

Home Horticulture - Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks - December 2020

Written and compiled by Ricky D. Kemery, Allen County Extension Educator Retired, phone or text: 260-431-6893

Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks / 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.

New Plants 2021

This issue is larger than normal because much of this issue is devoted to “new” plants that may appear at garden centers, nurseries, or greenhouses in 2021. After the nightmare of 2020, it might be nice to start out with new things in our gardens. When I was working as an extension horticulturist, I would offer a presentation to Master Gardeners each year about new plants that might be useful for the Display Gardens in Allen county - or for use in their own Gardens.

Disclaimer: What is “new” to some companies is not necessarily new in the trades. I looked at many sites and companies, and selected plants supposedly new but to me interesting and unusual or with qualities that could be useful. Look for these plants online or at local garden centers and nurseries.

Hopefully, sometime in 2021 things will return to “normal” meaning we can travel about , shop, and meet with other gardeners to make the world a better place. For now, plants, seeds, and products will continue to be expensive and scarce because I don't see the demand for horticultural products decreasing anytime soon.

A Few Interesting Annual Introductions

Superbells® Coral Sun *Calibrachoa hybrid*



There are always tons of new million bells introductions every year. This introduction is reported to be more heat tolerant, and it does have an interesting look.



Buried Treasure Strawberry

This wonderful plant is both highly ornamental and it produces tasty fruit on ever-bearing plants. The semi-double red flowers are gorgeous in their own right. Planting in a container will show off the fruit to best effect, but it can also be grown in gardens. Runners can develop over time, which may add a long trailing element to the plant.

Luscious® Royale Red Zone™ *Lantana camara*



Puffs of small red flowers packed into clusters adorn the dark foliage of this plant. The extreme heat tolerance makes it a winner in any warm summer climate. The plant is certified sterile by the University of Florida, so it won't be invasive in warm winter climates.

Moonlight Knight™ Sweet Alyssum



This sweet alyssum is reportably heat tolerant and offers a soft yellow color instead of the normal white or purple shades .



Begonia "Funky Red" This cross between *Begonia tuberosa* and *B. boliviensis*, two species of tuberous begonias is supposedly more heat tolerant than the "average" tuberous begonia.. Mature plants will reach up to 1' tall and 1.5' wide. In general, tuberous begonias work better as container plants outdoors in part sun or as houseplants in our area.



Plectranthus Colorblaze Royal Pineapple Brandy (Proven Winners) The color of this *Coleus* changes under different light levels and its narrow yellow leaf features a thin red outline. There are several Colorblaze introductions

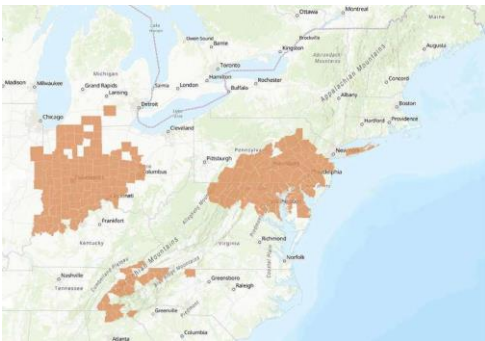
Brood X, the U.S. Cicada Infestation coming in 2021



Every year cicadas emerge from the ground in mid-summer. We hear them buzz their mating calls and will occasionally see their left-over exoskeletons attached to tree bark as the season progresses. Different populations of cicadas on different yearly cycles emerge each year. But once every 17 years, a potentially massive brood of cicadas arrives in the mid-Atlantic and Midwest, filling the air with a deafening mating hum that can reach up to 100 decibels.

That phenomenon is named Brood X, or the Great Eastern Brood. It's set to return in May 2021. For the five to six weeks that they're above ground, the live cicadas — and their crunchy, discarded exoskeletons — will be impossible to miss.

Brood X (that's Brood 10 in Roman numerals) is the most widespread and prolific of the known generations. Through history, it has appeared as far west as Missouri, as far south as Georgia, as far north as Michigan and as far east as Long Island, New York. You can see the areas with the most frequent sightings in the map below. © Provided by CBS News Brood X is endemic to much of Indiana, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware and Eastern Tennessee. / Credit: USDA Forest Service



Experts believe that cicadas come out in staggered years as a survival mechanism. It is uncanny how a Brood X cicada knows 17 years have passed and that is time to emerge from the ground and climb up in a trees to begin its cycle. There are annual cicadas which come out every year, but 17-year cicadas have emerged in huge numbers in the past. I can remember as a youngster Brood X cicadas in such numbers that they were more than annoying. The noise of their mating calls was deafening, and there is nothing worse than having cicadas land in your hair.

Immature periodical cicadas or nymphs develop underground, sucking root plant juices from the roots. If there are enough of them, they can weaken a tree. After the appropriate time limit elapses, the mature nymphs emerge and climb right onto some vertical surface or nearby vegetation. After that they molt into winged adults, leaving their shed outer skins (exoskeletons) attached to twigs or tree trunks. They are extremely vulnerable to predators at this time. Even some predator fish such as bass will enjoy a cicada snack.

Male cicadas sing by their vibrating abdominal membranes and attract females for mating. After mating, the female cicadas lay one to several dozen eggs in one branch. Generally, this number can be up to 400 eggs. Many times the twigs and small branches will become scarred with egg laying sites.

Cicada brood remains in the twigs for 6-10 weeks before hatching ant-like nymphs, which fall and burrow 6-18 inches underground to start their cicada life cycle again. The last Brood X emergence in 2003 in the Eastern United states was a bit disappointing. Some experts speculated that the continued disappearance of the forest due to development left fewer trees for cicadas. In addition, soil disturbance in and around the trees killed many nymphs. Who knows what will happen to brood X in 2021?

New Perennial Introductions for 2021

Maybe its just me, but it seems as if there are more new perennials this coming year compared to last season.



Heliopsis helianthoides var. scabra 'Bleeding Hearts'

This is a good species to allow to naturalize. Prized as the first seed strain of Heliopsis without yellow on its flowers, this blooms from July until frost. The new flowers emerge intense orange red and mature to golden orange with red centers. Deep green leaves with bronze highlights and black flower stems complete the look. A taller plant suitable to the middle or back of the border.

- Size: 30-36"
- Sun to part sun
- USDA Hardiness Zone: 3
- Moisture: Moist, but well-drained



Penstemon Dakota™ Burgundy • Glossy, purple black leaves on a very hardy perennial. Lovely lavender to violet flowers in June, which are loved by hummingbirds. Shorter and more compact than 'Dark Towers' or 'Mystica'. Tough and long lived. Showy dark seed heads in fall make great cut “flowers”. • USDA Hardiness Zone(s): 3-8 • Size (HT/W/FL HT): 12" / 18" / 24"

Lavandula x intermedia Sensational!

Lavender Sensational! is the next generation of Lavender Phenomenal with incredibly large and thick flowers and sturdy stems

- Broad SILVER foliage is thick, tough, and cupped
- Dense habit with incredible branching stems
- Extremely good heat and humidity tolerance along with cold tolerance
- Sweet lavender floral aroma
- Height 24"
- Zone 5 hardy



Rudbeckia triloba 'Prairie Glow' (Brown Eyed Susan)!

Brightly colored flowers of yellow with a bright red eye fading to a glowing orange to bronze, this native beauty brings fire to the sunny border.

It's multi-branching habit provides dense flower cover, and its late blooming time, starting in July and flowering right through to October, makes this a valuable pollinator plant. •

Size: 24"ft • Sun • USDA Hardiness Zone: 4 • Moisture: Moist, but well-drained R



Rudbeckia 'American Gold Rush'

2020 All America Selections Perennial Award Winner • Finally, a Black-Eyed Susan that's resistant to the Septoria leaf spot! Thanks to the thinner and hairier leaves, this hybrid Rudbeckia shows no signs of the fungus even in wet, humid conditions. • A dome-like habit of golden yellow flowers with black centers are produced heavily from July to September. • Sun • 20-24" • Zone 4. This interesting plant may have been overlooked and unavailable last year.

Summer's Surrender Ironweed Clusters of airy rich dark purple flowers seemingly cover up the deep green narrow foliage of this tough and disease resistant selection of Ironweed attracting myriads of bees, butterflies, and other garden beneficients.. Was bred and selected by Dr. Jim Ault of the Chicago Botanical gardens for its broad spreading dense and bushy habit, exceptionally disease resistant foliage, as well as for its long season of flowering. As the name implies, Ironweeds are tough as nails clump forming native perennials that provide much needed late summer and fall nectar for pollinators. Adaptable to a wide variety of soil types from clay to loam and are somewhat drought resistant once well-established.

It can easily reach 5-6' wide by 4' high! Ironweed has excellent resistance to rust and powdery mildew. Deer resistant.

North Creek Nurseries.





Ornamental oregano ‘Drops of Jupiter’

Although related to the oregano commonly used in cooking, this herb is meant to show off in the garden. In full sun, the leaves are chartreuse yellow crowned by mauve-pink flowers held on purple calyxes. Hardy to Zone 4 **Walters Gardens**

A Rhoomba for Christmas.....

This year I decided to give myself an early Christmas present- a Rhoomba vacuum. I really detest sweeping and mopping – well... housework in general. I wish I had a personal maid like Hazel from the Jetsons - or a personal butler named Jeeves.

I can imagine it now “Jeeves, I will take my morning coffee and breakfast now” The scrambled eggs with hand-picked mushrooms should be beaten lightly with cream from organic cows from Ireland. My toast will be medium brown with orange marmalade. My vodka martini will be shaken- and not stirred” I am wearing a terrycloth ultrasoft robe and lounging by a pool in a tropical paradise.....



In a British accent “Then the floor should be swept with a Dyson vacuum - paying special attention to the corners. The floors then mopped with a dish towel made of 1000 thread Egyptian cotton”

Life is tough at the top.....

After realizing my burgie fantasy will never come to pass- I purchased a Rhoomba vacuum.

Rhoomba vacuums come in various models of different price points, but of course the idea is that a small round machine / robot will vacuum your floors for you – giving one free time to ponder the esoteric issues in life. Most come with apps that work with devices such as Alexa to command the robot to clean- sometimes to clean specific areas, or even mop with some other models.

After using my Christmas Rhoomba for a few weeks; here are my observations:

One needs early work to “prep” the house for the Rhoomba by removing or moving anything that could impede or disrupt the vacuum. Especially important are wires to appliances and computers, or anything that inadvertently could get sucked up in the machine. Moving furniture is sometimes required so the Rhoomba has a clear path.

My Rhoomba has a docking station where it automatically returns to - to empty its dirt and dust into a container that only needs manually emptied about once a month. It also returns to the station to recharge. It is uncanny how the robot knows where the station is. Some models only have recharge stations.

More expensive models have cameras that help the Rhoomba find its way around. Cheaper models learn their way around in a more random manner, but expensive models are more linear in their cleaning patterns, and can be programmed to do certain areas, and be blocked from entering other areas. Some can be programmed to learn different floors on a multilevel home. Unfortunately, Roombas cannot climb stairs.

More expensive models have better brushes, so they don't clog as much. A few models have better suction, or suction that can be adjusted. Some models claim to be better on carpet, and /or better at picking up pet hair. Some models struggle with WIFI connections in homes, and in general the better your WIFI connections; the less issues one might have.

I have little carpet in my house, and the Rhoomba cleans very well. I particularly like the fact the little rascal can clean under the bed (my bed is high off the ground). It cleans dirt I don't even see. It can struggle a bit getting over thresholds but has managed to get over them after a few tries.

Obviously, there are a few places the Rhoomba can't access to clean. I either move chairs occasionally so the Rhoomba can have access, or (sigh) I hand sweep dirt from those areas out into the main areas. I do find it interesting that the Rhoomba will alert you by the phone app when it gets itself into trouble. For instance, the Rhoomba cried for help when it became hung up on the legs of my keyboard in the music area. I had to move the stand so that did not happen again. Sometimes owners have reported the Rhoomba runs out of charge before finding its way back to the charging station.

After cleaning one can access the app for a cleaning pattern diagram that documents where it cleaned on its sojourn across your floors. The Rhoomba will actually send a post clean survey to the app on how well it "performed". One of the questions on the survey asks if the Rhoomba "behaved". Really? How can it misbehave? Read on for examples of Rhoomba misbehavior.

Many people name their Roombas – mine is named "Begonia", Some other fun names include: Baby Yoda, Tinkerbell, Dobby, Gollum, Lurch, Wall-E - and my favorite: Kato.



Dogs really cannot hide their guilt, can they? Evie trying to act nonchalant.

Following are accounts of Rhoomba misbehavior: Some folks program the Rhoomba to clean at night, or when they are not home during the day- often with disastrous results.

Jesse Newton woke up in the middle of the night after his four-year-old son had crawled into bed smelling distinctively like dog poop. The smell was so horrifying, Jesse jumped out of the bed, only to discover that their dog Evie had left a poop deposit in the middle of the night that the Roomba robotic vacuum cleaner had run over. Dog poop now covered the entire house– think rugs, floor, furniture, and kid's toys. All of this horror happened while the whole family was soundly asleep...

Newton, who described the event as a 'pooptastrophe' was so shocked that it took him a year to start speaking about the Roomba dog poop incident. "It's taken me until now to wrap my head around it and find the words to describe the horror."

Yellow Twig Dogwood



C. sericea Flaverimea is the yellow-twig version of *Cornus sericea*. I especially like to plant groupings of both yellow and red-twigged in a landscape.

Pagoda Dogwood can

be a large shrub or trained as a small tree. Pagoda dogwood makes a better specimen plant in the landscape – with a branching pattern that is strongly horizontal. It is native to Eastern North America, more common in the S/E United States.



Leaves are arranged alternately on the stem, unlike every other dogwood which has opposite leaves. There is always someone in the family that has to be different.

- USDA Growing Zones: 3–7 Height: 15–25 feet Sun Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil Needs: Rich, medium moisture soil



Grey Dogwood (Cornus racemosa)

Gray dogwood is a native dogwood shrub that forms thickets found along roads and waste areas in our region. White flowers appear in late spring, leading to white berries in summer—they are edible to birds but should not be eaten by humans. The dark-green leaves are lance-shaped and turn purplish-red in the fall. This dogwood is a rougher customer compared with other more colorful dogwoods, but can handle drier areas

Native area: Eastern North America

USDA Growing zones: 4 to 8

Height: 10 to 15 feet

Cornelian Cherry Dogwood (Cornus mas)

The cornelian cherry (also known as European cornel) is a large shrub or small tree native to Europe that is one of the earliest woody plants to flower each year. This species produces yellow flowers that bloom in early spring before the leaves appear. It looks like forsythia. The oval leaves are about 4 inches long, and the fruits turn cherry red in mid-summer. You can harvest the fruit of this tree once it has ripened and fallen to the ground, and use it to make liquors, jams, desserts, pickles, and sauces. This dogwood is not quite as cold hardy (zone 5) as other shrub dogwoods. It can develop quite interesting mottled decorative bark as it matures.



Variegated Dogwood shrubs are common in the trades, and yet have generally more issues than other sturdier shrub dogwoods. Leaf spot in our area is common, and the leaves can scorch in full sun.

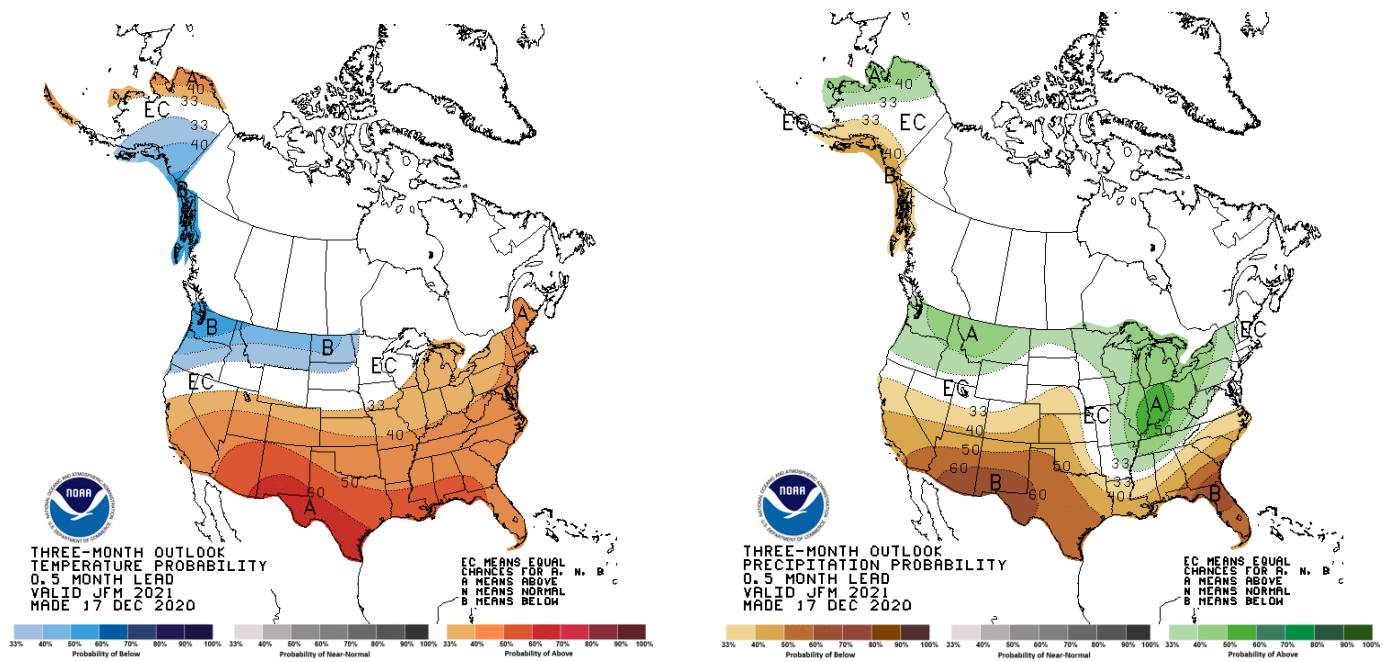
Other Examples of Rhoomba Misbehavior





Weather 2021

We are currently under the influence of a relatively strong La-Nina pattern and this pattern will continue into spring and early summer 2021. Usually what this means for our area is warmer weather in general, with more precipitation. Where the jet stream sets up will determine whether we receive the precipitations as snow – or rain and / or ice. In some years, the southern jet stream carries storms from Colorado and the central Midwest up the coast into New England - resulting in tons of snow.



The circle of above-average precipitation located right over the state of Indiana is concerning – if it falls as snow. The pattern persists well into spring, meaning that the upcoming spring could be a soggy one.

A Few New Trees and Shrubs for 2021



Velvet Fog Smoke bush

Smoke bush is an interesting large shrub for our area. The red-pink plumes of Velvet Fog make a really nice, appealing contrast with the blue-green foliage. This selection flowers longer than other cultivars. It can be planted as a specimen or hedge, thanks to its lush, full branching and form. Velvet Fog flowers on old wood, meaning one should prune immediately after the “fog” diminishes. One also needs to watch out for verticillium wilt, a fungal disease affecting the root system. Don’t plant smoke bush in wet soggy areas.



Berberis WorryFree® Crimson Cutie® is the first in a series of non-invasive Japanese barberries bred and tested by the University of Connecticut. Crimson Cutie will not produce nuisance seedlings or spread to unwanted areas. This replacement for Crimson Pygmy is excellent as a low hedge or border and is deer resistant. Can be used as an accent or foundation plant in addition to a low hedge and border. Like all barberries, old woody growth needs to be pruned as the new growth produces more color.

Boxwood blight a destructive disease, and boxwood leaf miner, a destructive insect are two major problems with boxwood in our area. **Boxwood NewGen Freedom®** is an excellent boxwood. It was selected due to its high tolerance of Boxwood Blight and resistance to Boxwood Leaf miner. • Size: 36" • Sun to part sun • USDA Hardiness Zone: 5. Boxwood is best planted in areas protected from the winter and early spring winds from the west which can scorch the foliage.



It is interesting that this Kousa dogwood developed by Rutgers University has pink flowers rather than scarlet - as the name suggests.

Cornus Kousa Scarlet Fire® 'Rutpink' is a new introduction that combines unique color and a long flowering season with disease and pest resistance as well as cold and heat tolerance. Its 5" dark pink and fuchsia flowers last for 6-8 weeks. • New leaf growth is tinged with purple, and its dark green leaves turn red in the fall. • Sun Exposure: Full Sun, Partial Shade

•Height/Habit: 25 feet •Spread: 20 feet •Spacing: 20 feet •Hardiness Zone: 5-9. The cold hardiness is a big issue because many Kousa dogwoods struggle in colder climates.



Fall color seems to be the big thing with new spirea nowadays, partly because some spiraea cultivars are showy in the spring, but then fade into obscurity for the rest of the season. **Spot On™** Spirea has blazing shades of red, orange, and yellow fall foliage that extends the season of often overused spiraea. Light pink flowers appear in early June with sporadic summer rebloom. **Spot On™** has a mounded habit that needs little pruning

Despite its overuse, spirea is very useful in foundation plantings because most cultivars only reach a height of 3-4 feet with little maintenance.

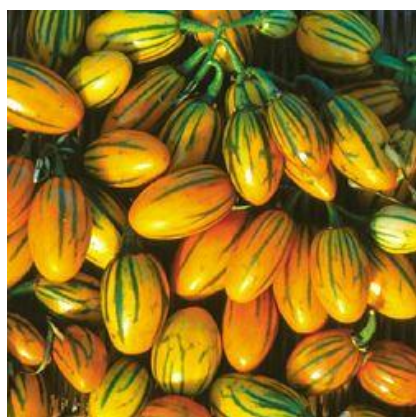
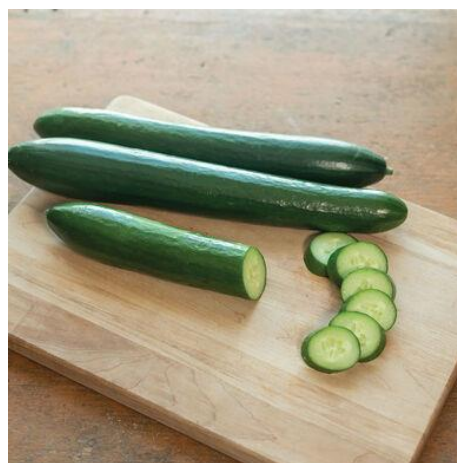


I really think **panicle hydrangeas** are the best suited hydrangeas for our area. '**Candelabra**' is a lovely upright form with incredibly uniform, sturdy stems supporting large cream flowers that turn deep pink, then red as summer fades to fall. Reaches a mature size of 1.8 m tall and wide. No need for sulfur applications or special pruning and panicle hydrangeas are quite cold hardy.

Some New Vegetables for 2021

Unique Beit Alpha x Long Asian cross. From Johnny's seed

Unagi is the cucumber we didn't know we needed, but now can't live without. Glossy, spineless cukes with tiny seed cavities, crisp texture, and excellent flavor. A prolific yielder of remarkably straight, uniform fruits. Harvest at 9–11" long (or smaller, if you prefer). Stays crisp and delicious up to 14". High resistance to cucumber mosaic virus, powdery mildew, and target spot.



Eggplant Striped Togo

These are the cutest tiny 3 x 1" oval, orange with green stripes, eggplants with mild flavor, and also holds well as an excellent ornamental. Hazard's Seed



Green Bee Tomato.

A new favorite for chefs and growers for its tangy flavor, firm texture, and extraordinary shelf-life. A crispy-ripe cherry tomato with tremendous culinary potential, Green Bee has appeared on menus in the San Francisco Bay Area in a variety of dishes. Very firm texture is ideal for grilling and roasting, but Green Bee can also be used for pickling, gazpacho, salsa fresca... you name it! A great choice for eaters who do not typically like fresh tomatoes, as the "tomatoey" flavors are muted in this variety. Best picked when skin develops a clear yellow-orange hue, or later, because fruit can

hold for a long time on the vine without cracking or softening. Bred by Dr. Fred Hempel of Artisan Seeds. Indeterminate.



Cipolla's Pride Tomato

Tough plants produce impressive yields of high-quality 10–16 oz. fruits in a concentrated set, which is ideal for home gardeners harvesting for canning and sauce. The flavor is fantastic and fully developed. Dry texture ensures fruits cook down quickly. Selected by the Cipolla family and submitted to us by Larry Cipolla of Minnesota. The original seeds were brought to Brooklyn, NY from Sicily in 1906 by Larry's great grandfather,

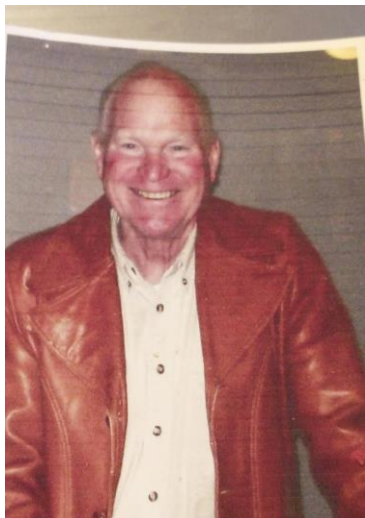
Emilio. The variety was then grown for decades on the 20-acre family homestead in Connecticut where it was lovingly referred to as 'Grandpa's Tomato'. Larry continued to select the variety, renaming it 'Cipolla's Pride'. Indeterminate. Johnny's Seed

Pepper Habanero Mayan Red -- Hazzard Seeds

Long, thin, more elongated than other habaneros, red, 2", thin wall, hot 250,000 scovilles.



Photos



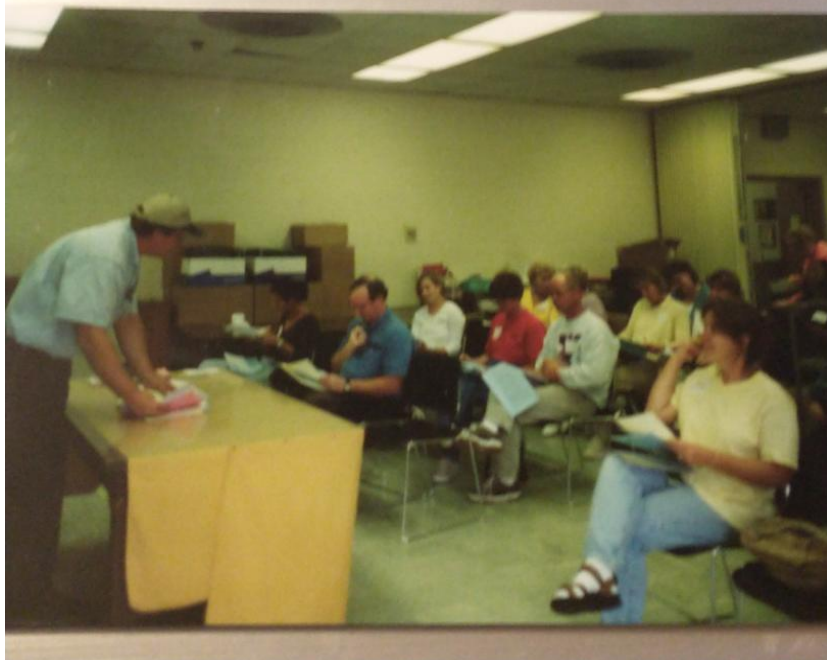
Howard Zimmerman was a wonderful Master Gardener. His expertise was vegetables and he taught the vegetable section of the Master Gardener training class. For many years, the class would meet at his farm on state road 114 and we would tour his gardens. It was wonderful.



Pat Doan was/is a Master Gardener who for many years was the leader of the Monet Pathway Garden. Many who know her described her as “your favorite funny aunt”. Pat also was a great teacher, and also had a great soprano voice. On the left is Master

Gardener Shirley Strope – also very funny. Her husband Jerry later took the Master Gardener program. It was people like Howard, Pat, and Shirley and Jerry that made my role as Extension Educator very special.

Me teaching a Master Gardener class long ago. I can only recognize a few volunteers. In front Jeff Ormiston, who became very involved with the Fox Island alliance and served as its president for several years. Nancy Ulliman (front right) who later moved to Colorado and still remains in contact. Barb Travis far back left in yellow) who never believed she could pass the course and was in tears when she did. A great help with the Youth program.





I received a wonderful, unexpected Christmas gift from Advanced Master Gardener **Delores Wright**. Delores was already a Master Gardener when I joined Extension in 1995. We connected because of our similar humble backgrounds and our mutual love of unusual plants. Delores did so many things to support the Display Gardens. She alone was responsible for getting approval for and contracting to have built the Garden shed still located behind the Extension office. She grew plants for plant sales and was a wonderful teacher - stressing propagating plants and frugal gardening - long before the idea of sustainability came around. She organized a quilting group of Master Gardeners to make quilts for various causes. Today she dropped off one of her handmade quilts for me to use and enjoy. It fits my log cabin and forest bedroom perfectly. I am touched and honored to receive it!



My Mother and Father, Ann Marie, and Richard “Rit” Kemery. They are both long deceased, but I have fond memories of them. My mother was part of a family of 11 kids, raised by my Grandmother Edith Steiner in Lafayette, Indiana. My mother, the oldest sister in the family, met my father when she was still in high school. My mother was a known blatant “cheater at cards”(example: “Oh I just love my wedding ring Diamond – when playing Euchre) and spent many hours during winter months playing all sorts of board and card games with us kids. Her mashed potatoes and fried chicken were legendary.

My father was working for FDR’s CCC program located near the Soldier’s home in Lafayette when he met my mother. They secretly met near a cemetery near the Wabash river. They married just before my father joined the army to serve in World War 2 in the Pacific theater. My parents loved to dance, and both were exceptional at the Jitterbug. My father grew up in a very poor family near Columbia City, Indiana and only made it to the eighth grade. His self-taught knowledge of electronics was amazing. My father loved music and would play loud music of all types on Sunday mornings.



Yours truly long ago. We always lived on the lakes, first at Big Lake in Noble county, then later at Hamilton Lake in Steuben County. I wasn’t able to participate in sports until I was in eighth grade, when my older sisters would give me a ride home after games and practice. This picture on the left was was me as a Freshmen when I was fortunate (along with classmate Neal Knox) to play part of the season on the varsity basketball team. I must add that it was somewhat rebellious to wear the shirt tail out-and not tucked in.





At the conference room where my Extension career began on December 5th, 1995 and abruptly ended on July 17, 2017.

It still means so much when so many former volunteers and citizens keep in touch with positive comments of support.

Hoggles' Demented Cat Logic



To My Caregiver: I am feeling a bit sentimental this holiday season as I have also been socially isolated. As the leader of the worldwide organization Cats Catch Covid too, I would like to honor our caregivers worldwide, and the essential workers such as grocery store workers and meat processors who risk their lives so I can continue to enjoy my favorite cat foods.

The many distractions of this past year have caused some folks to forget or overlook the countless caregivers and support staff at hospitals and nursing homes who have spent months trying to save lives - often without the necessary protective equipment to protect them. As a result, many have given their lives to save others.

So, I am sure that many cats- and people too, will join me when I say **Thanks to all the Caregivers!!!!!! Happy Holidays Everyone!!**

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