

Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks

and Home Horticulture

May 2020 Issue

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Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to kemeryr7@frontier.com.

The Invasive Terrestrial Plant Rule

Last year, the IN Department of Natural Resources - Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology (DEPP) passed a rule defining a list of invasive plants not to be “sold in trade; purchased online or shared with friends or family. This rule affects what plants you - in theory - will not see at nurseries and garden centers this spring.

According to DEPP (Oh joy, another acronym), species included in the terrestrial plant rule were assessed through a scientific and transparent system by a team of experts that included representatives from horticulture, landscape, nursery, research, conservation, and Purdue Agriculture.

It is not illegal to have any of the 44 species (listed below) growing on a property. You just cannot sell, share, or offer any of the plants on the list to friends, though I cannot imagine giving a “gift” of garlic mustard, poison hemlock, or Amur honeysuckle to anyone. DEPP has authority to issue a \$500 fine per incident per day.

Here is the list of plants on the list. If you want the scientific names, then go to the DEPP site for the full transparent details.

(Japanese chaff flower) (tree of heaven) (garlic mustard) (black alder) (mug wort) (small carp grass) (Japanese barberry)

(spiny plume less thistle) (musk thistle) (Asian bittersweet) (spotted knapweed) (bull thistle) (poison hemlock)

(field bindweed) (crown vetch) (Chinese yam) (common teasel) (cut-leaved teasel) (autumn olive)

(wintercreeper) (leafy spurge) (glossy buckthorn) (dame's rocket) (Japanese hops) (pepper weed) (sericea lespedeza)

(blunt-leaved privet) (Japanese honeysuckle) (Amur honeysuckle) (Morrow's honeysuckle) (Tatarian honeysuckle)

(Bell's honeysuckle) (Japanese stilt grass) (white mulberry) (reed canary grass) (Amur cork tree) (common reed)

(mile-a-minute vine) (Japanese knotweed) (giant knotweed) (Bohemian knotweed) (common buckthorn)

(black swallowwort) (pale swallowwort)

DEPP admits that two notable invasive plants – Callery Pear and Norway Maple – were not included on the list because “the State determined that including them would cause too great of an impact to growers of those species”.

To not include **Callery Pear** is perplexing, as this plant is one of the most invasive trees ever. To continue to sell it at nurseries and garden centers could be a mistake of epic proportions. Callery pear is one of the first trees to flower in the spring. No one knew that different cultivars of ornamental pear introduced from the Amur region of China would cross pollinate and suddenly produce seeds that would be eaten by birds and scattered all over the place. No one knew that suckers from below that graft union on these trees would suddenly develop and also produce flowers that would pollinate the top portions of these planted trees-also producing seeds spread all over the place. The resulting pear seedlings are rapidly taking over forest edges and waste areas,

Norway maples, while very pretty, are rapidly replacing sugar maple trees in the few forests remaining in this area. If you like hiking, then look at all the maple seedlings on the forest floor scattered among the spring wildflowers. These seedlings used to be all sugar maple seedlings waiting their turn to grow if and when other mature trees died or fell over as they aged. If one pulls off a leaf on a seedling and squeezes the end of the stalk that holds the leaf on the tree one will often find that a milky sap exudes from the end. Norway maples have milky sap, unlike sugar maple seedlings that have clear sap. Using this method, one will discover that Norway maple seedlings are replacing the native sugar maple seedlings that once occupied the forest floor. If this keeps up, then our native sugar maple forest will become filled with trees from Norway – and we will all have to adopt Norwegian as our hiking language.

Burning bush – a very invasive shrub taking over forests was left off the list. Could it be that this plant also is a huge part of garden center and nursery sales? **Wintercreeper euonymus**, the first cousin of burning bush and an invasive groundcover, is rightfully on the list. **Vinca minor**, another groundcover commonly found in garden centers that is aggressively invading forests, was kept off the list.

In my opinion, the DEPP experts on this panel included many invasive plants just not commonly in the trades, and left off the list many plants very invasive in an effort to appease the landscapers and garden center owners who still make money selling these plants. **Note:** Jonny Depp, the rather enigmatic and unusual actor that played a pirate in many movies, was not involved with this panel or decision...

I do envision this future scenario:

***Marge**, a Millennial mom activates her Ring doorbell at the front door at her house in the city. She observes a man suspiciously dressed like a Canadian Mountie standing at the entryway.*

***Marge:** Can I help you? (hand on cell phone ready to press 911)*

***Man:** (Clears throat) Madam, I am office Dudley Do right (formerly employed by the Canadian Mounties) with DEPP, The Indiana Department of Natural Resources - Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology- and I am here to hand you a ticket for a violation of our Invasive Terrestrial; Plant Rule just passed recently by our transparent band of experts..*

***Marge:** I am really not interested in buying anything at the moment...*

***Dudley:** It has come to our attention by our field agent, Snidely Whiplash, that a week ago last Sunday you gave a Dames Rocket seedling to poor innocent Maiden and neighbor Nell as she was tied up to a railroad track.*

***Marge:** It was a pretty plant, and I thought she could use a lift in her life as being constantly tied to railroad tracks and rescued at the last minute is probably quite a drag....*

***Dudley:** AHA! Just as I thought, a clear violation of the law...I have no choice but to give this \$500 ticket to you and tell you never again give this plant to anyone!! I'll just slip this ticket under your door in the spirit of social distancing....*

***Marge:** I am calling the police... you idiot Baby Boomer petard!*

***Dudley:** I am the police madam. the plant police! Now I am off to one again rescue Nell from a runaway train... sighs...*

Sparky's Relatives Move In

In the last issue of Home Horticulture, I recounted my adventures with Sparky, an incredibly cute but destructive chipmunk who took residence under my hot tub after enjoying a summer of seed gorging and hoarding at my bird feeders. Sparky was “relocated” to an urban forest after doing considerable economic damage to my hot tub. The lawsuit is still pending.

This spring, I looked out of my window towards my bird feeder to again observe a wascally chipmunk laying on its back happily gorging seed at the feeder – in an eerily similar manner that Sparky used to feed. This Chipmunk was smaller than the original Sparky, but I knew – oh yes, I knew – that this was some freeloading chipmunk cousin – once again hoping for free summertime meals.

Later that day, my dreams of chipmunk-free social isolation were dashed as I saw TWO chipmunks at the feeder-happily feeding whilst the sparrows and finches who normally visited the feeder perched in sullen silence on twigs nearby. I can imagine their conversations: *“It IS a bird feeder, right?”* or *“These brazen chipmunks have to be stopped-at all cost! To: “Go peck them Sally Sparrow! - I ‘ll uh... hang back here to offer support...” To:”* (in a New York accent) *“Maybe Frankie the Finch can contact Hank the Hawk – he’ll take care of this!!!!... birds nod in agreement...”*

Once again, I set a live cage trap near the feeder. Within a few hours...Victory! One of the chipmunks was in the cage lured by the delicious aroma of fresh peanut butter and apple. This chipmunk I named Billy – in honor of Billy Carter – the famous dysfunctional freeloading brother of President Jimmy Carter. Older folks remember how Billy released his own brand of beer – called appropriately “Billy” beer in an effort to make some denaro. Unfortunately, Billy beer tasted pretty bad and didn’t really sell. One can still find cans of Billy beer occasionally at garage sales - purchased long ago by someone who mistakenly thought this beer who become a collector’s item and be worth – once again mucho denaro. The beer as so bad that even today- no one wants it.

Billy was relocated near the oak tree where Sparky was released last year. Maybe they can begin to once again brew Billy beer and offer it to dysfunctional and lazy creatures of the woodland.

Efforts to capture the other chipmunk, whom I named Wiley (in honor of Wiley Coyote) have failed. The baited tap has so far captured one field mouse who actually did not really ever want to leave the cage because of the free food and protection from predators. This spring I have emptied the hot tub, and later on, maybe I can coerce others (with my lasagna) to help lift the still heavy tub to place hardware cloth beneath it to curb any future unwanted residents. As I have learned, food is a powerful motivator.

Peach Leaf Curl

Peach leaf curl is a springtime disease caused by the fungus, *Taphrina deformans*. It infects the leaves and shoots of peaches and nectarines. Apricots are immune. It causes the leaves to curl and turn reddish in color. A severe infection can cause reduced yields. The fungus overwinters on bud scales, on twigs, and on fallen infected leaves. In spring the fungal spores are splashed onto newly developing leaves. During cool, wet weather the spores germinate on the young leaves and initiate infection. Development of the disease slows as temperatures increase. Older leaves are resistant to infection.



Use properly timed protective fungicidal sprays in the fall. If leaf curl was a problem this spring, apply a protective fungicidal spray after leaf fall in October or November or before bud break in late winter... Do not apply to foliage. Chemicals effective in controlling leaf curl include copper-based fungicides like Bordeaux mixture, lime-sulfur, or other brands that list the control of peach leaf curl on their label.

Ricky's Garden Update

Besides dealing with chipmunks, it has been a good spring in my garden areas. This year, for some reason, I seem to be ahead of the game when it comes to weeding and bed preparation. The assortment of poppies I planted in my higher raised beds have germinated extremely well. I purchased the seed online from a company called Seeds2Go – the germination rates are extremely high.

I converted two raised beds to landscape beds by planting Korean Spice Viburnum, Dwarf Mock Orange, Fragrant Abelia, and a shrub called Dyer's Green Weed. Dyer's Green Weed is a plant native to Scotland and Wales and found in unimproved hay meadows, heaths and open woodland. It is a member of the pea family and has bright yellow flowers that appear from June to August. It is an important foodplant for a range of scarce moths and other insects. The plant has been used since Saxon times to color wool. All parts of the plant yield the water-fast pigment luteolin which was used either on its own to produce yellow or in combination with Woad to form a strong green color.



I first encountered this unusual shrub when I was a student at Purdue in the early 1990's. I was exploring areas at the university, and wandered into a small protected area north of the Purdue Memorial Union where a row of the Green Weed was planted. It took a while to find out what the plant was.

I was impressed by the crisp green/yellow stems, its cheery yellow flowers, and its upright shrubby form. It prefers drier soils so putting it in a raised bed was a good move.

I think that every landscape should have a few fragrant plants. Viburnums are well-adapted to our Indiana climate and soils. There are a few native viburnums, which are quite useful. I have Arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*) planted in slightly wetter portion of my backyard. They were used by native Americans to make arrow shafts as the twigs are very straight. Korean Spice viburnum is a complex hybrid – and is generally a small to mid-sized shrub depending on the cultivar. Most range from 3 to 6 feet in height. The spring flowers are incredibly fragrant, like a fancy spiced French perfume.



Glossy Abelia (*Abelia grandifolia*) is an unusual vase-shaped delicate shrub with fragrant tubular flowers of white or pink. Abelia I think, are overlooked shrubs for the Midwest. In southern regions, they are evergreen. In the Midwest they are deciduous. In general, they are well - adapted to our soils and weather. I like that it is flowers primarily in late spring and summer- sometimes even into the fall. It grows in full sun or partial shade. There are many cultivars of varying size, but I prefer the types with small shiny leaves and delicate flowers. Butterflies are attracted to the flowers.

Wildflowers

I think many folks are confused about the term “wildflowers”. Are they native? Annuals? Perennials? Turns out they can be all of those descriptions. Every once in a while, Dr. Michael Dana (an expert on wildflowers at Purdue University) would let me tag along as he ventured into woods, prairies, and botanical gardens to look at various types of flowers- including wildflowers. By then I had learned that there are many types of “wildflowers” and we even coined special names for the various types.



Meadow-in-a-can wildflowers were the ones most folks were familiar with. These flowers sold in “cans” or bags, were mostly annual flowers either native to the western United States or Europe. Sometimes a few perennials were thrown in for appearances. Most mixes contained such flowers as annual poppies, annual baby’s breath, annual larkspur, bachelor’s buttons, butter and eggs, sometimes cosmos, a western wildflower called clarkia, and assorted other species.

Consumers who purchased meadow-in-a can mixes were often not aware they were mostly annuals. They would call and wonder why few flowers came back in successive years and be disappointed when they found out it was normal for the mixes only to last a year or two at best.

Many folks thought they could simply scatter the seed mix anywhere and the flowers would magically appear. They were surprised when the planting area would become a mass of weeds with a just few flowers peeking through.

I still see this today with some folks who believe that one can just scatter out seed or “seed bomb” an area and the flowers will just suddenly appear later on- transforming an area into a flowery wonderland. Unfortunately, just scattering meadow-in-a can seed anywhere wily-nilly rarely works in this area.

To have success with meadow-in-a-can wildflowers, one needs to begin with a weed-free firm seedbed bare of any other vegetation. One can kill existing turf for instance by using the Epsom salt vinegar mix and / or placing newspaper over the area, and then plopping a six-inch layer of compost over the whole thing. One can also lasagna layer an area to make a slightly raised bed where one can seed.

Scatter the seed over the area. I usually apply more seed per area than listed on the package. Most mixes have flowers that prefer cooler weather, so I would generally scatter the seed in mid-April-depending on the weather. I like to seed when daytime temperatures are reliably in the mid to upper fifties.

Good soil to seed contact is important, so I generally tamp down the seed into the soil with my hand for small areas. I use a back end of a shovel or other flat tool on larger areas. Some areas I just walk over. One can also use a lawn roller if you just happen to have one laying around.

The idea is to lightly press the seed into the soil surface. I do not cover the seed. I then lightly spritz the area with water, continuing to keep the top ¼ inch of soil moist until the seeds germinate. Do not allow the soil to dry out. Keep spritzing until the seedlings are well established with true leaves. Then one can back off on the watering. Once the plants are a good six inches in height one can only water when the soil begins to dry. Once well established, the planting will only need watering when the soil at the six-inch depth is dry.

If you established this planting on a weed free seed bed, then additional weeding should be minimal. Pluck out carefully by hand any offending weeds. There are special herbicides that are labeled to clean up wildflower plantings. Ornamec is the most available. If you do it right, these herbicides will not be necessary in most cases.

One can add seed yearly to the area to refresh the planting, but weeds will move in over time. After several years, it is best to start over.

Quick Tip: A Sustainable Solution for Frost Protection

After trying several materials to protect my seedlings during the last severe freeze, I found that using spruce boughs to cover tender plants worked just as well or better to protect my seedlings. I have used cardboard, sheets and blankets, and plastic and Styrofoam with varying levels of success. Spruce or pine boughs cost nothing.



Prairie Wildflowers are a totally different ballgame. Native prairies once occupied approximately 1/3 of the land area in the U.S from the Rocky Mountains east – even to sections of New England - until development of farmland and rural development resulted in less than .01 percent of remaining prairie today.

The prairie consisted of perennial flowers (very few annuals), called forbs, and three main grasses – big and little bluestem, and Indian grass. Prairie drop seed is also a dandy shorter prairie grass in the trades.

Prairie species are notorious for being extremely deep-rooted – extending meters down into the soil to create the deep prairie soils settlers found in our area.

Farmers had a difficult if not impossible time converting prairie sods to farmland, until John Deere created the sod busting plow in the late 1860's. In addition, the buffalo, who help manage and rejuvenate the were massacred and almost drove to extinction by early hunters and settlers.

A few scattered prairie remnants remain mostly near abandoned pioneer cemeteries, railroad rights-of-way and undeveloped land – and a few scattered plantings near highways.

Even today one can find evidence of prairie plants still stubbornly surviving along highways such as U.S. 30, U.S. 24, and even along I-69 nearer Steuben county. Steuben county has a surprising number of scattered plantings near Pokagon State Park.

Many smaller remnants still remain in western Indiana near Logansport, Lafayette, north along U.S. 41 – even near Gary Indiana. One of my favorite remnants was found near Ambia, Indiana west of Lafayette almost on the Illinois line.



In our area, Dr. Larry Yoder of Goshen College helped establish prairies at the Isaac Walton League and Merry Lea Environmental area near Wolf lake, Indiana. Earth Source Inc. in our area worked to establish a larger prairie tract near the YWCA at Solomon Farms. Master Gardener Nanette Coble and her husband recently established a prairie planting at the conservation club in Waynedale.

Trying to establish prairie from seed has always been time consuming and difficult. Early work by Carl Betz at Fermilab, work at Iowa State, the University of Northern Illinois, and the University of Wisconsin (at Curtis prairie) documented their efforts to re-establish prairie.

Prairie seed requires a technique called moist stratification in order to germinate properly. The seed is kept cold in moist sand for at least 15 weeks before it is ready. Seed obtained from seed companies that sell seeds to consumers is generally not moist stratified. This means that if seed placed in the ground-say in 2020-will not be able to germinate until late spring of 2021. Many experts recommend planting in fall so that the seed gets the treatment it needs with less time just laying around-to rot or be eaten by animals.

Many commercial companies use seed drills to plant prairie seed. Truax seed drills pulled behind a tractor are the most common. The seed is variable, some small and other seed larger and fluffy. The different type seed is placed in separate hoppers and dropped into furrows created by the planter. Generally, seed is planted from ¼ to a ½ inch in depth.

After planting the area is usually mowed to around 6-12 inches (or more) in height to reduce weed pressure. In about 3-5 years - if one is lucky - prairie seedlings will begin to take over. After that continued mowing or burning by certified technicians is necessary to control weeds and woody invaders.

As you can see establishing a prairie from scratch is not for the faint of heart. It requires patience, fortitude, and even a bit of luck to create large prairie areas from scratch.

Most gardeners don't want to re-establish large tracts of prairie. You might want a small plot of prairie or you might want to establish a rain garden, since many rain gardens consist of prairie plants. For these areas, transplants are the way to go. Many online companies now sell transplants of prairie plants, and locally Riverside nursery offers customers transplants.

Following is the method I used to plant the original prairie area at the Allen County Extension office – called the Ehle-Ford prairie named after a wonderful Master Gardener volunteer named Ruth Ehle and a wonderful citizen (Mr. Ford) with a love of prairies.

I collected seed of prairie plants from various remnants located in the region. Generally, it is a good idea to collect seed from areas close to the proposed planting. Since I planted the prairie circa 1999, I collected the seed the fall before - when the seed was mature- easily falling away from the seed heads. I stored the seed in the crisper section of my frig until late fall early winter. I then placed the seed (separated by species) into seed trays filled with a grower's mix. I pressed the seed into the soil as per meadow-in-a-can seed. I put hardware cloth over the seed trays to deter any critter feeding. In this case I shoveled existing snow over the trays. Snow is optional.... In mid-to late spring, seedlings appeared in the trays. Putting the seeds out all winter gave the seed the moist stratification it needed. I transplanted the seedlings into quart containers with their plastic bottoms removed to encourage fibrous rooting. These bottomless containers had a layer of shop towel covering the bottom to hold the mix. I left a lip around the bottom to help hold the paper towel. As the container fills with roots, the paper towel disintegrates and only the fibrous roots remain.

The original site area was about 30 feet long by 20 feet wide. In this case, I had a truckload of soil brought in and plopped over the heavy clay. It was about 12 inches in depth after I spread the soil over the area. I would use the lasagna gardening method if I did the same planting today. I then used the dunk/tease method described in the last issue of Home Horticulture and then planted the prairie plants about 24 inches apart. I planted for the most part in a random fashion.

It was an extremely hot afternoon. I had changed out of my office clothes and by the time I was finished planting, it was almost evening. I was a filthy hot mess.

A garden visitor happened by and asked me what I was doing. After I explained prairies and the reason why I was planting one, He looked at me and remarked "Well for just a worker, you seem to know quite a bit"

I mulched the area after planting and weed pressure was minimal. Over time the prairie flourished and expanded with the help of many wonderful Master Gardeners. They added different species of plants over the years. The area was and still is a beautiful example of what native prairie looked like when settlers first came to Indiana in the 1800's. I have not visited the area since my early forced retirement in July 2017, but I hope it is still doing well.



Dyer's Woad is native to southeastern Russia. It has been cultivated as a dye crop and valued as a medicinal herb in Europe since the 13th century. Dyer's Woad was grown for its indigo blue dye and was brought to America by colonists in the 1600's. Introductions to western North America occurred as contaminants in alfalfa seed imported to California and Utah in the early 1900s. Dyer's Woad was routinely offered for sale in seed trade catalogues in Pennsylvania and several other New England states prior to 1850.

Dyer's Woad seems most common on crop- and rangelands in the west. In some areas it is considered a noxious weed. It is extremely deep rooted and yet tends to be short lived as it robs the soil of nutrients over time

Rose Sawfly

Rose sawfly or Rose slug is the larval stage of flying wasp-like creature known as a sawfly. Sawfly adults literally have a “saw appendage” on their bottoms that allow them to create a slit in leaf or stem tissue to insert eggs into. Juvenile sawflies look like caterpillars. They secrete a slimy substance over their body surface that makes them resemble small slugs. Rose sawflies are yellow green in color and can grow to a ¾ inch maximum length.



Rose sawfly larvae feed on the surface of leaves removing the soft tissue leaving behind the papery, translucent surface and veins. Heavy defoliation gives plants a brown scorched appearance. In general, light to moderate infestations are cosmetic in nature and rarely harm the host plant. Heavier attacks, however, can weaken plants when leaf loss stresses them to the point of vulnerability to other insects and disease.

There are many products that are effective against rose sawfly. However, many of the products are systemic- meaning the product travels within the plant. This is bad if bees visit the rose flowers. Insecticidal soap or neem are the most least toxic controls, but still should be applied in the later part of the day when bees are less active.

Bt, a commonly used biological insecticide that offers control of many caterpillars, is NOT effective against sawfly larvae.

Late Update: Japanese Maples Once Again Show Freeze Damage



Japanese Maple Trees are notoriously wimps – especially the cut-leaved cultivars. Japanese Maples prefer eastern exposures or alcoves well protected from wind. If they are not protected, then a late season hard frost or freeze can damage the leaves-making them have a scorched appearance with browning edges or even damage between the leaf veins. The good news is that in every case I have seen, the trees recover by mid-June, and no one will know the torment the trees suffered from our strange Indiana weather.

Foraging ...

Foraging for wild or not so wild edibles seems especially popular with the younger (primarily below 40) crowd. On social media folks post pictures of scrummy (Yes, I have been watching the Great British Baking Show) dandelion greens, plantain, and others lawn “weeds” they have gathered and prepared - along with wild mushrooms, garlic, leeks, and other forest edibles.

It is not like older Boomers don’t know about foraging. Master Gardener Julie Diehm from LaGrange county used to do wonderful programs and cooking demonstrations about wild edibles at the Home and garden show in the 1990’s.

Ewell Gibbons was a TV talk show regular during the late 1960’s and 70’s discussing his classic book “Stalking the Wild Asparagus”.

As always, I would caution folks about depending solely on their friends or dubious Internet sources for information about wild edibles. It only takes one “wrong” mushroom to kill someone, or one wild plant mistaken for something else, or an

Internet source that doesn't tell the whole story when it comes to wild edibles. For example, I found several Internet sites that promoted eating Pokeweed which is poisonous unless very immature shoots are rinsed repeatedly before cooking. Many sorrels contain oxalic acid, the same compound as immature rhubarb, and folks can become ill if they eat too much. Too much purslane can result in iron toxicity, especially in males. I found one site that encouraged folks to eat scouring rush – which can cause kidneys to fail. Elderberry jam is wonderful, but kids have been poisoned by eating immature berries, or even making whistles out of the stems.

Many foraged edibles are found in lawns – brought over from Europe by pioneers that used the plants for food or medicine. Many of the plants escaped into the “wild” and are considered weeds by many striving to have perfect lawns. Here are a few lawn / landscape edibles. If you are collecting edibles from lawns or landscapes, make sure the area has not had any pesticides such as broadleaved wood killers applied in the last two years.



Dandelions: Many homeowners do everything in their power to rid lawns of dandelions. Personally, I could care less if a neighbor has dandelions in their lawns. The leaves, roots, and even the flowers are edible. But many folks simply pluck the small leaves found at the center of a dandelion clump (these are most tender and least bitter), chop finely and sprinkle them in salads, or cook them with bacon to make greens. I like dandelion wine the best—grins...



Purslane The thick teardrop-shaped leaves of this weed have an unusual succulent, mucilaginous texture, like a cross between spinach and okra. Purslane's mild taste balances out the stronger flavors of many other weed species when mixed together in a salad. Unless you are anemic, don't overdo it with purslane.

Lambs quarters is a common garden weeds, and one of the most palatable. They make a fine spinach substitute in salads. Lamb's quarters can grow head-high, but the leaves are most tender on plants that come no higher than your knee. Don't confuse this plant with Jimson Weed, which is highly toxic.



Chickweed is a winter annual with tiny leaves. This twining, sprawling plant is one of the first “weeds” to appear in garden areas. Harvest whole clumps, stems and all, for salads. Chickweed is one of the few weeds that can match baby lettuce in its tenderness and neutral flavor.

Plantain leaves can be somewhat thick and chewy. Select the smallest, most tender leaves, and chop them finely for salads. They are fairly neutral in flavor but packed with nutrients.



Garlic Mustard is an invasive weed of forest edges which tastes like mustard greens (to which it is related), with a hint of, you guessed it, garlic. Harvested when young, the leaves are reasonably tender – though if the plants grow up tall and produce flowers, you can eat those, too. This plant is popular and desired by the Burmese here in our area.



Violets: I could never understand why folks don't like violets in lawns. To me they are beautiful. The leaves of all violets are edible, including the tiny weedy ones that often invade lawns and gardens. The dainty flowers are tasty and used in fancy restaurants for edible decoration.

Wild Onions and Wild Garlic

Wild onion and wild garlic are common perennial grass-like weeds found in many home lawns. They are the wild cousins of the garden variety we use in salads and for cooking. Just like the store bought or home-grown variety, these wild cousins are also edible.

Distinguishing between wild onion and wild garlic is difficult due to their similar appearance. Wild onions have a flat blade, while wild garlic has a rounded blade. When you break the blade in half, wild garlic will be hollow, while wild onion will appear more solid.



Stinging nettle, true to its name, is covered in tiny stinging hairs that is found in moist woodland areas. Look for arrow-shaped leaves with variegated edges and fuzzy white flowers. I see a lot of posts from Millennials wanting plants to establish in their yards. My suggestion: Harvest in the woods – your neighbors will freak if they learn you are planting nettles. **Caution:** Don't eat nettles without boiling first to remove those nasty little hairs. One must rinse repeatably to be safe. The web site where I found this info states: "You may also want to wear gloves when harvesting". I would state "You **definitely** need to wear long pants and shirt AND gloves while collecting. Nettles should never be harvested "au natural". The stinging part of stinging nettles is long lasting, and excruciating.



Murder Hornets

Just what America needs, another pest imported from Asia that potentially could wreak havoc with humans and honeybees. Researchers have recently discovered a nasty wasp from Japan with a potential to destroy honeybees and harm humans that has appeared in Washington State and the Vancouver area. Many times, dire predictions about how introduced pests will overrun and destroy ecosystems are overblown. Other times, the pest can be a real problem for folks in the future. I always love the predictions

by scientists and natural resource personal that they are monitoring and in control of the situation and are sure it is just a small localized problem that will not spread. It usually never turns out to be controlled or a small localized problem and the pest usually spreads. How far-no one really knows. I suppose it could be worse for us in the upper Midwest. We could have fire ants and giant pythons on the loose. I do predict some sort of Hollywood blockbuster will be released eventually because of the horrific way this pest attacks bees-and other creatures. This wasp does kill about 50 people a year in Japan – so it is nasty. Following is a description of this wonderful new introduced pest.

When a pack of Asian giant hornets targets a hive of honeybees for slaughter, the carnage can be swift. The so-called **murder hornets**, which have surfaced for the first time in the United States, have a particular appetite for bees and specialize in group attacks. The slaughter begins when a worker hornet spots a bee colony, marks it with a pheromone and then brings a backup crew of between two and 50 others. While a honeybee hive can have thousands of residents, murder hornets can wipe out the whole population in hours. During one recorded slaughter examined by researchers, each hornet killed one bee every 14 seconds, using powerful mandibles to decapitate its prey. While the Asian giant hornet is a threat to humans, with a potent stinger that kills up to 50 people each year in Japan, its arrival in the United States has brought

particular dread to beekeepers. They are working together to post traps to try and catch queens this spring and workers in the upcoming summer. Government biologists are trying to identify where the hornet has settled in Washington State and eradicate it before it establishes a permanent presence. Beekeepers are exploring a special trap used in Japan that is placed in front of a beehive, designed to catch an Asian giant hornet before it marks the hive with a pheromone.

When Conventional Herbicides May be Necessary.

I really prefer not to use pesticides at all. If I have to use a product, I will always use the organic option first. Unfortunately, there are a couple of instances where I see no other options than to use what I refer to as “conventional” pesticides for weed control.

The most compelling case is Canada Thistle. This noxious invasive weed will completely take over a landscape if allowed. It spreads by extensive lateral rhizomes and seed. If one tries to foolishly pull it or hoe it, then all one does is increase the number of plants as the cultivation only signals the plant to send up more shoots from the rhizome. Almost all herbicides are ineffective. Covering it doesn't help. Boiling water, Epsom salt solutions do not work. It is a monster of a weed.



Thistledown is a weed control that contains a special active ingredient meant just for our friend the Canada thistle. Usually two application and the thistle is gone. Apply early in the season when the plant is small. The product is expensive, and only available at places like the Allen County Co-Op in New Haven – or online.

The active ingredient in Round-Up (glyphosate) has been linked in some cases to increases in non-Hodgkin's lymphoma – especially those who have used large quantities of the product over many years. Having said that I don't know of any other product that can kill poison ivy or weed trees such as mulberry and hackberry trees in fence lines as effectively. Research shows that products that also contain surfactants are more likely to cause issues, so I purchase glyphosate without surfactants (they are available). I simply pour a small amount of the pure concentrate into a small container – like a soup can – adding a bit of dish soap to the solution. I then paint the pure product -using a crappy paintbrush I never intend to use again- on the cut stems of small trees. Sometimes I also scrape off the outer bark and paint the exposed portion. If necessary, I cut back the top portion of the sapling before I paint.

I use a paintbrush attached to a stick to swab onto poison ivy. This works well when the poison ivy is growing in a hard to reach place or in a ground cover or shrub bed. I take great care to apply downwind, and I put my clothes I was wearing when using the product immediately in the washer. I shower immediately after using the product. This is a good practice to follow any time one uses insecticides and herbicide in the garden and landscape. The alternative to not using these products is to have a garden or landscape overrun with thistle or poison ivy. Allowing these plants to flourish will reduce or eliminate your ability to grow food or maintain a sustainable or safe landscape or garden.



Cabbage Worms

In early spring, cabbageworms begin ravaging cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, collards, kale, kohlrabi grown in our area. The imported cabbageworm is a sluggish, velvety-green worm. The cabbage looper is green with stripes along its back and sides and travels in a looping motion. In spring, white, or brown butterflies may be seen depositing yellow or yellowish-white eggs on the underside of leaves of cabbage and related crops, salad crops, and leafy vegetables. Upon egg hatch, the cabbageworm larvae begin feeding on foliage.

If allowed to become numerous, cabbageworms can completely defoliate plants; they also eat their way into cabbage heads from near the base of the plant, resulting in decay and general poor appearance of the cabbage. They also poop on the foliage – its disgusting.

The presence of small white butterflies cavorting near your cabbage and broccoli signals the start of infestations. I used to tell citizens (who happened to play tennis) that one could work on their backhands while reducing the cabbage moth populations in the garden. Some sources report that planting companions such as thyme, dill, oregano, lavender, onions, garlic, and marigolds near cabbage deter cabbage moths. Red and Purple cabbage are visited less by cabbage worms because evidently the red and purple pigments are not as tasty to the worms.

There are many pesticides that are effective against cabbage moths. However, in my I opinion, there is no reason to use anything else but *Bacillus Thuringiensis* (Bt) often sold as Dipel Dust to organically control cabbage worms.

Hoggles' Demented Cat Logic Logic



To my caregiver: *I am deeply concerned about the threat of murder hornets, but I am strangely fascinated by their gruesome behavior. Following my huge success with the production of the movie "Cats", I have come up with the following potential titles for movies about murder hornets for the coming year.*

Hornet-nato – The Hive Killer

Swarm: The Return – Murder hornets invading suburbia. **Note:** *The Swarm was probably one of the worst movies in American history-worth checking out if you are still socially isolating.*

Godzilla vs. Murder Hornet - Los Angeles will never be the same

The Invisible Murder Hornet – Elisabeth Moss deals with a stalking murder hornet who happens to be invisible.

The Lighthouse - Two murder hornets hired as lighthouse keepers try to maintain their sanity whilst living on a remote and mysterious New England island.

And Then There Were None – based on an updated version of an Agatha Christie novel where 9 citizens and one murder hornet with jaded pasts are invited to a dinner by an unknown host. I wonder - which one survives?

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