

Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks **and Home Horticulture**

June 2021 Issue

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

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.



Bagworms

Recently, experts from Ohio State University reported bagworm sightings in southern Ohio. This means it won't be long before they show up in our area. Bagworm is a type of pest that sneaks into an area, and damage on its favorite evergreens such as arborvitae and spruce happens before we even notice the pest is here.

Bagworm is a caterpillar that molts into a moth in the adult stage. They are easiest to identify by the bags they construct as they feed. Each bag can be up to 1½–2½ inches long when the larva is mature.

Bagworms overwinter as eggs inside the bag constructed by the female. The following year, in late May through mid-June, eggs hatch and the larvae crawl out the bottom of this bag. They spin down on a thin strand of silk (a habit known as "ballooning"). Larvae will settle to feed on lower branches or may be blown to nearby plants during the ballooning stage. When they reach a suitable host, the larvae begin to feed and produce silk to construct individual bags around their bodies. The larva feeds through an opening at the top of the bag, while the pointed end of the bag dangles from the host. If you

observe a bag closely, you will see that the caterpillar's shiny black head and first pair of legs are exposed as it feeds.

The bag is attached to branches of the host with loose strands of silk and can be moved to get to fresh plant material. After feeding for 8–10 weeks, the larva firmly attaches the bag to a branch with stronger, more durable silk.

The female bagworm never leaves her bag but positions herself over a small opening in the bottom of the bag in late summer and begins to emit sex pheromones to attract male moths. Mating occurs with the male outside the bag and female inside. Adults die shortly after mating. Each female can produce 300–1,000 eggs before dying. The eggs will remain inside the female's mummified body, inside her bag, through the winter. If you squeeze a bag containing eggs during the winter months, the small, whitish eggs will ooze out and may resemble minute tapioca. Only one generation of bagworm occurs per year.



Male bagworms are moths that have two pairs of wings and three pairs of legs. Their wings are transparent with black borders and their bodies are dark and fuzzy. Male bagworms are about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long from head to the tip of the abdomen.

Controlling bagworms can be difficult because of the protection the bag offers. It is better to try and control bagworms when they are young.

Hand-picking and destroying bags anytime during growing season or in spring before eggs hatch can be

very effective in eliminating a localized infestation. Use scissors because the bag can be difficult to remove. Offering a bounty to younger citizens for bagworm removal can be a great motivator.

Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) sold as Dipel or a liquid form sold as Thuricide - is a bacterium that kills specific insects such as bagworm caterpillars but is safer for natural enemies. It is most effective when used against young larvae. Larvae must consume Bt on the plant material; therefore, coverage and timing are critical.

Spinosad - sold as Captain Jack's Deadbug Brew, Monterey Garden Insect Killer, and Fertilome Bagworm, Tent Caterpillar, and Chewing Insect Control, is a certified organic insecticide also effective against bagworm.



Ricky's Quick Tip

I believe that we will see abundant disease this year in the gardens. Keep in mind not to water in the late afternoon or evening, as water left on plant leaves promotes diseases. In general, a water hose delivers about a gallon every 30-40 seconds – depending on the flow rate. Newly planted trees or shrubs will need about 5 gallons

a shot every week if there is no rain. This means you will need to spend about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes watering these new plants. Established trees and shrubs usually do not need watering unless there is a severe drought. There are exceptions – but of course there are always exceptions. In the case of annuals flowers or vegetables, dig near a plant to see if the soil at the 6 inch-depth is dry. If it's dry, it's time to water. I have seen over the years, that more people overwater in times of drought than underwater. It's weird.

Robin Update

As reported in the last issue of Home Horticulture, I wrote about a lovesick male robin who would constantly peck at his reflection in a window – thinking it was seeing a female robin. Covering some windows helped reduce the obsessive pecking from Thumper – as he was eventually named.

The good news is that Thumper finally found a girl - proving that even a love - starved robin with a bent beak can find love. Thelma – as Thumper's mate is called - has built a nest in my pergola and is sitting on three eggs. Thumper perches nearby and keeps an eye on his true love. Awwwww...

Fairy Gardens

One of the highlights of teaching young adults about gardening in our Master Gardener Youth program at the Allen County Extension office was when Advanced Master Gardener Suzanne Wys would teach our young gardeners about Fairy Gardens. The students would eventually learn to construct their own fairy gardens to take home after the class.

She would begin each class with a story that recounted the history of fairies, their likes and dislikes, legends, and what the fairies liked in their own tiny spaces. However, it was much more than that. It was really a story – using fairies as the metaphor – about finding one’s own creativity and expression, finding one’s way in the world, and learning that when they used their own creativity and ideas – there were no mistakes, and anything was possible. We provided the materials to use to build fairy gardens, but we made a point of not building the gardens for them.

This proved a real challenge for many of the students, as they were used to having things done for them. Usually, after a period of angst, the students would create beautiful gardens full of their imagination and creativity. Suzanne’s program was one of the most inspiring presentations I have ever heard. I miss hearing it, and she memorized it, so there were no notes.

The word “fairy” derives from the Latin *fata*, meaning “fate”, and Old French *faerie*, meaning “enchantment”. Originating in English folklore, the earliest mentions of fairies are in the writings of Gervase of Tilbury, a 12th-century English scholar and canon lawyer.

When we think of fairies, most of us probably think of the good fairies like those featured in Walt Disney movies. But there was a time when people genuinely feared fairies. Much of the folklore of fairies revolves around protection from their malice. English and Irish folklore reported many types of both good and bad fairies, ranging from Brownies, Pixies, Elves, Devas and Dryads, as well as leprechauns, the Seelie Court and Unseelie Court.

Back in a time when the world was a much more mysterious place, people feared offending fairies who could cast evil spells or curses on a whim. In Ireland in particular, such was the fear of upsetting the fairies, that instead of referring to them by name, they were called the Little People, the Gentry, or the Neighbors.

C. S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, knew of a haunted cottage that was feared more for its reported fairies than its ghosts. Fairy paths were avoided and digging in fairy hills forbidden. Some homes even had corners removed for fear of blocking a fairy path. Cottages were sometimes built with the back door directly aligned with the front; both being left open at night whenever it was deemed necessary to let the fairies pass through.

According to legend most humans can’t see fairies. They live in a parallel universe called the “realm of the fey.” Fairies went into hiding to avoid us because as we modernized the world with electricity, built roads and



My humble Fairy Garden – Complete with cows, cats, and a David Bowie owl.

cities, and cut down trees. The fairies were forced to “go underground” and hide in caves, burrows, underwater fortresses, and finally into the spirit world.

Come away, O human child!

To the waters and the wild

With a faery hand in hand,

For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand

William Butler Yeats, 'The Stolen Child'

Shakespeare knew all too well that the best time to see fairies is Midsummer's Eve. This is when the invisible veil that separates us from the fairies is thin enough to allow people to see and interact with them. You might even be lucky enough to watch them dancing. But be patient—you could be waiting hours just for one glimpse.

Hand in hand, with fairy grace,

Will we sing and bless this place.

William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream

In modern times, fairies are looked upon as more kind than their ancestors. Fairies possess the power to bring health, happiness and spiritual blessings and wield magic to make your garden grow. Fairies will dance among the flowers and protect your garden while you sleep. However, since fairies don't like to be seen by humans, one has to protect your garden fairies by giving them a home.

When I visited Great Britain and Ireland in 2007, I did notice that some of the locals devoted part of their front 'garden' to a small area usually placed on stone or concrete - decorated with small castles, mushrooms, and gnomes. In Great Britain in particular, only very small areas exist for planting anything, and even the small pieces of lawn in the backyard were called the 'garden'. Interest in fairy gardens has increased in recent years in the U.S. Many craft stores now have special areas devoted to materials to construct fairy gardens.

This year, I decided to make a small area near my pergola into a fairy garden. I wasn't using the area for anything, and I liked the fact it was somewhat sheltered – something I think the fairies would like.

Considering my health issues and other frustrations with daily life, I figured any help from the fairies would be welcome.

I would give gardeners interested in establishing a fairy garden the same advice we would give our young gardening students. Let your imagination and ideas fly keeping in mind some general fairy rules.

Keep it small as well - fairies are tiny little creatures.

Fairies are said to be partial to the secret hiding places of the garden, such as a miniature fern grove in a secluded corner of the yard, the hollow of a rotten log, or a clearing at the base of a tree.

They favor gardens with wildflowers and a slight, unkempt look. Small succulents sold at some garden centers work really well.

Since fairies would need a space of their own for celebrations and festivals. Small stones and pebbles for pathways and tiny benches, chairs, fencing, and arbors could provide encouragement for the fairies to stay.

Weatherproof doll-house furniture, miniature glazed ornaments, and a small dish containing water embedded into the surface to resemble a pond can be enticing. Small mirrors used to represent water work really well.

A whimsical fairy door at the base of a tree would allow fairies to both leave quickly should danger threaten.

Allow your imagination to bloom. Think of acorn caps as fairy cups, walnut shells as fairy bowls, and small inverted champagne glasses as birdbaths.



I used paver stones as a wall backdrop for my gardens, and added cats, foxes, and cows because – well I think the fairies need company. I used Forget-me-not as the borders of my stone paths and a few geodes as additional drama since fairies like shiny things. My white owl on the top of the sunflower cottage is placed in homage to David Bowie in the movie Labyrinth – one of my favorite movies of all time.

I have seen cool fairy gardens in containers, in wheelbarrows, in hollowed out logs. Your only limitation is your imagination.



Coach Gibson – He had injured his ankle.

The Gipper

Recently, with the help of Advanced Master Gardeners Penny Alles and Gwendra Turney, I helped give a gardening talk to approximately 85 garden club members from four counties in Hamilton, Indiana - my old hometown. The facility where we gave the presentation was located across from my old high school – which hasn't changed much since I attended there long ago.

I actually expected to see at least some of my old classmates there, but I saw no one I knew. Some attendees asked about my two older sisters, who were extremely popular. One time when I was still in junior high, a group of students remarked that “It must be great living with such gorgeous sisters”. “You haven't seen them when they first wake up in the morning” I retorted.

I had great teachers at Hamilton High school. I was excited to play basketball when I was a student there. Our school team name was the Marines, a name I have never heard since used for a team name.

Since we were a very small school, if one wanted to participate in sports, there were usually spaces available.

Most freshman and sophomores played on the ‘B’ team or junior varsity until they became upperclassmen.

Our ‘B’ team basketball coach and assistant varsity coach was Jack Gibson - nicknamed ‘Gib’ or ‘The Gipper’ by the students.

Mr. Gibson was a great coach and teacher – not because he knew more about basketball than anyone else, but because he was just a great person. He was always positive, funny, down – to – earth, and he actually listened to what one had to say. One never thought that he thought he was somehow better than you -just because he was older and a teacher. One classic example of this was during a Junior Varsity game that we were losing. Many

coaches I have known react to losing poorly. They yell at or try to shame players when the outcome is not to their liking. Not the Gipper.

He was always encouraging, he just encouraged players to do their best and have fun. He would say that winning or losing should be handled gracefully, and that happiness and fulfillment in life was more important than any sport.

The Gipper called a timeout during the third quarter. We were losing badly. He looked at all of us in the huddle. “So –we seem to be struggling - what do you guys want to do?” We were in shock – no coach had ever asked us - the players - what we might do to improve things. There was silence in the huddle. Finally, someone said in a quiet voice “ We could try to play a zone since most of their scoring is from the inside”

The Gipper nodded and said, “Great idea”. We could try the 1-2-2- zone we have been working on in practice” “Everyone Ok with that”? The Gipper asked. We all nodded.

We won the game- completely shutting down the other team’s offense. I learned from that encounter that it is important to listen – really listen - to feedback from others – especially when you are in charge.

Another classic moment with the Gipper occurred in my senior year. I was looking forward to the basketball season, as many of our players had cleaned out an old barn during the summer to use for informal get togethers to hone our skills during the summer.



The Marines – circa 1971 – I am number 34 with the incredibly long hair - and Coach Gibson with glasses and the dark shirt is kneeling in front

I was excited as we warmed up for the first home game of the season. After warmups, we went back to the locker room for a pep talk from the coach and prepared to go back up to the gym. As the other players went upstairs from the locker room, my head coach and the Gipper called me to the coach’s office. “We have a complaint about your hair”, they remarked. “ What about it?, I asked. This was at a time when the length of one’s hair was a big deal for the boys in school, along with rules about shirttails tucked into pants, no long pants worn by the girls, and so on. Schools had strict rules about such things.

I thought my hair length was fine, as I had had it cut a few weeks before. “ A person has insisted that you not be allowed to play as your hair is over your ears”, they remarked. “ You have a choice, cut your hair before the game, or you will not be allowed to play.”

“Really?” I said. “Who made the complaint?” I asked. “We can’t say.” the coaches remarked.

I thought long and hard. Should I make a stand and refuse to cut my hair?

I finally looked at the coaches and said “ Hand me the scissors. I cut a small amount of hair that was a smidgen over my ears. “ How’s that? I asked the coaches – throwing the scissors and my clipped hair on the desk in front of them. “That will do”, they said.

Coach Gibson took me aside before I went up to join my team. He told me the person who objected was a “prominent” businessman in town who wanted his son to play instead of me. “ It is #^%\$“, he said, “but you made the right decision”.

I think I scored 15 points with a ton of rebounds that game. Afterwards, Coach Gibson told me the person who objected came to them during the game and complained I had not cut enough hair. They told the person to go back up in the stands.

Two years later, there were no dress codes anymore, so basketball players everywhere could wear their hair as long as they liked. Ironic, I thought.

Years later, I attended the 25-year reunion of our basketball season held in the gym . It was good to see many of my old teammates. The announcer introduced us to the crowd, and I stayed to watch the game.

After the game, the current school principal came up and thanked me for coming. He then asked,” What was the highlight of your basketball career here at Hamilton High school? The Gipper – bless his heart for coming to wish us well – was standing nearby.

“Hmmm, “ I said” I guess the most memorable part was being the only player in Hamilton High school basketball history to have to cut their hair before a game to play.” I then recounted the events as the Gipper looked on greatly amused.

Afterwards the Gipper said to me “ I still remember that night, and the tough decision you had to make.”

I thought that in my life-after high school – I had to make plenty of tough decisions. It is just the nature of life.

The presentation for the garden club was a lot of fun. I have spent my life teaching others about the joy of gardening, I have been a coach of youth baseball and basketball, and I always remembered the lesson of not taking it all too seriously and making learning- for youth and adults - fun. After the presentation, a lady came from the audience to speak with me. She explained that coach Gibson was her husband who had passed away recently. “He was very proud of your accomplishments.” She said. After she left, I thought about the Gipper, sad that he was gone. But he left behind a legacy of kindness, humor, of teaching others. I will never forget him.

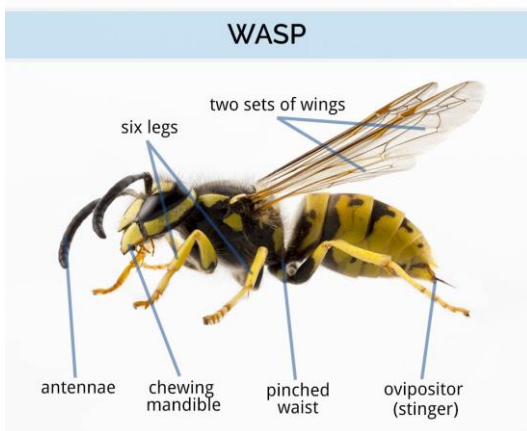
Wasp Invasion?

Yellow Jackets are the most common wasp in northern Indiana. They are often mistaken for honeybees because they look so similar. Bees however have hair on the abdomen, no pinched waist, and structures called pollen baskets on their legs to collect pollen. Yellowjackets have pinched waists, smooth shiny abdomens and lack pollen baskets. Based on what I have observed so far, I expect a bumper crop of wasps later this summer.

German Yellowjackets are the most common yellow jacket wasp in the U.S. They are more aggressive than the native North American Yellowjacket and have 3 dots on its face unlike the American version – not that anyone would want to get close



enough to tell the difference. The North American yellowjacket native to North America and prefers to nest in the ground – unlike the German yellowjacket, which can nest in the ground or in structures such as porch eaves or any place considered safe for the queen.



Yellow Jackets are social insects and live-in colonies. Wasp colonies contain three castes: workers, males, and queens. A yellowjacket nest is gray in color and paper-like in texture. Populations peak in late summer and fall. A yellowjacket nest can be the size of a basketball – or larger.

Yellowjackets feed mainly on nectar and other sugary substances such as honeydew and the juices of other fruits. Yellowjackets will do anything for a sugar fix. This is why they can invade picnic lunches or end up in a soda can without your knowledge. Even folks who wear perfume or other scents can attract the wasps.

Yellowjackets feed their young on a diet of partially chewed insect parts, including caterpillars or flies, as well as nectar. Fertilized queen wasps usually emerge from stumps, hollow logs, in leaf litter and soil cavities during the early spring. A nest site is selected, and a paper nest is built where the eggs are laid, one in each hexagonal cell. The queen will begin feeding the larvae as soon as the eggs hatch. The larvae remain in their cells which are soon covered with silk domes, where they will form pupae. Finally, small infertile female wasps will emerge as "workers" during mid-June to take on the tasks of foraging for food, nest expansion, taking care of the queen, and defending the colony. Much like the British, the wasps love their queen and will defend her to the death.

Yellowjackets become very aggressive when their nest is disturbed and are likely to sting. Yellowjacket wasps have a lance-like stinger and can sting repeatedly. The sting of a wasp can be very painful and may even be fatal to particularly sensitive individuals. If reaction to a wasp sting seems unusual or severe in any way, you should contact a physician.

Some folks argue the yellowjackets are beneficial insects and should be left alone. They are beneficial in that they are good pollinators, but they are not beneficial when they can repeatedly sting – severely injure or even kill people.

Many times, it is better to hire a professional to deal with established yellowjacket nests. Folks who insist on dealing with the problem themselves should take great care. Do NOT pour boiling water on a yellowjacket nest!



Instead at night –the cooler the night the better- dust around the nest with the pesticide Sevin and walk away. Most of the time the wasps will take the pesticide into the nest – killing all within. Sometimes one has to reapply the dust around the entrance if some wasps remain. Sevin is deadly toxic to wasps.

Some experts discuss blowing the dust into the entrance or using a knock-down aerosol to spray in the entrance. I do not recommend that., because yellowjackets can sense the vibrations from an interloper such as yourself and this alone can enrage them. When yellowjackets emerge from a nest they are very quick and will chase the offender for quite a long way. If you are not a fast runner, you might let a pro do the job. I might also add I learned that the correct spelling is yellowjacket – it is not yellow jacket.

Passionflower

The genus *Passiflora* is native to North America and South America and contains more than 500 species, so the common name passionflower can actually describe a number of different plants. Some are shrubs, annuals, perennials, and even trees; some also produce edible fruits. They all share exotic flowers that remain open for only about a day. The flower has a wide, flat petal base with five or 10 petals in a flat or reflex circle. The name 'passion' is a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Parts of the flower are said to resemble items used during the crucifixion.



Passiflora caerulea (blue passionflower)

Passionflowers are rapid growers and are best planted in spring or early fall while it's still warm. Where they are hardy, passionflowers are usually trained on a trellis, fence, or other vertical structures—in regions where they are not hardy, passionflower plants are often grown in pots and moved indoors for the winter.

Most species of passionflower are easy to grow—so easy, in fact, that they're sometimes considered invasive if left to their own devices. Typically, they should be grown in full sun to partial shade, in average soil that is well-drained. A sheltered location, such as against a garden wall, is recommended for many species, which can be damaged by major winds or harsh weather. If you are bringing your passionflower indoors for the winter, it will probably go semi-dormant and look less than ideal, but it should perk up again in the spring.

In zones cooler than zone six, they often die in the winter unless you bring them indoors. Plant them in an area that's protected from wind, as a strong wind can damage stems and burn leaves. In addition, they do best in areas with moderate to high humidity.

Some of the most popular cultivars for landscaping and gardening include:

Passiflora caerulea (blue passionflower) – Often sold at garden centers as an ornamental

Passiflora coccinea (red passionflower)

Passiflora incarnata (purple passionflower) – the most cold-hardy passionflower native to the southeastern U.S.

Passiflora alata 'Ruby Glow' (fragrant granadilla)

Maypop (*Passiflora incarnata*) is a rapid-growing, trailing vine that climbs by axillary tendrils. It is woody in warm winter climates but dies to the ground in cold winter climates. It is native to the southeastern U.S.A. and prefers average, medium, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. In its natural habitat, it is found in sandy soils along stream banks, roadsides, woodland edges, meadows, and pastures. Maypop is a common name for this vine, relating to the loud popping sound made when the fruits are stepped on.

Under optimum growing conditions it spreads by root suckers to cover large areas. This is the hardiest of the passionflower vines and it does not have



Passiflora incarnata (purple passionflower or Maypop)

to climb in order to produce flowers like other passion flowers. If a bushy growth habit is preferred, pinch the vines back after the first growing season.

This plant is moderately resistant to damage from deer. The showy flowers and edible fruit make it an excellent choice for an arbor, pergola, trellis, fence, or wall near a patio where its showy flowers can be enjoyed.

According to WebMD, Passionflower is used for anxiety, including anxiety before surgery. Some people take passionflower for insomnia, stress, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder pain, and many other conditions. The research is mixed or unclear on whether passionflower works consistently and effectively on these conditions. I have read some articles where some passionflower fruit from some species can cause ill effects. This is a case to make sure the passionflower you purchase is from a reputable source.

Passionflower was formerly approved as an over-the-counter sedative and sleep aid in the U.S., but this approval was withdrawn in 1978 when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviewed the class and manufacturers did not submit evidence of safety and effectiveness. In foods and beverages, passionflower extract is used as a flavoring. According to the Mayo Clinic, Passionflower is **LIKELY SAFE** for most people when used in food-flavoring amounts.

Birds Deeply Disappointed at Cicada Performance ABN News Report

Angry birds – waiting partake of a tender juicy cicada larva feast are protesting that the cicadas have performed poorly after experts predicted ‘Billions’ of Brood X cicada would overrun the area.

“I specifically flew north to gorge on cicadas”, one angry and disappointed robin commented to ABN (American Bird Network). “I came to eat, and enjoy the cacophony of noise,” one disappointed crow remarked. I came - I saw nothing - and heard nothing – but silence.” Stay tuned for our special series “ What really happened to Brood X cicadas?” Are UFO’s and Horsehair worms involved?

Horsehair Worms Compiled and revised from an article by Jeffrey Hahn, former Extension entomologist.

Horsehair worms are strange threadlike roundworms that resemble the "hair of a horse's tail or mane." These long, active worms may be observed in streams and ponds, but are more commonly noticed in domestic water containers such as bird



baths, swimming pools, water troughs, pet dishes, sinks, bathtubs, and toilets. They may also be found on damp garden soil or vegetable plants after a rain. Amazingly, the horsehair worms grow and develop as a parasite inside the body cavity of crickets and other large insects such as grasshoppers, katydids, beetles, and cockroaches. This internal parasite of insects does not harm humans, animals, or plants. However, insects infected with horsehair worms die as a result of the parasite.

The worms often squirm and twist in water, knotting themselves into a loose, ball-like shape, resembling the "Gordian Knot." Another name for horsehair worm is Gordian worm.

Horsehair worms resemble hairs from horses actively moving in the water. A superstition once surrounding this species held that the worms in water troughs and puddles had miraculously come to life from the long, thin hairs of a horse's mane or tail that had fallen into the water. Horsehair worms do not infest people, livestock, pets, or plants. They are beneficial because of the small percentage of insects that they kill. No control measures are needed when this interesting worm is found.

Horsehair worms are long, measuring from several inches to over 14 inches- or in the picture to the right – the size of a small cobra.

They are quite thin, ranging from 1/25 inch to 1/16 inch wide and are uniform in diameter from front to back. They vary in color from clear to whitish to yellow/tan to brown/black.



Horsehair worms can also be found on the ground or on plants. A subscriber recently sent me a picture of a horsehair worm writhing and twisting in a flower bed like an alien creature.

Horsehair worms mate during spring, early summer or fall., and males coil around females in pools of fresh water or damp soil. It is common to see a number of worms to be intertwined, forming a loose ball during mating. Eggs are laid in a long, gelatinous string in fresh water. Once they hatch, immature horsehair worms try to infect a host.

They can attack a wide variety of insects and related animals: grasshoppers, crickets, roaches, beetles, and katydids, as well as dragonflies, caddisflies, millipedes, centipedes, spiders, crustaceans, leeches, snails, and other invertebrates. Horsehair worms may be found inside homes in toilets causing people to be concerned that it is a human parasite. It is amazing the kinds of creatures that can end up in toilets.

Ricky's Notes: This is perhaps the most disgusting, alarming, and disturbing creature known to man and womankind. It is difficult to believe that these creatures were not brought to earth by alien beings - dropped from UFOs in crop circles to infest all beings on earth. At the very least I see a new streaming series "The Invasion of the Gordians" – right after the Chateau series where the English couple and their two perfect children live in a fantasy world of wonderful food, a private bus for picnics, a houseboat parked in a moat, and seemingly unlimited resources to do anything they please. Do I seem bitter? Yes...I am.



Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

To my caregiver: I must confess that it is I – Hoggles – whose name was used without my permission in the movie Labyrinth –using my worldwide cat minion network – am responsible for the release of horsehair worms by the Goblin King – Played by David Bowie. Ziggy, as I call him – has been my friend and co-conspirator for decades..... Signed Hoggles,

Keep an Eye Out for Early Blight

This is the time of year that early blight can show up on tomatoes. The fungal disease begins with yellowing leaves at the base of the plant. Spots and blotches on the leaves quickly follow, and if nothing is done, the leaves turn brown and progress up the plant., Pretty soon the plant can look like an abandoned French fry left in a deep fryer. Notice the spots located in the lesions. Those are the fungal structures that release spores to other plants.



Spray Serenade Garden fungicide at the first sign of disease, remove any diseased leaves, water in the morning, and use a stake or large cage to support the tomato plant. Apply one half cup of Epsom salts around each plant when the tomato is ready to set fruit, and mulch with pine needles if possible. Good luck in your battle.

Ricky's Travels Around Town

When I am driving around town, it is tough for me to concentrate sometimes on the road because I am always looking at plants planted near homes and businesses. When my friend Penny Alles and I are on site visits, we relish in the bizarre or classic symptoms of diseased plants. We will be making comments such as “ Wow, I have never seen such spectacular Cytospora canker on a spruce.”” The homeowners will be standing off to the side and ask” Well what do we do to make it all better?”. Oh, - it’s going to die eventually”, we exclaim enthusiastically. Plant diagnosticians are a different breed..



To the left is a Meijer Lilac located off north Coldwater Road. It looks as if there is another shrub behind the lilac, but this is not the case. In fact, a root sucker from the original lilac has been allowed to flourish. The sucker – originating from below the graft union, is sturdier and will take over the existing lilac below. This can also happen with roses and weeping cherries. Back to the alien theme, I would get calls from folks convinced that aliens had taken over the cherry tree and transformed it into something else. Nope - just prune away the invader,

If you have a Dwarf Alberta spruce that looks like this specimen on the right, then you can be almost certain spider mites are present. This is located near a fast-food drive through entrance, and the heat from the pavement, car exhaust, and salt have stressed this plant accustomed to the cool climate in Canada. Unfortunately, the dead needles will not grow back, but it is a wonderful example of spider mite damage.



Waiting For the Orioles



Earlier this year, I decided to try and attract Orioles to my yard. It became an obsession. I researched Orioles on the Internet. I found out that they came to northern Indiana around the first of May – sometimes earlier and sometimes later. They like the color orange, and they like oranges to eat, nectar to sip, but above all – they love grape jelly. When I was a child, my Mom would make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to pack when I went on my “explorations” into the woods. I still like grape jelly, so, I purchased a feeder from Amazon. I had orange ribbons tied to the tree where I placed the feeder. I even considered purchasing a drone to drag along an orange banner over the

feeder, Perhaps I could arrange sticks in the yard that spelled **Orioles Please Come!**

And then.. I waited. ... Mid-April went by and no Orioles. I learned there were Oriole networks where Oriole fanatics like me reported sightings across the country. Eventually folks on Facebook reported Orioles in our area. In my backyard—no Orioles.

Around the 20th of May I was sitting in my backyard around dusk when I saw a flutter of activity around the feeder. An Oriole was feeding on the grape jelly! If I were nimbler, I would have danced an Irish jig near my fairy garden. Of course, the fairies have blessed me and called the Orioles! 10 seconds later, the Oriole flew off – never to return. That’s what I get for using cheap jelly and believing in fairy magic, I thought.

By early June, I was getting ready to take down the feeder. The Orioles are not coming- despite my efforts to attract them. Towards evening, I once again was sitting outside under my pergola when I saw – Orioles! Two Orioles! - feeding on the jam. This time the Orioles stayed. I figure a mating pair built a nest somewhere nearby and found my feeding station. Now I observe the Orioles all though out the day. They even visit my newly purchased birdbath with a fountain that changes colors.

I guess I believe in fairies after all.....

To subscribe to this electronic newsletter, send an email to kemeryr7@frontier.com - or text 260-431-6893. I will not share information with others. Ricky Kemery will not knowingly discriminate in any way based on race, gender etc....