.5, but is pretty forgiving for soil types in general, but as with all things, it does best in a fertile and loose soil and grows best in full sun (at least 6 hrs. of direct sun). Remember that pH ranges from 0-14 with 7.0 being neutral and pH less than 7 is considered acidic, while pH greater than 7 is considered alkaline/basic. Adding soil amendments always helps improve one's soil. One of the best amendments is compost. Try to get organic

compost so there are no residual pesticides or herbicides that can affect growth. Compost provides added nutrients, improves soil structure, helps retain moisture, provides added microorganisms, and helps provide long term fertility. A good source of added nitrogen is important, too since you want good bulb development. An all-purpose fertilizer is ok, but often, our soils don't need added phosphorus, so I usually add something like blood meal, or other nitrogen sources. I happen to have seasoned goose, sheep, and horse manure, so if you have neighbors, or a source for these types of manure, they work great. Manure must be aged at least 8 - 12 months to prevent possible pathogen contamination. When you're ready to plant just dig a trench a few inches deep. Keep your rows about 8-12" apart, so you have room to work between the rows.

PLANTING

Separate your bulbs into the individual cloves taking care to leave the paper like wrapper on each clove to provide protection against pests and disease. If the wrapper comes off, you can still plant it, but it might not grow as well, or at all. But, hey, just take the risk. Plant each clove with the pointed end up in the trench about 4-6" apart and 2" deep. Cover them with soil, gently firm the soil and then water them in. Add mulch for winter protection. Add a little extra mulch if you planted the softneck variety, since it's not quite as cold tolerant as the hardneck. Continue to water them deeply until the ground is frozen. You may, or may not see some green growth sprout up this fall. Whether you do, or do not, don't worry. Any new growth will die back once there's a killing frost and that's okay! Don't panic. What you don't see is the growth under the ground. Even though the ground is getting colder, the garlic clove is developing roots to support the growth of the bulb to come. Remember that garlic needs a vernalization period (a cold period) for optimum growth. I have had mixed success planting the softneck variety and wondering if it needs even more mulch than I added. The hardneck variety has been my more successful crop.



Acreagenebraska.org



alifewellplanted.com

If you are planning to plant your garlic in spring, rather than fall, you will need to refrigerate your bulbs for 6-8 weeks prior to planting to ensure they have had an appropriate vernalization time at a temperature of at least 40-45 degrees F. Your bulbs will be a bit smaller, but spring planting is another option.

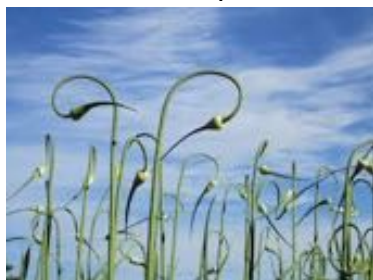
You can also grow garlic by planting the small bulbils (the small seeds that develop if you let the scape grow and flower). Allowing your plant to flower diverts energy away from the bulb forming below, but it doesn't completely halt its growth. You might get smaller bulbs. If you cut off the scape,

which many growers do, you can eat these in stir-fries, pesto, etc. There are lots of ways to eat the garlic scapes. Garlic can be grown from seed, but this is more difficult and will not be discussed in this article.

Once your garlic is planted you just rest during the winter while the roots grow and when spring arrives, your garlic will begin sending up green shoots. Once spring arrives and your plants begin to grow do the following:

- Fertilize once a month with an NPK ratio of 5-5-5 or 10-10-10, but don't over fertilize, as this can result in too much top growth with under-developed bulbs.
- Water as needed and remove scapes before they curl too tightly and begin to flower, so the plant can concentrate energy on the bulb. But remember not to throw away the scape – it's delicious sauteed in stir-fry.
- Use mulch to keep weeds down and hand weed between plants to avoid disturbing bulbs. Keep mulch from directly contacting the growing garlic to prevent the possibility of soil borne diseases.

Garlic scapes



Smithsonianmag.com

Bulbils



GreyDuckgarlic.com

HARVESTING

- For hardneck varieties - when a little more than half of the lower leaves have yellowed, withered, and died, bulbs are ready for harvest. The upright flower stem of hardneck varieties will continue to stand upright even as the leaves brown.
- For softneck varieties – when the leaves have nearly all turned browned and fallen over, your bulbs are ready for harvest.
- You can also carefully dig a few bulbs out around mid-July and check their size. If they're as big as you'd like, then it's time to dig them out.
- DON'T pull the bulb out. This can damage the joint where the green attaches to the bulb and provide an entry way for disease in your bulbs as they dry. Loosen the soil around and under the bulbs about 12" away from the bulb to avoid damaging the bulb.
- DO NOT wash your garlic bulbs. Brush off any excess soil and cut roots close to the bulb to prepare for curing and storage. Leave at least 7-8" of the stalk attached to the bulb which will help it to cure by drawing moisture away from the cloves.
- Curing can take 4-6 weeks. Once the paper-like skins start to peel away and the cloves still feel firm, you'll know they're ready to store.

- Once cured, you can cut off any excess stalk for the hardnecks. For the softnecks you can braid them together to hang in a cool, dry spot out of direct light.
- Set aside your largest and best garlic heads for next year's crop and enjoy the rest.



Garlicseed.ca



firstfrostfarm.com

Resources:

1. Finegardening.com
2. Garlicseed.ca
3. Highmowingseeds.com
4. Ag.umass.edu

Faux Amis Dans le Jardin Or Fake Friends in the Garden

By Jason Cruse, Master Gardener

In French, a “faux ami” is a word that sounds like a word in another language (like English), but which means something completely different. In gardening, we also have “fake friends”—plants that might appear to be a good and useful plant but which actually is a weed and potentially harmful. Here, I’m going to briefly discuss five of these fake friends that we commonly find in yards and garden spaces.

Let’s start with a South Dakota favorite: rhubarb and its “fake friend” the common burdock. Here, rhubarb is a perennial, as it requires cold temperatures to get through the winter. I did not grow up with rhubarb; Missouri doesn’t get cold enough in the winter for it. Upon moving here and discovering the delight of rhubarb, I thought that perhaps it had a wild version. Fortunately, I didn’t taste it. The common burdock, as it grows, creates burrs that grab onto clothing and people.¹ It also has a poor taste and can make one ill. When young, however, it can resemble rhubarb.



Common Burdock



Rhubarb

Next, we have a poisonous “fake friend” — poison hemlock.² This plant is spreading insidiously throughout North America. Poison hemlock can resemble carrots when young and baby’s breath, or Queen Anne’s Lace when in bloom. Every part of this weed is poisonous, but generally does not cause a contact rash. Ingestion, including through the eyes or nose, can cause poisoning. Touching the plant is not recommended, however, as its secretion can get on the hands, and then into the eyes or nose due to rubbing. The plant is recognizable for its extreme height in its second year (6-10 feet) and the purple coloring of its stem.



Poison hemlock leaves



Carrot leaves



Poison Hemlock Flower



Queen Anne's Lack Flower



Baby's Breath Flower

Next, let's move to horse nettle, which just looks mean when you examine the stem³. The thorns on this plant have nothing on thistles! Horse nettle often poses more of a threat to livestock than to humans; however, a child or adolescent (or even adult!) who is learning to distinguish plants by leaves could easily mistake young horse nettle for a tomato or mature horse nettle for watermelon, and get a nasty surprise when they stick their hand into the plant.



Horse nettle



Watermelon



Young tomato plant

Our next entry into the fake friend list is dog fennel⁴. We've all seen this; it is everywhere! And every time I see it, I'm that somehow I've found wild dill, leftover from a previous gardener in my plot or carried by the wind or a bird. Not so! They don't appear to be poisonous, but they won't do your pickling any good at all.



Dog Fennel



Dill

Finally, we have a plant that tricks me *every year*: fleabanes. I have a couple of fleabane plants in my backyard. Every year, I think I planted daisies. And every year, when they bloom, I remember I didn't. These guys also resemble chamomile. Fleabane can be pretty, but is considered a broadleaf weed and is toxic if ingested.



Fleabane



Chamomile



Daisy

Well, there you have it! A few “faux ami” or fake friends that we find here in South Dakota. Some are worse friends than others, but none of them will bring any real value to your garden space. Be careful, know the differences, and “root” them out!

1] <https://www.fs.fed.us/r3/resources/health/invasives/pinkForbs/commonBurdock.shtml#:~:text=Common%20burdock%20is%20a%20warm,short%2C%20flowering%20side%20stems%20above>

2] <https://bygl.osu.edu/node/1447>

3] <https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W264.pdf>

4] <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/dogfennel/>

5] <https://extension.psu.edu/lawn-and-turfgrass-weeds-annual-or-daisy-fleabane#:~:text=Annual%20fleabane%2C%20also%20called%20daisy,plant%20material%20will%20repel%20fleas>

We want to hear from you!

*Please let us know what garden topics you would like to learn more about. All correspondences can be emailed to **mcmgnewsletter@gmail.com***

To all contributing Master Gardeners, for your time and knowledge, thank you!