



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



This master gardener loves nature, flowers, learning, and surrounding herself with people of similar interests. Deb Johnson joined the Minnehaha County Master Gardeners club in 2008 and earned her full master gardener status in 2009. Since then, Deb has served in nearly all aspects of master gardeners, helping with our Spring Event, garden tours, continuing education opportunities for club members, attending state meetings, not to mention, serving as one of our past presidents.

All of that said, one of Deb's favorite projects has been the Garden of Dreams pollinator garden, located near the Arc of Dreams sculpture in Downtown Sioux Falls. Our club was approached in 2019 by a member of the sculpture walk committee to see if there was interest in starting a flower garden to help beautify the sculpture area. Deb jumped on the opportunity. Her vision was to create a pollinator garden using mostly native plants. It started as a bare patch of ground and has blossomed into a garden that not only provides education, natural beauty and interest, but a garden that supports nature, especially pollinators. When I asked Deb why she went with a pollinator and native flowers garden, she simply stated, "I wanted to help pollinators."

Deb grew up in a rural area where she vegetable garden with her parents. Ever since she was little, she wanted to be a nurse. She became a nurse, working in the postpartum ward at one of the hospitals in Sioux Falls, caring for women and their newborns until her retirement. However, it was after she and her husband bought their home and began their own family that Deb fell into her passion, raising chickens and kittens, and growing irises and tall grasses. Why grasses? "Grasses sway gently in the wind and add interest to cold winter scenes."

For Deb, becoming a master gardener was a great way to enjoy her passion of being outdoors and giving back to the community, as well as, continually learning about the latest gardening practices and problem solving. One of the lessons that stands out for Deb has been learning a more organic, or natural approach to weed control. And weed

control, as most of us will attest, seems to be never ending, much like Deb's appreciation and dedication to bringing nature and education to us all.

If you would like to learn more about becoming a Master Gardener, please visit the SDSU Extension webpage about [Becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer](#).

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.

American Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla hirsutissima*) is an herbaceous perennial flower belonging to the Buttercup (Ranunculaceae) family. This herb was adopted as South Dakota's state flower. This flower has showy, blossoms composed of 5 to 7 sepals that look like petals. The leaves on the stem are silky and haired and arranged in a whorl beneath the blossoms. The flowers are one of the first to bloom in the spring, usually around Easter (Hebrew word Pasch means Passover). The plant grows in dry prairies or moist meadows and grows to 5-8 inches in height.



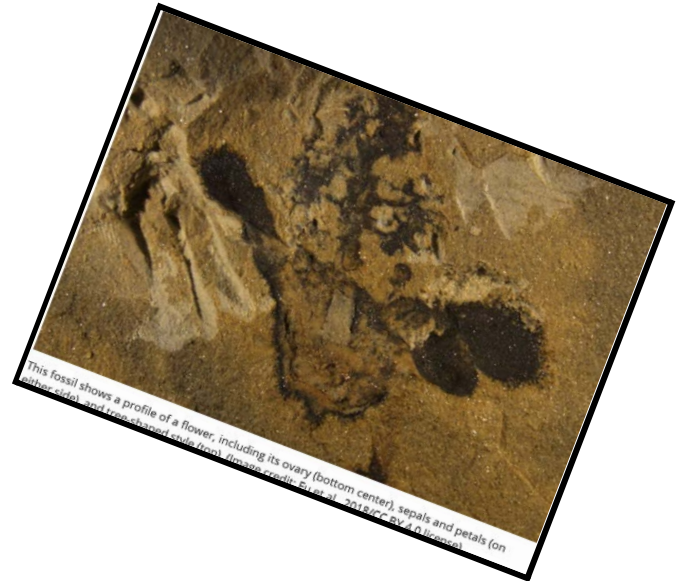
Health Benefits: Tribal Indians were the first to discover the medicinal side of the *Pulsatilla* plant. All above the ground parts can be dried and used for herbal remedies. Not used in any food products. Any plant with "hairy stems" can generally be used for respiratory problems like colds, asthma or bronchitis. The Pasque Flower parts are anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and a nervine. They have been used for digestive

disorders, ear and eye infections, arthritis pain, boils, sleep disorders and sinusitis to name a few health benefits.

Plants and Pollinators

by Pam Conklin, Master Gardener

Over 174 million years ago, something spectacular happened. Flowering plants emerged and an evolutionary relationship between plants and animals blossomed. Until then, plants, mainly conifers, reproduced using wind to carry pollen from male to female. But flowering plants, still rooted to one spot, overcame their reproductive limitations by developing many alluring features: flowers of all sizes and shapes, with brilliant colors, sweet aromas, and delectable nectar, all just to attract insects, and other pollinators, to carry their pollen from male to female. Evolving together, some plants and pollinators developed a dependency on one another. One example of such a coevolution is that of the Monarch butterfly and Milkweed.



mature Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) on Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
photo by Pam Conklin



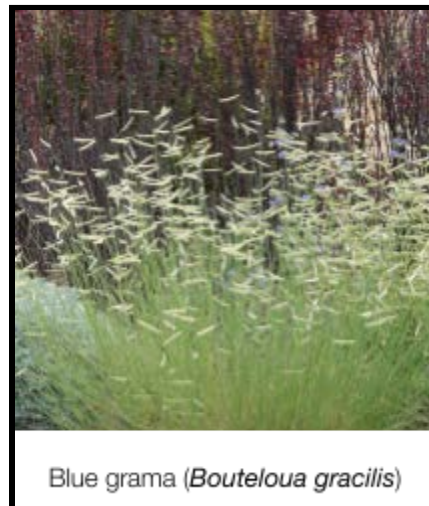
Monarch caterpillar feeding on Milkweed leaves
photo by Pam Conklin



Monarch Butterflies migrate from Central Mexico all the way up to Canada, and back again. Only a few decades

ago, millions of Monarchs made the yearly journey that takes 3 generations to complete. The abundance of wildflowers and Milkweed along their migration paths made it all possible. Milkweed is the only plant that Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on. Milkweed is the only food source for the developing Monarch larvae and caterpillars. Milkweed is poisonous to almost every other species. The milky sap of Milkweed is even an irritant to humans who come into contact with it. Still, it may be worth planting small pockets of milkweed in the yard.

In 2021, the [Center for Biological Diversity](#) released startling statistics regarding Monarch butterfly decline. As mentioned last month, a leading cause of pollinator decline is habitat loss and degradation. This is certainly true for the Monarch butterfly. Although we can't stop land development to accommodate human needs, we can adopt more environmentally friendly practices that include habitat restoration and protection. Along with milkweed and other flowering plants, grasses are another necessary element of pollinator gardens.



You might find some good deals on grasses, as garden centers begin closing down after Memorial Day. Although grasses don't have nectar for pollinators, they do provide shelter, nesting material, and seed for birds, and other wildlife. Many native grasses work well in home landscapes. Natives also improve soil health with their deep roots, some exceeding 10 feet. This helps prevent soil erosion, reduce water runoff, and breaks up heavy, compacted soils. My favorite native grasses are Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Prairie dropseed, and Blue grama.

Return next month and I will explore woody plants for the pollinator garden, as trees and shrubs serve an important role for pollinators.

KALE: One of the Longest Season Vegetables to Grow

By Carla Goetsch, Master Gardener



Kale can be grown in South Dakota from April until December. Cooler weather may be kale's preference, but it will also produce in the heat of summer as well. It can tolerate temperatures as low as 20 F degrees and can become more bitter in longer periods over 80F degrees but depending on how it is prepared, this can be remedied. Light frost improves the flavor of kale. Choosing the Variety: Different varieties include curly leaved, flat leaved, lacinato (dinosaur or Tuscon), ornamental, Red Russian, Siberian or Redbor. Red Russian and curly-leaved varieties are the sweetest and most versatile. Ornamental kale would be a disappointment if attempted to eat.

When to Plant: Kale can be planted 3-5 weeks before the last frost date. Plant in good quality soil that receives full sun to part shade. Space plants 1.5 feet apart. No support structure is necessary, but the plants do like to be mulched and receive 1.5 inches of moisture per week. Feed your kale with compost or a high nitrogen fertilizer. Kale can also be grown in pots with at least 12" diameter.

When harvesting kale, remove the outer leaves allowing the center of the plant to continue to produce and grow. Leaves may be harvested at 3-4" but do not remove more than half of the total leaves at a time.

Kale is a member of the cabbage family and subject to the same pests such as aphids, cabbage loopers, cabbageworm, cutworm, flea beetles, and slugs. The best defense is to monitor for signs of eggs or feeding such as holes in the leaves. Treat the problem as soon as they arise. Practice crop rotation, not replanting in the same area but every 3 years.

Cooking Notes: Raw kale can be bitter, especially if harvested during hot weather if the leaves are allowed to get too large. The bitter taste can be improved if leaves are massaged with an acid such as lemon juice or vinegar. Removing the tough ribs before using.

Ideas to use kale: Grill it on an electric grill as a crispy side dish. Kale chips can be made in the oven or throw leaves in soup recipes. Large leaves can be used under meats as a way to add color to a plate. When using raw kale, look for recipes with lemon juice and/or vinegar.

Favorite Kale Salad Recipe:

1 large bunch kale, 2-3 cloves garlic, ½ of a red onion chopped, ½ cup dried cranberries

Dressing: ¼ cup lemon juice, 3 Tbsp olive oil, 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar, 1 Tbsp honey, salt, pepper.

Massage the dressing into the kale and other ingredients. May add ¼ cup slivered almonds and/or optional feta or parmesan cheese.

The Gift of Flowers

By JoAnn Christenson, Master Gardener

A bouquet of flowers delivers a smile, hope, or fills an empty place in someone's heart. Many of us would love to give flowers to a loved one but the cost is often prohibitive. Prices can approach \$100 or more for traditional professional arrangements. I recently gave the gift of flowers to a family member. The bouquet was \$25 for a bulk package of assorted flowers. I removed about 4 inches of the stems and arranged them in a vase I had on hand. The final touch was carrot tops used as filler and a simple bow made of twine. The cost was well under \$30. As summer approaches, gardeners have access to many flowers from their own gardens. A variety of greens may be used straight from the garden.



Carrot tops as filler



Dill as filler



Parsley as filler

Garage sales, thrift stores, or recycled food containers are a great source of vases for under \$5. I recently obtained some beautiful vases at a thrift store at a half off sale. I also picked up a beautiful Waterford crystal vase in Ireland that had a very small flaw and was reasonably priced.



The narrower the vase's neck, the fewer flowers required for a bouquet. A minimal number of flowers results in an exquisite bouquet. Recycled bows or ribbon add a nice finishing touch around the neck of the vase. If there is a gap in the bouquet, add an embellishment.

The traditional order for arrangements is to place filler in first, the center focal point flower second and remaining flowers last. I personally put filler in last as I generally change my mind and the filler often must be handled with care. With summer approaching, I use a lot of herbs as filler. Carrot tops can be used to cover the neck of the container. Carrot tops have a graceful look about them and they last quite awhile in an arrangement. Dill, cilantro, and Italian parsley also work as filler.

This summer begins the tradition of giving flowers to friends, family or someone who needs a lift. Zinnias grow very well in a variety of colors. In addition to zinnias, I am growing Bells of Ireland, and Love in a Mist. Have fun and enjoy a bouquet of flowers.

Local Master Gardener Hosted Events!

Garden Tours: We are still working out the details for our annual Garden Tours. Dates and locations for the event will be published on our [FaceBook page](#), as well as, our newsletter.