

Winnebago County Master Gardeners

Newsletter

May 2020

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.

“Never underestimate the healing power of a quiet moment in the garden.”



“This picture was taken of my front yard on April 6, 2020. My husband and I have been planting crocus bulbs into the lawn for approximately 6 years. Each fall we add more. The patch is about at peak today. We have a small fence surrounding the area to protect it from the rabbits, who view the crocus flowers and leaves as a fresh salad.” by **Jennifer Breining**

What am I?

By Jane Kuhn

I am a North American native, hairy, herbaceous perennial which grows to a height of 4-6 feet and a spread of 3-4 feet in zones 3-8. I grow in shade, part shade and sun and prefer moist to wet soils although I am somewhat drought tolerant during the summer months. My stem appears to be growing through a leaf. Tiny, white flowers are arranged in fuzzy clusters at tops of the stems, with clusters 2-8 inches across and each flowerhead about 1/6 inch across. They have a pleasant floral scent and bloom from mid-summer into fall.

Propagation is by sowing seeds in fall, planting thickly as germination is usually low. Clumps can be divided in spring or fall. My native locations include wet soils in low woods, thickets, stream banks, meadows and prairies. My good size and late blooming plant is good in borders, native plant gardens, cottage gardens, banks of ponds and raingardens. My flowers are showy and good as cut or dried flowers. The nectar or pollen of my flowers attracts bees, wasps, flies, beetles, birds and butterflies. I am tolerant of deer.

WCMGA Contacts

Check your membership guide for contact information.

Co-Presidents: Ed Dombrowski & Bob Kneepkens

Vice President: Britton Dake

Secretary: Susan Raasch

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 or submitting a photo, please let me know by the 15th of each month by emailing pakster0605@yahoo.com. Thank you!

Upcoming Events - See Calendar for May Events

Oct. 19: Flower Arranging, Park View Great Room

Letter from your Presidents: Ed Dombrowski & Bob Kneepkens

We hope everyone is safe and healthy. The coronavirus (COVID-19) has certainly changed our daily lives. These truly are challenging times.

The need for social distancing gives us an opportunity to find garden related and interesting things to do. We can work in our own yards and gardens. Remember to keep six feet away from people not part of your single household or living unit.

Adrian Higgins, a columnist for the Washington Post, has an interesting perspective about social distancing and gardening. We thought it was worth sharing.

“If someone were to say I must self-isolate in the garden for the next few weeks, I would shake him or her by the hand. If I could. Here’s a thumbs up from a distance of six feet or more.

The neighborhood sidewalks and nature trails are thronged with the cabin-fevered, so what better place to be outdoors and yet away from others than in your backyard and garden?

You can sit out there with the newspaper and a cup of coffee, but in time both of those pleasures will come to an end.

The mark of a true gardener is a person who does not see a finished landscape but a series of tasks that need to be tackled. This isn’t as onerous as it sounds because it gets to the essential elements of gardening: creativity, honest toil and the satisfaction of a job well done. Aches and pains come along for the ride, but that’s why we have bathtubs.”

We will keep communicating with members through this newsletter and the Winnebago Master Gardener - Special Communications email, which we strive to send every two weeks.

If anyone has any questions or would like clarification about any item, please email Ed, Kimberly, or myself. We will respond in the special communications email.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Ed Dombrowski

Bob Kneepkens

Grow Garden Herbs for Sanitizing By Lawanda Jungwirth

Our homes, businesses and hands are probably more germ-free than ever before, and we've been buying all manner of chemical cleaners and sanitizers to make them that way. Did you know that there are many herbs with antiseptic properties that you can easily grow in your own garden? Here are just four of them, all perennial plants.

Common garden thyme is started by seed, nursery plant, or division from a friend's garden. It prefers a light, dry, well-drained soil in full sun to partial shade. Over the years it will slowly spread but can easily be cut back at any time of year. It is a ground-cover type plant with woody stems and tiny leaves. In summer, thyme has white to pink flowers.

Rosemary is an evergreen shrub with grayish-green needle-like leaves and pale blue flowers that grow at the branch tips. It doesn't survive our Wisconsin winters, so it can either be grown in a large container year-round or potted up and brought indoors in late fall. It becomes root-bound quickly in a pot, so twice-yearly repotting is necessary. Full sun is best. Rosemary is difficult to grow from seed so start with nursery plants.

Lavender is seldom started from seed because it often does not breed true, so nursery plants are the way to go. It prefers light, well-drained soil in full sun. Both leaves and flowers are fragrant. Wayward twiggy stems can be pruned back in spring. Lavender is slow to bud out in spring so after you think your plant is dead, wait two or three more weeks to find out if you were correct.

Sage is a woody plant with silver-green leaves. Beautiful purple flowers are produced in summer. Sage starts easily from seed, but it takes two years to grow a good-sized plant for harvesting, so again, buy nursery plants or get a division from a friend if possible. Sage prefers well-drained, moderately rich soil in full sun. Prune back hard in early spring before new growth begins.

Few pests bother any of these herbs, probably because they are repelled by their strong fragrance and taste.

Just a note about soil. All four of these herbs prefer light, well-drained soil, but I am growing them successfully in heavy clay, so give them a try no matter what your conditions.

To use the herbs for sanitizing, snip sprigs from the ends of the stems, either flowering or not, and infuse them in hot water as you would to make tea. The longer the infusion, the stronger the solution, but go for at least a 15-minute minimum. Strain the infusion into a spray bottle and allow it to cool. Use it to disinfect countertops, faucets, doorknobs and your hands. Allow the spray to sit on the surface for several minutes before wiping dry, or let it dry in place. The lavender infusion combines well with an equal amount of vodka for use as a hand sanitizer, air freshener or linen spray.

A Better Way of Stocking Up By Lawanda Jungwirth

Perhaps the coronavirus pandemic will spawn a whole new generation of people who will feel compelled to keep their food supply and other items at a level even above “well stocked” at all times, similar to what happened to those who lived through the Great Depression.

To be truly prepared for a long-term emergency, you will feel more secure if, rather than relying on the grocery store, you can turn to your own garden and after gardening season to your freezer and pantry.

If you don't already have a vegetable garden, this may be the year to start one. If you already have a garden, you might think about it in a different way, with a view toward preserving what you grow.

There are many ways of preserving fruits, vegetables and herbs, some easier than others, but all worthwhile skills to have.

The easiest preservation method is freezing. Fruits like strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, grapes, apples, pears, and melons can be spread on baking sheets and frozen before being transferred to plastic freezer bags. Apples and pears can be peeled or not depending on future use. Vegetables like tomatoes, peppers and zucchini are frozen in the same way.

Beans, asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, beets, cabbage, peas, sweet corn and carrots need a period of blanching before freezing. Blanching is immersing the vegetables in boiling water for a short period which slows the enzyme action and retards spoiling. After blanching, vegetables are submersed in ice water to stop the cooking process. Blanching times vary among vegetables. For directions search for Publication B3278 at <https://learningstore.extension.wisc.edu/>.

Canning is another option for food preservation. There is some equipment involved, but it is generally inexpensive. Don't be frightened of canning! Just read all the directions before you start and follow them carefully. The Division of Extension has two publications to help you at <https://learningstore.extension.wisc.edu/>, B1159 for vegetables and B0430 for fruits.

Dehydrating is a third method of food preservation. Dehydrators range in price from \$40 to about \$160, or you can use your oven set at its lowest temperature. Vegetables such as shell beans dry right on the plant and can last for years in storage. Herbs like thyme, oregano, marjoram, dill weed and seed, peppermint and lemon balm can be air dried.

The oldest method of food preservation – fermentation – is making a comeback in a big way. This is an astonishingly large and fascinating topic. At the most basic level, you need just vegetables and salt. Two good books to get you started are *Fermented Vegetables* by Kirsten & Christopher Shockey and *Ferment Your Vegetables* by Amanda Feifer. Last fall I tried fermenting for the first time. I fermented basil and a radish-onion mixture, both of which turned out wonderfully.

The National Center for Home Food Preservation provides information on how to preserve fruits and vegetables by freezing, canning, dehydrating, fermenting and more. Visit <https://nchfp.uga.edu/> and click on one of the choices under “How Do I?”

Answer to What am I?

By Jane Kuhn



I am boneset. Order: Asterales. Family: Asteraceae / Compositae – Aster family. Genus: Eupatorium L. thoroughwort. Species: Eupatorium perfoliatum L. – boneset. Other names: common boneset, agueweed, feverwort, thoroughwort, sweating plant. Specific epithet means perfoliate, having leaf bases that encircle the node, giving the appearance that the stem passes through it. This plant was introduced to American colonists by natives who used the plant for breaking fevers by means of heavy sweating. The dried leaves have been used to make a tonic, boneset tea, thought effective in treating colds, coughs and constipation. I can be found in the rain garden adjacent to the Coughlin Center.

References: USDA Plants Database and associated links.

JUNE 9, 2020 MASTER GARDENER PICNIC - Canceled

GIVEN THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE COVID-19 VIRUS, THE 2020 PICNIC HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

KEEP SAFE AND WE WILL SEE YOU IN THE GARDEN.

-Ginny Slattery

Member Business Meeting Minutes - No April Meeting

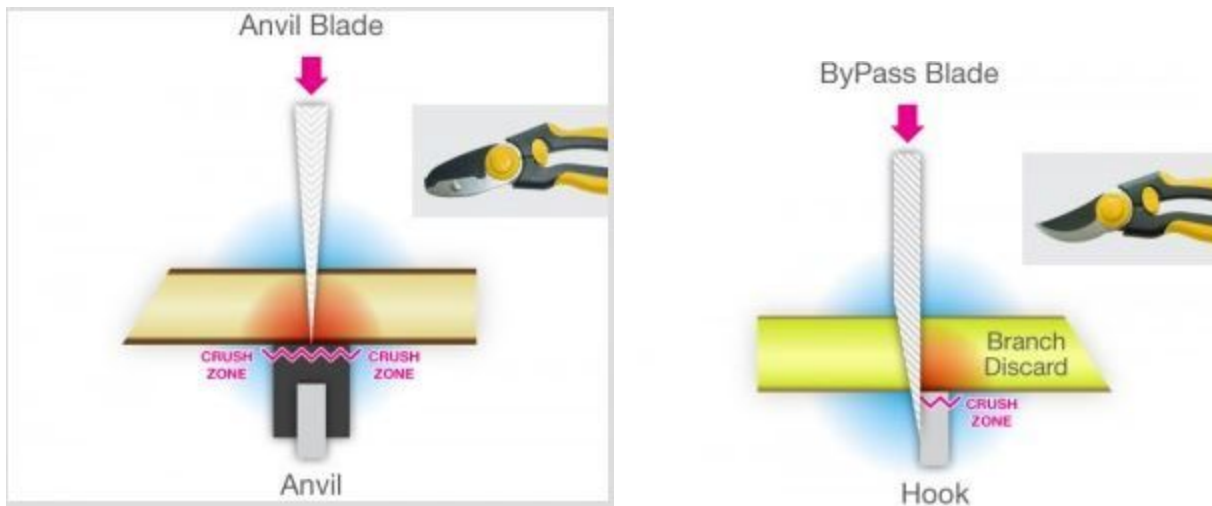


From the Tool Bucket

*a monthly review of various tools, suggestions for using them and how to care for them, compiled and written by **Valerie Stabenow**. Any opinion expressed in this review is that of the reviewer with no opinion of the WCMG or UW Extension inferred or implied.*

If you are like me, no excursion to the box store or garden center or garden show is complete without a trip down the tool aisle. I have tools of all sizes and for many purposes. It is my goal for this review to write about some common tools, perhaps some uncommon tools, how to use them and how to care for them.

For this month I am going to start with hand pruners. Long-handled pruners are referred to as loppers, similar but designed for two-handed use. There are basically two types of hand pruners: Anvil pruners and Bypass pruners. Here are two diagrams that show the difference between the two:



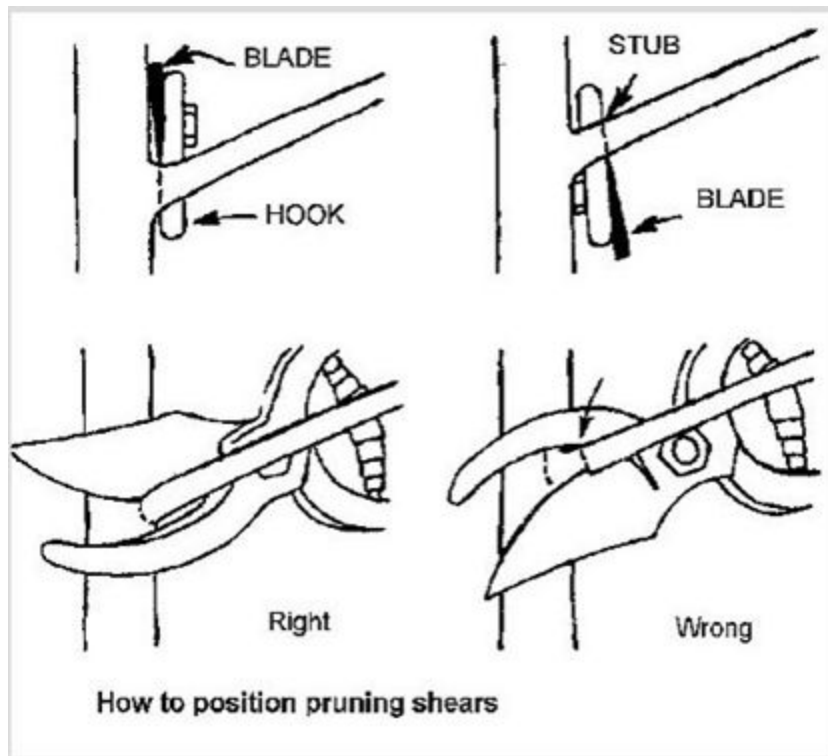
With an Anvil pruner, the sharp blade cuts through the twig or branch and is stopped by the 'anvil'.

With a Bypass pruner (diagram on right), the Bypass blade cuts through the branch material and slides down (bypasses) the side of the 'hook'.

While Anvil pruners have their place, they are not advised for use when cutting soft tissue, as the blade actually crushes the plant material. Anvil pruners are best for cutting dried or dead wood.

Bypass pruners are better suited to most garden jobs and if used correctly, will do almost no damage to the plant.

It's also important to know how to correctly position your pruners when you want to make a cut. The following diagram may help to show you how to do that:



The top diagram on the left-hand side (Blade/Hook) show the cutting blade correctly positioned tightly against the trunk/stem. The diagram underneath shows the positioning of the shears. The two diagrams on the right-hand side show the wrong way to use pruners, with the cutting blade (again in black) underneath. Using the pruners this way creates a stub, not the clean cut desired.



Here is a photo of the two types of pruners: (Anvil on the top, Bypass on the bottom)

Bypass and Anvil pruners can be found in just about any retail location that sells garden-related items. Expect to pay between \$10 and \$20 or more for a good set with a blade that can handle sharpening. You can buy them for less, but like many things, you will get what you pay for. Felco, Corona and Fiskars are some of the most common suppliers. The other factor is what the diameter is of the material you want to cut. If you want to cut thicker branches, look for a pruner that has a one-inch capacity. Pruners also come in $\frac{3}{4}$ inch as well as $\frac{1}{2}$ in capacity. However, you have to have the hand strength needed for the size you want to cut. Once you find some possibilities, find and read the reviews... do the pruners break after a few weeks of use? Are they uncomfortable to use?

One of the most important things to know once you have your pruner is how to care for it. Best practices tell us that we need to sanitize our tools between cuts. That way, disease is not spread. When you are finished with the pruner, sanitize it (spray bottle with isopropyl alcohol works) and take a bit of synthetic steel wool (green scrubber pad) and clean off anything that may have stuck to the blades. A light oiling with lightweight machine oil on the pivot pin will also help.

The next important thing is to keep the blade(s) sharp. Heavy use of the pruner will soon dull the blade and it will become harder and harder to cut with. Having two (or more) pairs will keep you working if one set becomes dull. If you have access to a sharpening tool, use it carefully. Blades can also be sharpened by the same people who sharpen your lawn mower blades.

Next month I will review sharpeners. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please email me at hclub34a@att.net.

WCMGA Projects

Check your Member Guide for contact information.

Project	Project Lead(s)
Algoma Town Hall	Petey Clark
Butterfly Garden Miravida Living Oshkosh	Jane Kuhn
Carter Memorial Library, Omro	Pat Behm/Linda Petek
Octagon House, Neenah	Jerry Robak
Invasive Species	Sue Egner/Valerie Stabenow/Audrey Ruedinger
Morgan House	Kathy Schultz
Neenah Public Library	Tamara Erickson
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	Eric Kropp
Park View Flower Arranging	Lil Hansche
Park View Vegetable Garden	Tom Weber
Farmer's Market	Dorothy Gayhart-Kunz/Janet Priebe/ Synda Jones/Patty Schmitz
Plant Health Advisors	Patty Schmitz/Mary Shepard
Shattuck Park, Neenah	Diane Iott
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.

May 2020						
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 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
31						

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