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Cover Artwork by Pam Conklin

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A word about Minnehaha County Master Gardeners: We are volunteers trained through the South Dakota State University Extension <u>Master Gardener Program</u>. For more information on becoming a master gardener, visit <u>SDSU Extension Master gardener</u> <u>volunteer program</u>

Be sure to stay in touch with all of Minnehaha County Master Gardeners' news: <u>follow</u> <u>us on FaceBook</u>, <u>visit our website</u>, or <u>email us</u>.

What's inside

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The South Dakota Herb Garden

By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener

Catnip (Nepeta cataria) is a perennial herb from the mint (Lamiaceae) family that grows





well in zones 3-7. Catnip prefers full sun with well drained fertile, sandy, loamy soil, but can also do well in partial shade. Catnip grows to 2-3 feet and can spread into other plantings if not contained. The leaves are triangular to oval with serrated edges that come to a point. The flower spikes are small white with light purple markings and can bloom June through August and attract bees. Can be toxic to cats [but cats are good at self-regulating, so they won't overdose]. However, many cats love catnip and can cause some to be sedated and others stimulated. Catnip is drought tolerant.Catnip has many medicinal uses. Catnip is a calming plant and is used for insomnia to improve the quality and the length of sleep. It has pain relieving qualities and has been used to relieve menstrual cramps, headache and toothaches. As with many of the mint family, it relieves gas and digestive upsets and has been used to reduce fever and upper respiratory infections.

Cecropia Moth

By Kat Murphy, MG Intern



Imagine my surprise when I was out trimming my Spirea shrubs early last summer, when I saw a giant moth. She was exhausted, letting me pick her up without hardly a flutter. I took pictures to identify her, then laid her carefully back where I had found her, under the shrub, away from marauding birds.

I discovered with the help of the National Wildlife Federation, that she was a Cecropia Moth, Hyalophora cecropia (Linnaeus). The Cecropia is the largest North American native moth. It is a member of the family Saturniidae, or giant silk moths. Females have been documented with a wingspan of five to seven inches; the little beauty in my yard was 6.25" tip-to-tip.

Cecropias are nocturnal, living in hardwood forests East of the Rocky Mountains, along the lower foothills and along the Front Range. They are closely related to Glover's silk moth, and Canada. My neighborhood is a veritable hardwood forest, with maples, ash, elm, spring snow, apples, crab apples, aspen and cottonwoods abounding.

The Caterpillars feed on leaves throughout the summer; while the adults don't eat at all. In order to find mates, the female produces pheromones, which the male can detect from over a mile away. The females lay over a hundred eggs. The eggs are a mottled reddish brown and can normally be found on the underside of a host leaf. There are typically five larval instars, each lasting about a week. When they hatch, the caterpillars are black in color. As they go through their successive molts, increasing in size and changing color from black to yellowish-green, they can reach a final size at the end of summer of five inches long.



The caterpillars feed upon common trees, such as maple, birch and apple, though many caterpillars don't live to see adulthood due to predation. Pests of these moths have become a significant problem. Parasitoids such as some species of wasps and flies, lay their young

on the caterpillars, which then hatch in their own larvae, consuming the caterpillars. Squirrels also consume the pupae of cecropia moths, which can decrease the populations significantly. Pruning trees and leaving outdoor lights on at night can also be detrimental to these gentle giants. The Compsilura concinnata or tachinid fly, which was introduced to control European gypsy moths, have been particularly threatening to the native North American cecropia. The successful caterpillars then seal themselves into large brown cocoons laid lengthwise on trees or wooden structures. They emerge the next spring in the first two weeks of seasonally warm weather as mammoth moths.

Hyalophora cecropia are univoltine (having only one generation a year). Most of the adult moths also succumb to predation by birds or bats, living at most two weeks after emergence. The species is stable. The cecropia caterpillars are found in such low abundances they do not represent a significant threat to ornamental landscaping.

Sources: National Wildlife Service National Park Service University of Nebraska Lincoln, Entomology Dept. Colorado State University

A Boulevard Makeover

By Pam Conklin, Master Gardener

Tired of a lifeless boulevard? Mowing? Watering? Weeding? Then, it's time for a boulevard makeover! This article highlights the steps I've taken to change my boulevard from a weedy grass patch that no one enjoys, and supports no diversity, to a what will be a lively and colorful oasis for pollinators and other Urban wildlife.

0: blah phase



2. bake phase

3: reckoning phase



Boulevard with tree stump, weeds, and *Batista* in place



Secured clear plastic allows heat in, but keeps moisture & air out

Plastic off, and dead vegetation has been raked away!

Prep phase: set your mower to its lowest position and mow down any vegetation. I needed to edge along the entire length of both the street and sidewalk. Since the

ground needed to be graded and leveled in areas, I decided to till up about 2/3 of the boulevard. I did leave on end untilled and vegetations died back equally well. Your plan of attack will depend on time and resources available. There is no discernible difference in approaches; I will admit that I had planted a few "keeper" plants last year, before doing the prep work. This proved to create problems securing the plastic tight enough to keep heavier rain out. Just something to be aware of, if you have existing trees and plants.

Bake phase: using the sun to kill vegetation and even weed seeds to a certain depth is accomplished using a process called soil solarization. I used 6 mil clear plastic, which covers the entire boulevard. Holes were cut to allow existing plants to stay in place. The plastic was laid in sections around the existing Maple tree. The plastic was secured along the edges using rubber edging and landscape staples. Ideally, the plastic will stay in place 3 - 6 weeks in order to raise surface temperatures up to 140 F under the plastic covering and even heat up the soil enough to kill weed seeds to a depth of 4 - 6 inches. A couple of things to consider, results may vary depending on shade from trees and how well you are able to keep rain from getting under the plastic. Besides being further north, the time of year also makes a difference for how long to leave the plastic down, as the sun's heat may not be as intense. I went with 6 mil, because foot traffic could tear the plastic, but a colleague using varying thicknesses found that the kill process was quicker with 4 mil, probably because the lighter weight was clearer.

Reckoning phase: after 7 weeks,I removed the plastic, and I was left with a nice patch of dead vegetation that I simply raked and bagged. I did find that the end by the tree has a few dandelions popping up, which is no surprise since I wasn't able to secure the plastic as well, and heavier rainfall did seep under the plastic at that end. Still, I am pretty pleased with the results.

Planting phase: my planting consists of sun and drought tolerant perennials; both native and cultivars that attract pollinators. Pockets of annuals offer season-long color among the transient blooms of perennials! Be sure to finish the planting using a mulch of your choice. My project will be completed late spring 2024 when I remove the street-side landscape fabric and seed buffalo grass, a warm-season native grass that grows only 3 - 4 inches tall, requiring no mowing, and the addition of little bluestem for accent, another native grass that is a beautiful accent of red, and blue-green. What you plant will be determined by the hours of sun your boulevard receives, and what your goals are. It may not be a bad idea to take a Sunday drive around town to see just what others are planting in their boulevards. Don't forget to check the <u>city ordinance</u> for specific requirements and restrictions. Happy planting!

4: planting phase



Do you have comments, questions, or topic ideas that you would like us to explore? Email us at <u>mcmgnewsletter@gmail.com</u>. 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!