



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](#). For more information on becoming a master gardener, visit [SDSU Extension Master gardener volunteer program](#)

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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.

Anise (*Pimpinella anisum*) is a bushy annual herb from the Apiaceae or Umbelliferae (carrot) family in zones 4-9 and grows to 2-3 feet or more. It prefers full sun. The plants grow best in fertile, well-drained soil. Direct seed sown in warm soil in the spring or transplant small seedlings is best as the plants have a taproot that doesn't transplant well after being established. The leaves at the base of the plant are long and lobed while leaves higher on the stem are feathery similar to queen anne's lace. The flowers are usually white or yellow produced in umbels and bloom in July to August and attract pollinators. The growing season is 120 days with germination 7-14 days.

The plant leaves and seeds can be harvested. The flavor of the seed is similar to licorice and is used to flavor meat products, desserts and drinks. The anise seed is rich in many nutrients and boasts a wide array of health benefits. It may reduce symptoms of depression and menopause. It has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial and antifungal properties. It may stabilize blood sugars and assist with digestive issues.



Bug Bites

by Pam Conklin, Master Gardener

Insects! They are tiny, creepy-crawly, digging, biting, disgusting, yet, beneficial; without them, life as we know it would not exist.



Chauliognathus pennsylvanicus on Allium

The word pollinator usually brings to mind the beautiful and iconic bee and butterfly. Another insect who plays the ever vital role of pollinator is the Soldier beetle, also commonly called leatherwings, *Chauliognathus* spp. They may not be as pretty as bees and butterflies, but they are just as beneficial and fun to watch.

Soldier beetles are easy to identify with a yellow body and wings that sport black dots. Both the adult and larvae act as predators eating soft bodied insects, such as aphids. Both also feed on pollen and nectar, but do not harm plants or humans, which makes them excellent friends to have in your garden.

You will spot them in groups on a variety of flowering plants, usually beginning in July. They are closely related to fireflies, but without the glow. Soldier beetles overwinter in their larval stage, under leaf debris and tend to like moisture — a good reason for leaving the leaves in fall and delaying yard cleanup in spring. So, keep a watchful eye out for these champions in your garden, and please, don't spay



Salvador Vázquez, Ph.D.

Sources:

<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/soldier-beetles>

<https://extension.sdstate.edu/soldier-beetles-visiting-flowers>

DID YOU KNOW....

There is a Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Tucson, Arizona?

By: Debi Ulrey-Crosby, Master Gardener



I recently visited my son and his girlfriend in Tucson and discovered a wonderful garden: The Pima County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden planted and maintained by University of Arizona Extension Master Gardeners.

Free tours are given by the Master gardeners February-May and September-December. The gardens are open to the public during daylight hours. There are 14 demonstration gardens which feature native, non-native and drought tolerant plants, and display a variety of planting, irrigation, and composting methods for desert gardening. The 14 gardens are: the All-American Selections, Certified Wildlife Habitat, Butterflies, Birds and Bees, Native Grasses, Edible- Basin Style, Cacti and Other Succulents, Small Spaces, Roses Galore, Colors, Edibles, Raised Bed Style, Xeriscape Landscape, Contain Yourself, and Propagation Nursery.



All-americanselections.org



Each garden meanders into the next garden with fences, gates, and signage that helps delineate the different gardens. The All-American Selections garden is an official AAS Display garden displaying award winning flower and vegetable selections. The Pima County Master Gardeners won 2nd place in AAS Display Garden contest in 2021 for their “Diversity in the Garden” theme. The Certified Wildlife Habitat showcases a mix of plants as well as landscape elements that provide food and shelter for birds, animals, and insects. I observed lots of lizards, bees, and even a ground squirrel happily running through the landscape.



The Shade Oasis garden is designed to reflect a riparian and meadow environment in the Sky Islands at around 4500 feet. A sky island is an isolated mountain range that rises up out of the surrounding desert “sea”. Sky islands are unique in that as the elevation changes, so do the surrounding ecosystems. Arizona is home to several sky islands including the Chiricahua National Monument that is located at a crossroads between four major ecosystems – the Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madre, Sonoran Desert, and the Chihuahuan Desert. Within this are five world biomes: Desert, Grasslands, Chaparral, Deciduous Forest, and Coniferous Forest. It can be warm and raining at the bottom and cold and snowing at the top. Can you imagine the vast variety of plants and animals and how they must adjust to this situation?

The Roses Galore garden brought back wonderful memories of all the roses in my California garden that I can’t grow in South Dakota. I just walked around and smelled every rose to take in its amazing fragrance...living in the moment! Sadly, I didn’t take any photos. My nose was on the roses, but my eyes were on the cacti and succulents.

Each garden was a showcase of beauty shared with us. We enjoyed all of them but my favorite by far was the Cacti and Other Succulent garden as you can see from the multiple photos. I am learning to enjoy and appreciate the desert more each time I visit Tucson and especially after visiting this amazing Master Gardener Demonstration Garden. Next time you visit the desert, think about the amazing biodiversity in the desert and surrounding mountains.



All photos by Debi Ulrey-Crosby unless noted otherwise

Do you have comments, questions, or topic ideas that you would like us to explore? Email us at mcmgnewsletter@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you!

All articles are researched and written by Minnehaha County Master Gardeners and Interns. Thank you to all, for sharing your knowledge!