Pest Control

One of the most frustrating aspects of gardening is dealing with pests, particularly those that are difficult to find or control due to overwhelming numbers. Because pests can take over a garden, home gardeners often use more pesticides per square foot than are recommended. Conventional pesticides, particularly when overused, may lead to illness in the gardener spraying plants, lead to runoff in waterways, can kill unintended animals such as beneficial bees, insects, and birds, kill plants, and minimize the effect of the chemical pesticides on target insects and weeds. When using conventional pesticides, users should adhere to package instructions and apply during low-insect activity times such as early morning and late afternoon. To avoid some of the above problems altogether, there are other ways of maintaining healthy plants such as through the use of organic pesticides, companion planting, and proactive garden management.

A combination of organic pesticides, companion planting, and proactive garden management are effective means of keeping garden pests at bay. Organic pesticides are derived from naturally occurring substances found in nature such as Neem oil, an evergreen tree grown in India. One method I used recently was to mix water and powdered cayenne pepper together in a spray bottle to control aphids, a favorite food of ladybugs. Aphids, like many other insects, live underneath leaves, so it is important to check all plant surfaces on a regular basis to avoid an infestation. Companion planting is also fantastic as a natural method used to keep malevolent creatures away while still attracting beneficial insects. An example would be planting garlic near roses to ward off aphids. If you had a terrible infestation of squash bugs last year, move your squash to a different corner of your garden for this upcoming season. It will confuse the bugs and they will not find them as quickly. Additionally, you can put bridal netting for wedding veils over non-flowering plants to keep flying insects out.

These suggestions are only just a few options you have as gardeners to maximize your garden space and production. For more information, consult seed catalogues and your county extension agency for companion planting charts and other words of advice.

Happy Gardening!

By Lacy Cornell
Curing and Storing White Potatoes

Curing potatoes to store for winter

After digging the potatoes, sort and size the potatoes for use. Group potatoes damaged during digging and be sure to use these first. Do not wash potatoes, because the soil will fall off after drying. Place the potatoes in a cool place with lots of ventilation.

The back porch is a nice cool area. Peg board supported on saw horses can be used to keep potatoes away from mice. Cover with cardboard to keep sun from damaging the potatoes and turning them green. Green potatoes are not good to eat.

The curing process takes 2 weeks. The skin will thicken some and the potatoes will be more protected.

After curing, place in cool area in net bags and hang. Place like-sizes in each bag to make it easy to distinguish baking potatoes from smaller potatoes.

Have a great summer of harvesting your vegetables.

Weed-B-Gone

- 1 gallon white vinegar
- 2 cups Epsom Salt
- ¼ cup Dawn (blue original)

It will kill anything you spray it on. Just mix and spray in the morning. Walk away. Go back after dinner and the weeds are all gone.

Cheaper than anything you can buy anywhere. Never buy Round-up again.

Tried it on gravel walkways – it worked!!
Edible Flowers

Edible flowers are the new rage! Impress your friends by serving them. You can freeze them in ice cubes, make lavender cookies, fry squash blossoms, and much more.

DO’S: Eat flowers only when you are positive they are edible. If uncertain, consult a good reference book of the internet prior to consumption. I referenced www.whatscookingamerica.net/EdibleFlowers.

No flowers are safe to eat unless grown organically.

Wash all flowers thoroughly before you eat them.

Eat only the flower petals for most flowers, except pansies, violas, and Johnny-jump-ups.

If you have allergies, introduce edible flowers gradually, as they may aggravate some allergies.

EXAMPLES of some edible flowers growing in summer: lavender, thyme, dill, cilantro, day lily, squash blossom, nasturtiums, chives, and basil. (These suggestions were gathered from Whatscookingamerica website.)

RECIPE: Crystallized/Candy Edible Flowers (Can be used to decorate cakes and all kinds of sweet things, such as ice cream, sherbet, and fruit salads.)

Ingredients: 1 egg white, Superfine granulated sugar (either purchased or made in a blender or food processor—just blend regular sugar until extra-fine), thin paintbrush, flowers (violets, pansies, Johnny-jump-ups, rose petals, lilac, borage, pea, pinks, scented geraniums, etc.), wire rack covered with wax paper.

Directions: Carefully clean and completely dry the flowers or petals. Beat the egg white in small bowl until slightly foamy, if necessary add a few drops of water to make the white easy to spread. Paint each flower individually with beaten egg white using the small paintbrush. When thoroughly coated with egg white, sprinkle with superfine sugar. Place the coated flowers or petals on wax paper on wire rack. Let dry at room temperature (this could take 12 to 36 hours). Flowers are completely dry when still and brittle to the touch. Store the flowers in layers, separated by tissue paper, in an airtight container at room temperature until ready to use.
MASTER GARDENER CLUB OFFICERS

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WELCOME TO MEMBERS

Marilee Bachmann
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You are invited to be a guest at one of our Master Gardener meetings at the Searcy County Extension Office on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 10 a.m.