



Cover Artwork by Pam Conklin

A word about Minnehaha County Master Gardeners: We are volunteers trained through the South Dakota State University Extension [Master Gardener Program](#). The Minnehaha Master Gardeners mission is to provide current, research-based, consumer horticulture information and education to the citizens of South Dakota through Master Gardener projects and services. For more information on becoming a master gardener, visit [SDSU Extension Master gardener volunteer program](#). Be sure to stay in touch with all of Minnehaha County Master Gardeners' news: [follow us on FaceBook](#), [visit our website](#), or [email us](#).

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Highlighting Master Gardeners

By Pam Conklin, Master Gardener



Say hello to JoAnn Christensen. She was a Master Gardener in Minnesota for 7 years before being transplanted to South Dakota in 2019, where she promptly fulfilled requirements to become part of the Minnehaha Master Gardeners club.

JoAnn has always had the spirit for volunteerism. She is also a volunteer courier for transplant organs, and a dog courier for a local breeder. Before coming to SD, she was involved in volunteer work at the 4-H Horticulture Day in McLeod County in Minnesota, where she designed a hardcover book, as part of a children's reading initiative to help them learn how to read and to get them interested in vegetable gardening. While volunteering at the Landscape Arboretum, she also discovered a talent for floral design. In fact, if you were able to join the recent Garden with the Masters event, JoAnn gave a wonderful table talk presentation, teaching floral design concepts to participants. At home, she enthusiastically grows cut flowers and frequently shares her floral arrangements with friends and neighbors.

Landscaping holds a special opportunity to share gardening knowledge, as well as add beautification to the neighborhood. JoAnn says that people often remark on her yard and flowers. Perhaps, her home garden will be on one of our future garden tours!

Currently, JoAnn gardens in one of the seven Sioux Falls community gardens. She loves teaching others, especially kids, the skills she has learned and often shares her produce. Another benefit to growing her own vegetables is that it goes hand-in-hand with another of her passions - cooking. JoAnn loves to develop new dishes, especially Thai inspired foods.

Overall, it is JoAnn's enjoyment of growing flowers and food that not only offered a break from her demanding job in Pharmaceuticals, as a Quality Assurance agent for medical devices, but also led her to become a master gardener!

In the Herb Garden: Elecampane

By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener

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

Elecampane (*Inula helenium*) is a perennial herb in the Asteraceae (sunflower) family and grows in zones 3 to 8. In appearance, it looks similar to the sunflower plant with tall stalks, pale green foliage and small, bright yellow flowers with large seed heads in the center. Not commonly found in nurseries, seeds can be sown a few weeks before the last frost. Place in partial shade but will tolerate full sun. Space plants 1-3 feet apart. Transplant in fall using rhizomes. May not flower the first year.



Health Benefits: Elecampane flowers and roots are commonly made into tinctures or teas and used for bronchial infections, pneumonia and chronic coughs as well as digestive issues. Also can loosen phlegm, ease pain from asthma, bronchitis and whooping cough. Elecampane has astringent and antimicrobial properties which can act against bacterial infections. Elecampane can cause drowsiness since it affects the central nervous system. Inform your healthcare provider if taking blood pressure medications or sedatives, or if pregnant or breastfeeding.

Growing a Tasty Tea

by Pam Conklin, Master Gardener

Growing your own plants for herbal teas is fun and easy. Moreover, it gives you complete control over how the plants are grown, processed, blended, and packaged. To get started, first plan, and then gather your supplies.

Plan:

- Select what herbs you want to grow. There are many websites available that have extensive lists of herbs. Below are some common herbs grown for herbal teas.
- Select your location. Most herbs will grow sufficiently in 5+ hours of sunlight, but the more sun, the more pronounced flavors will be. Don't forget — many herbs are planter friendly, making them a great choice for patios and decks.
- Design your layout. Keep taller plants in the back, so not to shade shorter ones. Space them according to growth habit for optimal airflow.

- Gather your tools. Have clean garden soil handy, a trowel, and some optional mulch, like straw that has not been treated with chemicals, and has few weed seeds.



Chamomile, *Matricaria recutita*.

- Annual.
- Start seeds inside or direct sow outside. Use 1 or 2 seed packets, the flowers are small.
- Grows 2 feet tall.
- Soothing & helps with sleep.
- Tastes slightly flowery, slightly sweet, with a hint of apple.
- Harvest a handful of flowers & steep in hot water for 5 - 7 minutes, filter and enjoy hot, or cool for later.
- Dry flowers for 1 - 2 weeks & store up to 6 months in airtight container.
- Blends nicely with a small bit of Lavender, or orange mint.



Mint, *Mentha piperita* L. (peppermint), *Mentha spicata* L. (spearmint).

- Perennial.
- Start seeds inside 8 weeks before the last frost. Transplant in mid-May.
- Grows to 3 feet tall.
- Spreads by roots. Best grown in containers, which can be set into the ground, if you wish to avoid plants from spreading.
- Soothes upset stomach & invigorates the senses.
- Tastes vary depending on cultivars: Spearmint, Peppermint, Orange mint, Chocolate mint.
- Harvest leaves & stem. Steep in hot water for 5 - 10 minutes, filter and enjoy hot, or cool for a refreshing afternoon tea break from garden work.
- Wash & dry mint leaves for at least 5 days. Store in airtight container
- Blends with lemongrass, Lavender, or Borage.



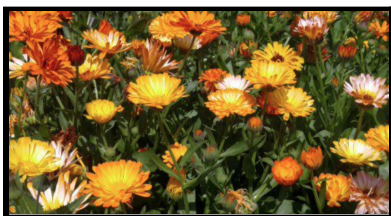
Lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*

- Annual.
- English Lavender has a distinct flowery aroma and taste.
- Grows around 1 - 2 feet tall.
- Lavender is often used for calming in aromatherapy. Some claim that in tea, it may also improve skin health.
- Steep about 1 teaspoon of flower buds in a cup of boiling water for at least 5 minutes. Filter and enjoy.
- Alternatively, add a few buds with other herbs for an aromatic hint of lavender.
- I like to mix lavender and lemon balm.



Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*.

- Perennial.
- Lemon balm is in the mint family. It looks like mint.
- Grows about 2 - 3 feet.
- Spreads by roots. Best grown in containers, which can be set into the ground, if you wish to control plants from spreading.
- Soothes & improves sleep.
- Crushed leaves smell like lemon drops & have a mild lemon flavor.
- Harvest leaves & stems. Steep in hot water for 5 - 10 minutes, filter & enjoy hot, or cool for later.
- Wash & dry leaves for at least 5 days. Store in an airtight container for up to 6 months.
- Blends with all other herbs, giving you a hint of lemon.



Calendula, *Calendula officinalis*.

- Annual, but freely self-seeds.
- Calendula is aromatic, spicy and has a bit of a bitter taste. Adding honey helps.
- Grows 8 - 12 inches.
- Said to calm digestive issues.
- Drink in moderation, *too much can cause drowsiness and slowed breathing.*
- Steep leaves in boiling water, allowing the water to cool to room temperature before straining and drinking iced. Or simmer flowers for about 10 minutes for a warm brew that helps soothe sore throats.



Wild Bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa*.

- Perennial.
 - Wild Bergamot is commonly called Bee Balm.
 - [Note:](#) Earl Grey tea is made using oil that is extracted from the orange-like fruit of the *Citrus bergamia*, grown in the Mediterranean. Your home tea is brewed using leaves and/or seeds of the herbaceous Monarda.
 - Grows to about 4 feet.
 - Smaller cultivars are available.
 - It is thought to combat colds and flu, and sore throats.
 - The flavor of Bee Balm is very similar to mint.
 - Brew leaves and/or seeds in hot water for up to 10 minutes.
 - Combine with black tea for a bold wild bergamot tea experience.
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Bringing Neighbors Together with a Garden Challenge: vegetable gardening

By Susan Scholtz, Master Gardener

As a general rule, gardeners tend to fall into two camps: Flower and landscape, or food production. Mind now, that many cross over a bit – the flower gardener might sneak a tomato plant into a container on the back patio, or a vegetable gardener will toss in a few flowers out by the post box, but we do tend to stick to our main interest and have more of one than the other. I'd like to convince you otherwise.

Times have been more strange than usual these past 3 years, and there has certainly been a bit more interest in growing vegetables. As a vegetable gardener myself, it warms my heart to see this, but sadly I see the need for even more people to start growing a few veg. I would never consider myself a “prepper” by the new definition of that word, but rather someone who grew up with grandparents who grew a lot of their own food and always wanted to do the same for myself. The rise of suburban living and the fashion of green lawns with a few landscape shrubs and flowers along with more ‘convenience foods’ available to buy has shoved home vegetable gardens out the door. My own parents had a small garden when we had a sunny space for one, but then, home after home had only a tiny shaded lawn and no space to grow more than a straggly tomato plant.

Now those convenience foods are getting more and more expensive, as are even basic fresh fruits and vegetables. There really isn't any reason why those basic back-yard gardens can't become the “IN” thing, and we Master Gardeners are just the ones to get our neighbors interested in growing some of their own food. If it weren't for the darned 6' solid wood privacy fences, more of my own neighbors would be able to see my 'lawn and garden'. As it is, I only speak to and encourage my immediate next-door neighbor to expand their little raised bed. They are now growing 3 times what they were the first year I moved in! I count any additional veg gardens a success!

This year I intend to have a Garden “Open House” and invite all the neighbors I meet to stop in and visit and try a tomato ... or an even better idea is to have a few veg planted out by the sidewalk with a sign that welcomes sampling!

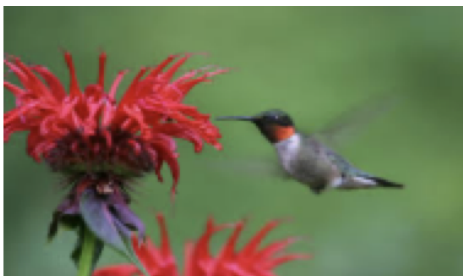


For those of you who are devout flower gardeners, I challenge you to pick a veg, or two that you really like to eat and find a way to incorporate a few veg plants into those lovely flower beds! Cucumbers are a great ground-cover, and a determinate tomato can be grown in a nice pot on the patio and doesn't need staking. How about some scallions and radishes to add to a few lettuce plants? These early spring plants, like lettuces, can be planted where a later season flower will eventually take up space, as you will harvest lettuce before your echinacea really gets growing. And after your early spring flowers are done, stick in that cucumber to cover over the bulb and iris garden that is finished for the year.

Another popular small veg garden is a spaghetti sauce garden. Tomatoes, peppers, onions, basil and some pretty marigolds make a pretty, tasty garden.

So step up, and out in your neighborhood and encourage your neighbors to grow some food and save some cash!

DID YOU KNOW...



You can plant your garden with plants that are especially attractive and nutritious for hummingbirds.

By Debi Ulrey-Crosby, Master Gardener

adirondackalmanack.com

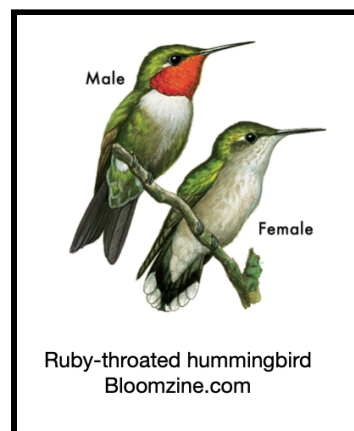
There are 9 types of hummingbirds that can be found in South Dakota, and happily, one lives here year round. The others just travel through on their way to someplace else. This means that we should all be planting flowers to attract these little jeweled travelers.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Ruby-throated (*Archilochus colubris*) hummingbirds are the only ones that breed, nest, and raise their families in South Dakota, but they may travel to warmer parts of the state for the winter. These amazing little birds all have different personalities and temperaments, nest in different habitats, and live in various geographical ranges.

There are 3 categories of hummingbirds found in South Dakota. Year-round natives, seasonal, and rare “vagrant” hummingbirds

1. Year-round/Native Hummingbirds are those that can survive sub-freezing temperatures and even a few days of sub-zero temperatures.
2. Seasonal hummingbirds are those hummingbirds that are here for the spring and summer, but in fall, head south for the winter.
3. “Vagrant” hummingbirds are those hummingbirds that show up in geographical areas far outside their established range and are known in the ornithological circles as “vagrants.” These hummingbirds are outside of their normal geographic range when found in South Dakota, but are occasionally spotted. Below are some of the species we might see in South Dakota.

- Anna’s – *Calypte anna*
- Black-chinned – *Archilochus alexandri*
- Broad-billed – *Cynanthus latirostris*
- Broad-tailed – *Selasphorus platycercus*
- Calliope – *Selasphorus calliope*
- Costa’s – *Calypte costae*
- Rufous – *Selasphorus rufus*
- White-eared – *Hylocharis leucotis*



Hummingbirds must eat once every 10 to 15 minutes and visit between 1,000 and 2,000 flowers per day, with wings flapping away at nearly 90 beats per second. So, if we plant a garden to attract these amazing flashes of color and sit quietly nearby, we are sure to see them. Nectar can also be provided in specialized hummingbird feeders but buying a pre-made nectar is not necessary and red dye in a nectar feeder is not

only unnecessary at best, but potentially harmful at worst. For nectar, The Audubon Society, Hummingbirds at Home, recommends the following recipe for homemade nectar: add ¼ cup refined white sugar to 1 cup boiled water 'till dissolved (do not use honey). Let liquid cool, then fill feeders. Clean feeders every few days.

Feeders with nectar certainly help but hummingbirds really need lots of flowers for their diet. This is where we, the gardeners, come in. There are so many plants and trees that flower and provide the much-needed nutrition that every gardener can find a few that fit their gardening style. Here are some of the most commonly reported native flowering plants from The Audubon Society, Hummingbirds at Home:

- Butterfly Milkweed – *Asclepias tuberosa*
- Showy Milkweed – *Asclepias speciosa*
- Dotted Gayfeather – *Liatris punctata*
- Cat-tail Gayfeather – *Liatris pycnostachya*
- Red Columbine – *Aquilegia canadensis*
- Wild Blue Phlox – *Phlox divaricata*
- Cup-Plant – *Silphium perfoliatum*
- Beebalm – *Monarda fistulosa*
- Trumpet honeysuckle – *Lonicera sempervirens*
- Cardinal flower – *Lobelia cardinalis* orldbirds.com
- Sage/salvia - Hummingbird sage (and other sages) – *Salvia spathacea*
- Cigar flower – *Cuphea ignea* (also sometimes called 'firecracker flower')
- Angel Trumpet – *Datura*



Wildbirds.com

You can attract, feed, and nourish hummingbirds in your backyard with a few easy steps. Flowers, perches, insects, and water are the key ingredients to a healthy yard that will attract these amazing jewels.

References:

<https://www.audubon.org>

<https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com>

<https://journeynorth.org>

<https://www.usda.gov>

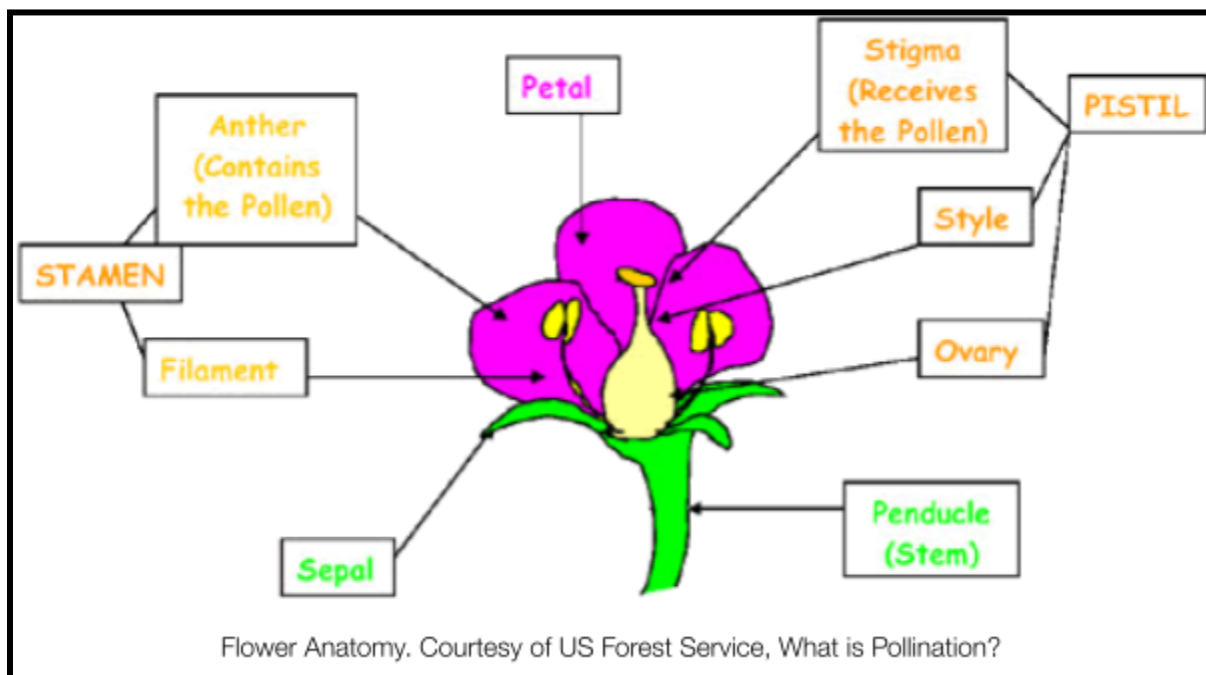
Buying Spring Flowers with Pollinators in Mind

By Pam Conklin, Master Gardener

After interviewing fellow Master Gardener, Arlene, in the April issue, I felt inspired to build upon her enthusiasm over pollinator gardens. In subsequent issues, I plan to include information about pollinators; why they are important and why they need our help. This article explains the best plant choices to consider when shopping at garden centers this spring.

First, let's talk about pollinators. They are animals: mostly invertebrates (bees, wasps, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, and other insects), and vertebrates (primarily birds and bats, but also a few other critters) who are responsible for the majority of plant reproduction by inadvertently transferring pollen between plants while they gather pollen, drink nectar, or forage for insects; and, their populations are diminishing dramatically, mostly due to habitat loss - we'll talk more about this, later.

Now, let's talk about flower anatomy. There are two main types of flowers identified by their reproductive parts: Perfect, meaning individual flowers contain both male (Stamen) and female (Pistil) parts, and Imperfect, meaning each individual flower contains either the Stamen or the Pistil, but not both. Pollen is produced in the anther, which is part of the stamen. See diagram below.

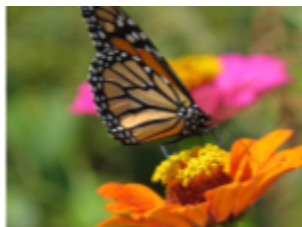




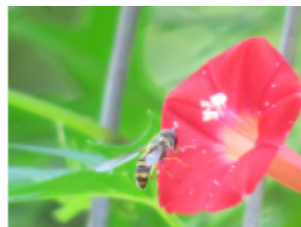
When Arlene mentioned not planting pom-pom coneflowers she was talking about double and triple-flowered plant varieties. Such cultivars have had their stamens bred into extra petals rendering the plants nutritionally void and unable to sexually reproduce. Plants where this is often seen are roses, dahlias, chrysanthemums, marigolds, and the pom-pom type of coneflowers (see left). Such cultivars look pretty, but cannot sustain pollinators. So, plant them sparingly, if at all.

Instead, look for flowers with a single, simple ring of petals. Red flowers are a sure bet to attract hummingbirds, especially those that are trumpet-shaped, while bees love aromatic and even minty smells. Bees see blue, yellow, and white, but can't see red. Butterflies, on the other hand, are attracted to red, yellow, orange, pink and purple flowers that are usually flat-topped and have short flower tubes for nectar. Don't forget to add a few larval host plants. Go for some diversity. Select a variety of annuals and/or perennials, add at least a few native plants. Below are short lists of flowers to give you some ideas.

Annuals provide season-long blooms, which make them a great addition to any landscape, or garden. Plus, annuals grow great in planters, window boxes, and hanging baskets. Some of the best annuals for pollinators are Cosmos, Sunflowers, Nasturtium, Zinnia, Lantana, Black-eyed Susan and Calendula. Some do self-seed.



Zinnia



Cardinal Vine



Calendula



Calibrachoa & Lobelia

Most perennials have a short bloom-time. However, when not blooming, perennials provide shelter for resting and life-cycle development, as well as, leaves and stems for grazing and overwintering (if left standing all winter). Choose perennials with various bloom dates in order to attract pollinators from spring to snowfall. Many native plants are best suited to our local soils and weather. Therefore, they require less water and best of all, they provide the right pollen and nectar to attract and sustain native pollinators. Perennials come in all sizes and shapes, they are the woody, herbaceous,

or grass plants. There are a great many plants to choose from, so do your homework. Following is a list of some herbaceous choices people are adding to home gardens.



Royal Catchfly, Purple Coneflower and Bee Balm

Herbaceous Perennials include Anise Hyssop, Common or Showy Milkweed, Butterfly weed, Coreopsis, Liatris, Wild Bergamot, Goldenrod, Large Beardtongue, Smooth Blue Aster, Purple Coneflower, Prairie Coneflower. BTW: many of these plants are growing in the Garden of Dreams (established and maintained by the Minnehaha County Master Gardener club), which is near the West side for the Arc of Dreams sculpture, downtown Sioux Falls.

Woody plants and prairie grasses are important to pollinators, too. Come back next month for more insights about pollinators, and find out what trees, shrubs, and grasses will improve your pollinator garden.

➡ *All photos in this article were taken by the author, unless otherwise noted.*

Local Master Gardener Hosted Events!

Checkout our annual plant sale - with a huge variety of plants and expert knowledge!



May 14, 2022

Opens at 9:00 am

Usually sells out by 12:00 pm

So come early!

Next up: Keep your eyes open for our Garden Tours, to be announced soon!