Winnebago County Master Gardeners Newsletter

July 2021

Mission Statement

Our purpose is to provide horticultural education, community service and environmental stewardship for our community in affiliation with the University of Wisconsin Extension Program.

"Hot July brings cooling showers, Apricots and gillyflowers."

- Sara Coleridge, Pretty Lessons in Verse

From the Butterfly Garden at Miravida.

Submitted by Jane Kuhn.

What am I?

By Jane Kuhn

I am an erect, clump forming, herbaceous, perennial, long-lived wildflower native to North America. I grow to a height of 4-5 feet and a spread of 2-3 feet in zones 3-6 and prefer full sun and moist to medium soil.. My stalks are erect, smooth, light green in color and may branch near the upper third. Leaves are 3-6 inches long and 1-2 inches wide, opposite along the stem and oblong to lanceolate in shape. They turn red and purple in fall. My white, pink or mauve blooms occur in July-August, last up to a month and attract numerous butterflies and bees.

My plant lives a long life of slowly spreading through rhizomes. I can be divided in late spring if desired. I can be started from seeds which need to be winter sown or experience a 30-day cold moist stratification period. I can be used in sunny borders, butterfly gardens and along stream or pond banks. I am deer and rabbit resistant and have no serious insect or disease problems.

WCMGA Contacts

Check your membership guide for contact information.

Co-Presidents
Ed Dombrowski & Bob Kneepkens

Vice President
Kathy Procknow & Debra Butch

Secretary
Anne Murphy

Treasurer
Deby Voyles

Advisor
Kimberly Miller

Newsletter Compilation
Anne Murphy

We would love your help! If you are interested in contributing in a future newsletter by writing an article, submitting a photo, or sharing a story, please let me know by the 15th of each month by emailing paksterr0605@yahoo.com. Each article submitted will count toward your volunteer hours. Thank you!

Letter from your Presidents: Ed Dombrowski & Bob Kneepkens

No letter this month. Look for one in August.

A Little Preparation Allows a Gardener to Vacation

By Lawanda Jungwirth

Last year the pandemic inspired many people to plant their first vegetable garden. This year, people may feel able to take a vacation, but are wondering how to leave for a period of time without coming home to find zucchini the size of watermelon, broccoli and lettuce gone to seed, and weeds overgrowing everything.

First, remove peas, lettuce, radishes, spinach, and other salad greens from the garden. A short hot spell will render them worthless anyway. As soon as you return home you can use the space to plant beans, carrots or late cabbage.

Next, pick all the blossoms from beans, zucchini and cucumbers. While you are gone, the plants will be revitalized and produce more blossoms and will deliver a crop just as large later when you are home to gather the harvest.

If tomatoes are starting to ripen, pick them and wrap them in newspaper. Store them in the refrigerator. Take them out to ripen on the windowsill when you return. If left on the plant, they will become overripe and slow the development of younger fruit.

If there are heads, even small ones, on broccoli and cauliflower, cut them off and freeze them for later use. Broccoli will form lateral heads that will be ready when you return from vacation. If you leave the main head on the plant, it may go into full blossom while you're gone, leaving the plant totally worthless.

Don't worry about root crops such as onions, potatoes, carrots, and turnips. The exception is spring beets which may bolt to seed, ruining the texture of the root. Beets should be pulled and stored in the refrigerator.

Go through the garden and remove any plants or plant parts that look diseased. Plant diseases can spread quickly and by removing affected leaves and stems you lessen the possibility of coming home to a catastrophe.

Remove all weeds. Ha! You knew that one was coming, didn't you? Do a good job, pulling up the entire weed, roots and all. Then mulch the garden, covering any area where there is bare soil. For this you can use grass clippings, pine needles, hay, straw or a purchased mulch.

Finally, unless it just rained, water thoroughly before you leave, soaking the soil with more than the normal amount of water. If you have been mulching all along, you might not have to water at all.

Many of the same methods can be used to keep your flower gardens happy while you're gone. Weeding, deadheading and a thorough watering are a must. Container plants should be moved to the coolest spot you can find in full shade and out of the wind.

Of course, the best plan is to have a good neighbor, friend or family member take over while you're away. If you allow them to keep all the produce they harvest while you are gone, they'll be happy to help out.

Answer to What am I?

By Jane Kuhn

I am swamp milkweed. Order: Gentianales. Family: Apocynaceae. Genus: Asclepias. Species: Incarnata. Scientific name: Asclepias incarnate. Common name: swamp milkweed. Other names: Rose Milkweed, Pink Milkweed, Red Milkweed, Marsh Milkweed. Native American uses for swamp milkweed included as a diuretic, emetic, cathartic and for pediatric or kidney issues. An interesting use for swamp milkweed was that it helped the allies win World War II. The parachutes that are attached to each seed in the seed pods were used to fill life jackets for allies which made them much more buoyant than other materials. Milkweed is toxic and should not be consumed by mammals. Monarch butterflies feed on milkweed and so collect the toxins in their bodies. Birds have learned to avoid them because of these toxic properties. Swamp milkweed can be found in the Butterfly Garden at Miravida Living and the flower cutting garden at Park View.

References: USDA Plants Database and associated links.

June 2021: Fired Up About Fire Blight

JUNE 17, 2021 DDLANG

It's the time of year where I am once again getting questions about apple and crabapple trees with dead branches. Often, in these situations, clients assume that their trees are suffering from fire blight. This bacterial disease has received a lot of press over the years and can be a serious problem. However, fire blight is definitely not the only reason that branches on apples and crabapples die.

There are a myriad of fungal diseases that can lead to branch dieback. In particular, fungal canker diseases can be an issue. I often find fungi like Cytospora, Phomopsis and Sphaeropsis in dead apple or crabapple branches. These fungi, like the fire blight bacterium, locally infect and girdle branches (thus leading to branch death), often in a somewhat random pattern in a tree. Sphaeropsis is particularly common. This fungus not only infects branches but can also infect fruits (causing black rot) and leaves (causing frogeye leaf spot). More systemic fungal diseases like root and crown rot, Armillaria root disease and black root rot (dead man's fingers) can also lead to branch dieback. The pathogens involved in these diseases infect and disrupt root and trunk function, preventing proper water movement from roots to branches. This lack of water leads to branch death, often over a fairly substantial portion of the tree canopy.

Environmental stresses can also lead to branch death in apples and crabapples. Drought can lead to branch dieback symptoms similar to those caused by the systemic diseases described above. Cold injury can also be a contributing factor. Growing a non-hardy apple or crabapple variety often leads to dieback issues. Even on hardy varieties, branch dieback can occur if cold snaps occur in the spring right as or just after trees leaf out. Lack of snow cover (which insulates soil) coupled with extremely cold winter temperatures can lead to physical injury to roots, which in turn limits water uptake, leading to branch dieback.

So, with all of these potential causes of branch dieback on apples and crabapples, how can you tell if your tree is suffering from fire blight? The answer is, "It's not easy!" People often claim that fire blight leads to a branch with a shepherd's crook (a downward bend at the branch tip). However, after years of seeing dead and dying apple and crabapple branches, I just don't consider this a reliable symptom for diagnosing fire blight. To me, a shepherd's crook just indicates that the branch didn't get enough water and wilted. That could be due to any of the causes outlined above. And conversely, I have seen cases of fire blight where branches don't have a shepherd's crook. What I tend to look for as I'm attempting to diagnose fire blight is oozy material (a combination of sap and bacterial cells) that seeps from the affected branch. I also look for some indication that the infection may have started where flowers were attached. I look for this latter indicator because trees are often inoculated with the fire blight bacterium by bees that carry the bacterium and drop it off in the flowers as they pollinate. Even when I see these symptoms, I will only diagnose fire blight if I have evidence that the fire blight bacterium is present. There are dipstick serological tests (these use the same technology as home pregnancy kits) that I use to confirm the presence of the fire blight bacterium. If I don't find evidence of the bacterium, I look for other possible causes of the branch dieback.

So, why do I really need to know if branch dieback is really due to fire blight? It all comes down to management. If fire blight is the cause, I recommend very aggressive pruning (roughly 12 inches

below where there are obvious symptoms). The fire blight bacterium can move rapidly down a branch under the bark, so you want to make sure to prune down far enough to remove all of the bacterium. Fungal pathogens tend to move less rapidly, so you can get by with pruning roughly six inches below where there are obvious symptoms. If the problem is a root disease of some kind, pruning will not resolve the problem. Fungicide treatments to the roots may be needed in some instances, or there may be ways of reducing tree stress that slow down the progression of these types of diseases.

It all comes down to the fact that if you don't know what the underlying problem is with your tree, it is unlikely that you will be able to fix the problem. So, get a proper diagnosis and then tailor your management strategy to the specific problem(s) you are facing. Without a proper diagnosis, you can spend a lot of time, effort and money, and not improve the health of your trees one bit.

For help with proper diagnosis of plant problems, contact the PDDC at pddc@wisc.edu or (608) 262-2863. To find out more about the clinic and its activities, check out the PDDC website. To keep up-to-date about new PDDC education materials and programs, follow the clinic on Twitter or Facebook (@UWPDDC) or contact the clinic at pddc@wisc.edu and ask to be added to the PDDC's listserv (UWPDDCLearn).

COVID-Approved Projects Open for Volunteers

The following is a list of projects that are Covid-approved and open to Master Gardener Volunteers:

- **Butterfly Garden at Miravida Living**
- **Parkview Cutting Gardens**
- **Parkview Vegetable Garden**
- **Parkview Prairie Garden**
- **Oshkosh Area Humane Society Memorial Garden**
- **Rain Garden at Coughlin Building**
- **Morgan House**
- **Paine Art Center and Arboretum**
- **Octagon House**
- **Pollinator Garden at Neenah Public Library**
- **Carter Memorial Library, Omro**
- **Sullivan's Woods-invasive removal only**
- **Plant Health Advising-virtual**

Please see the 2021 Winnebago County Master Gardener Guide and contact the Project Lead for more information.

From Kathy Procknow

Hello Winnebago County Master Gardener Volunteers,

We hope you and your gardens are enjoying the hot weather we have been having!

Recently, UW-Madison Division of Extension updated the COVID-19 Safety Policy and Guidelines for the Master Gardener Program. Everyone should have received an email regarding this. Here is a link to the document if you did not receive the email or haven't had an opportunity to read the guidelines:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/18xtPTK8BIHOHewZlaMg9sWs_p8G45ASYtaDEjtArGpE/edit

The GOOD NEWS is that activities have become less restrictive and work for our projects are getting to a more normal state especially for those who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Here are some of the highlights:

Requirements for ALL volunteer activities:

- Must follow the Division of Extension COVID-19 Safety Policy.
- Activities must follow local and/or partner health guidance, if more restrictive.
- Volunteers/guest speakers/participants should not ask about the vaccination status of any individual.
- All volunteers are required to take this training before volunteering. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLUd9lyMGO8

Outdoor Gardening Activities (This applies to most of our projects)
General Guidelines:

- No limit on number of participants for outdoor gardening activities.
- No limit on duration of outdoor gardening activities.
- Unvaccinated individuals must maintain physical distance (6 feet) from persons outside their immediate household. Face coverings are required for unvaccinated individuals when maintaining 6-foot physical distance might be difficult (e.g., activities that may require brief periods of close proximity).

Additional guidelines are in place for Outdoor Gardening Activities, Outdoor Events/Meetings (such as garden walks), Indoor Events/Meetings, Farmers Markets, Bus Trips and Partner Events. Please read the details of these in the document.

In 2020, only three of our projects received the benefit of the hard work of Winnebago County Master Gardener Volunteers. Project partners have expressed the void of missing you and the value you bring to their gardens. They are thankful Winnebago County Master Gardener Volunteers are able to help them bring their gardens "back to life" in 2021.

In a recent membership business meeting, camaraderie was identified as one of the reasons people belong to the Winnebago County Master Gardeners Association. While the volunteer hours requirement is waived again in 2021, our projects carry on. Some leads have expressed the need for additional assistance, particularly the Neenah Public Library and the Carter Memorial Library in Omro. Many opportunities for camaraderie with our project partners and fellow Master Gardener Volunteers are available. Please see the Winnebago County Master Gardener Guide and contact the lead(s) for projects that may interest you.

If you have general questions about projects, please contact Kathy Procknow (keprocknow55@gmail.com) or Deb Butch (debbybutch@gmail.com).

Thank you for all you do on behalf of the Winnebago County Master Gardener Association and our project partners!

Happy Gardening!!

The season's first monarch caterpillar seen on the swamp milkweed at the Park View flower cutting garden. Submitted by Jane Kuhn.

Hot weather gardening tips

June 13, 2021 Natalie Hoidal, UW Minnesota Extension educator, local foods and vegetable crops

Peas growing in soil with a black plastic hose for drip irrigation in the foreground and a walking path made of straw in the background.

Drip irrigation releases water directly at the soil surface near plant roots.

We've just experienced a couple of weeks of record-setting June temperatures, and meteorologists are predicting that we'll continue to see above-average temperatures for the remainder of the summer.

What does this mean for how we manage our gardens?

Water wisely

We've been in drought conditions for weeks at this point, and wells are becoming depleted. Many cities have begun to instate watering restrictions, so make sure to check on your local ordinances. In many communities, this looks like only watering on certain days of the week according to the side of the street you live on or even/odd addresses.

- Water your plants in the morning as early as possible. This allows the soil and your plants to absorb more water because in the heat of the day there is more evaporation occurring at the soil surface.
- Drip irrigation is ideal because it deposits water directly at the soil surface, and can be targeted.
- Watering by hand is also quite effective: water as close to the soil surface as possible.
- If you need to use sprinklers, try to use sprinklers that deposit water low to the ground rather than spraying high into the air to minimize evaporation.

Wait to prune tomatoes until the heatwave passes so they are less stressed.

How much water is needed?

The average vegetable garden needs about 1 inch of rain per week. This looks like:

- 62 gallons for a 10x10 area.
- About 20 gallons for a 4x8 raised bed.

During extremely hot weather (daytime temperatures above 90 and nighttime temperatures above 70), try to water daily or every other day. In a 10x10 foot garden, this would mean giving your plants 8-9 gallons of water each day.

If you're watering with a hose, fill a container with a known volume (like a gallon of milk or a 5-gallon bucket) and calculate how long it takes. Multiply that by the number of gallons needed to figure out how long you should leave the hose on.

Prune carefully

July is a great time to prune plants. However, keep in mind that when it's extremely hot outside, your plants are stressed. Pruning is another stressor, so if possible, try to wait until conditions have cooled slightly to prune your plants.

Only prune when there is no rain in the forecast and humidity is low. This limits the likelihood of infection as the plants heal the wounds left by pruning.

After pruning, give your plants plenty of water, applied directly to the roots.

Weed, weed, weed!

This bean plant competes for moisture with weeds.

While weeds also need water to grow, many common weeds are well adapted to drought conditions, and the heat is allowing them to grow quickly. Try to get out every couple of days to remove weeds from your garden, as they are easier to remove when they are small, and they can quickly become a lot of work to manage.

Keep in mind that weeds are also using precious water, so by removing them, you'll reduce some of the competition for your garden plants.

Right plant, right place

Ligularia plants thrive in wet conditions but are not thriving in this dry rain garden.

Droughts offer us insight into plants that may not be quite right for our landscapes. Take a look at your garden, are there plants that are substantially more wilted than others, or plants that you're watering every single day to keep alive? Perhaps that particular plant is not well suited to your landscape, or that particular spot.

If certain types of plants are thriving, consider removing plants that are not doing well, and replacing them with plants that are.

As you do so, investigate the soil in the area. Perhaps you have a low spot that you thought would make a good rain garden, but one side of it has much sandier soil than the rest, causing it to drain more quickly.

Take care of yourself

Make sure to take breaks and drink plenty of water as you garden.

Know the signs of heat stress: headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, thirst, heavy sweating, etc., and get help if needed.

From Green Bay Botanical Garden, Washed Ashore exhibit, Pricialla The Parrot Fish.

Submitted by Kim Willman.

WCMGA Projects *Check your Member Guide for contact information.*	
Project	**Project Lead(s)**
Butterfly Garden Miravida Living Oshkosh	Jane Kuhn
Carter Memorial Library, Omro	Jenny Breining
Coughlin Rain Garden	Ed and Jill Dombrowski
Octagon House, Neenah	Jerry Robak
Invasive Species	Valerie Stabenow/Sue Egner
Morgan House	Kathy Schultz
Neenah Public Library	Susan Forbes/Bette Hoytink
Oshkosh Area Humane Society	Julie Miller/Matt Miller
Paine Gardens & Arboretum	Virginia Slattery
Park View Cutting Garden	Donna Kudlas/Jane Kuhn
Park View Prairie Garden	Carol Swannell/Ruth Eberwine
Park View Flower Arranging	Lil Hansche/Diane Thompson
Park View Vegetable Garden	Tom Weber (with assistance from Renee Donner)
Farmer's Market	Synda Jones/Patty Schmitz
Plant Health Advisors	Mary Shepard
Sullivan's Woods	Linda Loker

Project Leads: If you'd like your meetings listed on the calendar, please email information to Anne Murphy pakster0605@yahoo.com.

July 2021

Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
				1	2	3
4 	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31