



Digging It!

April 2008

Seeds For Thought...

A Message from the Agent

For the past two months, the Logan County Master Gardeners have been fortunate to have two excellent guest speakers. In March, 10 Master Gardeners met at the Booneville Senior Citizens Community Building. Guy Robson, the Biological Science Technician for Animals at the USDA Research Center, gave a presentation about his homeland of New Zealand. While watching his slide show, I was able to learn many fascinating things. The weather in New Zealand stays mild, enabling the plants and grass to grow year round. When viewing pictures of snow covered volcanoes and sunny beaches Mr. Robson said, "There are parts of the year it is possible to see either one on the same day." He continued to show plants grown by residents and a colorful sea of wildflowers sweeping the countryside. It seems I have another place to see sometime in my life.

In April, the Master Gardeners met in Paris at the Community Outreach Building. Sixteen members and four guests were present. Stan Brown, the owner of Blossom Berry Nursery and Garden Center in Clarksville, gave a presentation on the newest varieties of plants. My personal favorite was the Diamond Frost Euphorbia. According to Mr. Brown, "It puts out so many white flowers, it resembles a white blanket." He went on to say that it can be planted by itself or around some poinsettias. Although it is an annual plant, it can bloom all year indoors. It seems this is possible because the Diamond Frost does not form seeds, which helps it to conserve energy. However, this annual will die by the first killing frost if left outside. In the summer, the Diamond Frost is drought-hardy and pest-resistant, which makes it considerably easier and possibly cheaper to grow.

Spraying Tip - Surfactants

At the meeting, we talked a little about spraying chemicals. Most pesticides sprayed on plants require a surfactant in order to be effective. This is because the surface tension of the water is too high, which causes the water to bead up and roll off the leaf blade before the chemical can be effective. A surfactant will reduce the surface tension of the water, resulting in better coverage and effectiveness. Soap can be used for this purpose, but be careful of detergent powders that contain chemicals such as sodium and boron. Such chemicals can harm plants, according to Wikipedia. Be sure to read the label before spraying. It will state the recommended amount of surfactants and other important rates as well as warnings.

The first Monday of the month, the Master Gardener Club meets in Booneville or Paris. For more information on their programs or horticulture practices, be sure to attend the meetings. Call the Extension office for more information.



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Spring-time for Master Gardeners

Is spring here? We have certainly had the spring rains, and with the snow last week, it has not been ideal weather to get out and get ready for planting.

√ Taking photos of your yard and garden now and then when it is at its peak can really make you feel good and also be a guide for any changes you might want to make next year.



√ Plan and design your lawn, making it an extension of your home and added rooms.

√ Now is the time also to clean and service those tools.

√ Clean your yard of debris — and with the rain and winds, I certainly have plenty of small limbs to pick up. I have done it once, but it needs to be cleaned up again.

√ It is also time to weed and feed those lawns. *EP*

CALENDULA

Also known as pot marigold, the English used *Calendula* to flavor stews and soups. It was brought to England from Europe in about 1573, and by the 1600s it was grown in Virginia and New Netherlands. It is a 2 inch orange and yellow flower with correspondingly larger leaves. Dutch grocers kept the dried petals by the barrels full. Apothecaries used the whole plant to make soothing ointment for skin wounds and ulcers and as a substitute for saffron in treating smallpox and measles. *EP*



(Source: *Plants of Colonial Williamsburg*)

COMMON GARDENING GOOFS

► *Wrong Plant, Wrong Size*

Before planting that newly purchased tree or shrub, consider the mature size. Too often we plant too close to power lines, the house and/or driveways. Too often, beautiful, mature trees have to be removed because of this. So check that the mature size.

► *Subsoil on top*

If you are moving into that new dream home and planning your landscaping, be sure the subsoil isn't the basis for the area you are planning on planting. Remove, amend, or do whatever is necessary to prepare for planting. Remember, 90 percent of the success of your garden depends upon soil preparation.

► *Out of proportion*

Do a little sketching before digging that hole. Make sure that the plantings will be in proportion.

► *Too much busy-ness*

Keep experiments in one place or find a way to pull them together by repeating same color and plants in other areas of the landscape.

► *Form, texture and color*

Too much of the same thing can attract diseases and pests. Do you want to plant a screen to block a fence, etc.? Try using assorted plants or shrubs of about the same size at the time of maturity. Planting fruiting and flowering shrubs will give you multi-season interest and will provide food and homes and shelter for the birds as well. Viburnums and hollies are just a couple of good shrub plants.

► *Planting too deeply*

Trees need a basal flare, which refers to the widening of the trunk near the ground. Follow instructions carefully when planting. If it looks like a telephone pole, you can almost bet it is planted too deep.

EP

RAISED BED GARDENING

The advantages of bed gardening are that you can choose an ideal location and soil type. They can be planted earlier because of quicker warm-up, ease of maintenance and their ability to be planted very closely for greater productivity. Plus, they can be a back saver — I just sit on the edge of the bed and pull any weeds that happen up.



Paul James of HGTV suggests building 2 x 12-8 foot long; you will need three for one bed. A 4 x 8 foot

bed is ideal. If building more than one bed, be sure to leave a walkway between beds. He uses rot-resistant cedar, which is a little expensive, but should last for ten years.

Prepare the space, including the walkways. Put down a barrier (I like to use cardboard) such as appliance boxes. This will prevent the grass from growing and will decompose in time. Add a good mixture of compost, manure, leaves that have been cut up (a trash can of leaves and a weedeater works great), blood meal, 1 – 2 cups per bed and some good soil. Blood meal is almost 100 percent nitrogen and will hasten the decomposition of leaves, etc. Till well; this will be the last time you will have to till until after harvest. You can place your plants much closer than in a regular garden. When plants are well established, you can lay your soaker hose and mulch on top.

Now, just sit back and wait until harvest time, except for checking for pests. I usually mulch my tomatoes immediately to prevent rain bouncing back up on the plants. This helps to prevent viruses. Remember to rotate crops!

I consistently can 48 pints of green beans in addition to the fresh ones we eat from an 8 x 8 foot plot. I built my beds probably 20 years ago — no one told me to do 4 x 8 foot beds, so I do the acrobatic act of trying not to step on plants while harvesting. Three sweet potato plants produced 69 pounds.

EP

Upcoming Events

- **May 7: County 76 General Membership meeting (Register by May 1)**
- **June 18 – 21: Southern Region Master Gardener Conference (early-bird registration ends May 1)**
- **June 26 – 27: Advanced Master Gardener Program**
 - **Register by June 9, 2008**
 - **Open for members in good standing for three years or more**
 - **Location: Fellowship Hall, First Baptist Church, Benton**
 - **Topic: “Plant Diseases and Insects: Identification And Management”**
 - **Cost: \$55**



PERRENIAL

Many perennials will carry through more than one season, but here is a list.



| Spring Interest | Summer Interest | Autumn Interest | Winter Interest |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Astible | Chinese stonecrop | Aster | Autumn fern |
| Baby’s breath | Balloon flower | Black-eyed Susan | Hellebores |
| Baptisia | Bee balm, Thyme | Blanket flower | |
| Basket of gold | Bellflower, Lavender | Bugbane | |
| Bellflower | Black-eyed Susan | Hardy geranium | |
| Brummera | Blanket flower | Hibiscus | |
| Bugle weed | Bubane, Hosta | Plumbago | |
| Coral bell | Cardinal flower | Russian sage | |
| Goatsbeard | Coneflowers, Plumbago | Salvia perennial | |
| Iris | Coreopsis, Lily, Sedum | Sedum | |
| Mayapple, China | Day lily, Baby’s breath | Swamp sunflower | |
| Meadow rue | Delphiniums, Iris | | |
| Penstemon | Gaura, Yarrow | | |
| Peony | Gay feathers | | |
| Jerusalem sage | Hardy geraniums | | |
| | Hibiscus, Penstemon | | |
| | Lamb’s ear, Russian sage | | |
| | Jerusalem sage | | |
| | Perennial salvia | | |
| | Swamp sunflower | | |

All meetings and activities announced in this newsletter are open to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communications of program information (large print, audiotapes, etc.) should notify the county Extension office as soon as possible prior to the activity.

| March | April | May |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broccoli ● Spinach ● Irish Potatoes ● Asparagus ● Pak Choi, Lettuce ● Cabbage ● Carrots, Kohlrabi ● Sweet Corn ● Mustard, Turnips ● Swiss Chard, Beets ● Irish Potatoes, Onions ● English Peas ● Radish, Cauliflower | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watermelon ● Basil ● Sweet Corn ● Asparagus ● Squash, Melons ● Okra, Peppers ● Cucumbers ● Sweet Potatoes ● Eggplant ● Dill, Tomatoes ● Beans (Snap, Pole) ● Kohlrabi, Broccoli ● Cabbage, Collards ● Swiss Chard, Lettuce ● Radish, Beets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tomatillos ● Pumpkin ● Asparagus ● Cherry Tomato ● Squash, Basil ● Okra, Peppers ● Cucumbers ● Sweet Potatoes ● Eggplant ● Watermelon ● Beans (Snap,Pole,Lima) ● Cantaloupe ● Sweet Corn ● Collards ● Radish, Southern Peas |