

Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture

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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.



Year of the Lilac From ACH-206 by Ricky D. Kemery

Every season, there are new “year of the” (insert plant name here) introductions. It is obviously a marketing scheme designed by the National Gardening Bureau to sell plants of all types. How are these plants selected? Well ...(clears throat)there is a Sorting Hat located in a hidden school of magic only accessible by train. The year of plants nominees all assemble in a large hall – names are drawn out of the “sorting hat” hat by an aging wizard - and the plants are told if they were the lucky ones to be selected in any current year. The losing plants are then devoured by magic flying cows for a delicious dinner.

Lilacs are woody deciduous shrubs which are members of the Olive family. They are highly prized by homeowners for their intensely fragrant spring flowers. It is thought the first common lilacs were brought to America by pioneers during the 1700's. Over 2,000 cultivars of lilac exist, and many of the most popular cultivars were developed during the 1700's by a nurseryman named Victor Lemoine in Nancy, France. Lilac is the state flower of New Hampshire. Carl Linnaeus first described the lilac genus, *Syringa*, in 1753. The name is derived from the ancient Greek word *syrinx*, meaning pipe or tube. The stems of the common lilac have a spongy pith that can be removed, leaving hollow tubes that were used to make panpipes

Legend has it that a wealthy Englishman, Sir Harry Frankland, sent the first lilacs to New England to his mistress. Another legend states that lilacs were brought to the New World from Persia by an English sea captain. Many pioneers moving west planted the popular lilac near their doorsteps to remind them of life in the east. Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson planted lilacs on their estates.

Almost all lilacs prefer full sun and excellent drainage. For best performance, keep a 5–8-foot diameter circle clean of vegetation around the plant. Apply a one-inch depth of leaf mold or compost or rotted manure underneath the plant each spring. One application of one cup of Epsom Salts around the plant in spring may also help produce flowers on the plant. A thin layer of mulch (less than 2 inches in depth) underneath the plant is also acceptable.

The most common disease of lilacs is powdery mildew. This fungal disease rarely kills lilacs, but many homeowners are alarmed when the leaves are covered on the upper surface with the white powdery fungus.

Improve air circulation by pruning the lilac to encourage sun and wind penetration. One can also plant varieties of lilac more resistant to the disease. Sometimes, especially if the plant is well established and healthy, and disease appears late in the season, it is best simply to do nothing.

Lilac borer is the larvae of a clearwing moth. It is the most destructive insect pest of lilac and can kill plants over time. The moth lays eggs on the plant stems. In early spring, the eggs hatch and the worms emerge. They bore into the plant and begin eating the sapwood (the connecting pipes of the plant). Often depressions and or ridged areas on the bark show evidence of borers. Sometimes plant sap or sawdust-like frass will exude from the borer locations. One may also see actual holes on the stem. Lilacs infested with borers often will show dieback of branches. Wilting of the leaves can also occur. Sometimes one can use a knife to physically remove live borers from the plant. Preventative cover sprays (on the bark and twigs) with a product such as Bayer Multi-Insect Killer will kill the young larvae before they penetrate the sapwood. Apply the first cover spray in late March / early April and apply another spray a week or two after bloom. In addition, keep the plant as healthy as possible with fertilizer applications, proper pruning, and by watering during drought periods. Healthy plants rarely have borer problems.

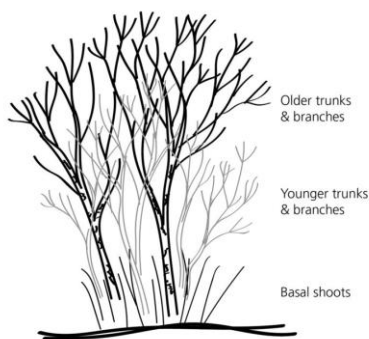
Sometimes lilacs stems look as if they are covered with grayish bumps or "scales." The plant may have several limbs which are dead or dying. Scale insects are insects with piercing-sucking mouthparts that penetrate the stem tissue. The insects suck plant sap while covered by a hard scale like covering. Applications of dormant (Volk) oil when leaves are absent from the plant and before bud swell will smother the scale. Summer oils (Eco-oil or superior oil) will also help smother the insects. Once again, healthy plants will rarely have scale infestations.

Root rot is more common on young lilacs planted in wet areas. "Miss Kim" and cut leaf varieties seem to be the most susceptible to root rot. The plants wilt initially, then "dry up" completely as more water is added by the homeowner. Root rot is also common when too much mulch is piled up around the plants. Avoid root rots by planting in areas of adequate drainage. Do not over - water young lilacs or water in late afternoon or early evening.

Heavy applications of high nitrogen fertilizers can result in lots of leaves and no flowers. Improper pruning - during the summer or fall - can result in few or no flowers. Low light exposure can also reduce flowering in lilacs

In general, it is best to prune lilacs immediately after flowering. Root suckers (emerging from the ground underneath the plant) can be removed anytime. Deadheading (the removal of dead and dying flowers) will encourage the plant to produce more flowers for a longer period of time. The key to proper pruning of lilacs is the complete removal (at ground level) of older/thicker stems as they develop on the shrub. This technique of "thinning" will allow air and sunlight to penetrate the plant. In addition, since most lilacs flower on newer

wood, the plant will produce more blooms all over the plant - not just on the outer portions or at the top. "Heading back" is a pruning technique that reduces the overall size of the shrub. Use pruning shears or loppers to cut just above a "node" (where the buds/leaves are). Vary the location and depth of the cuts so the shrub is not sheared.



Restoring an Older Lilac: Each year, remove a third of the the older thicker branches at ground level after the plant flowers. (see bold branches in diagram). Head back the remaining branches (about a third of the shrub) at the same time. Over time, your lilac will be a youngster again.

Types of Lilacs:

Syringa vulgaris or common lilac is the type of lilac that is most common in home landscapes. Over 2,000 cultivars exist of this species. Often, common lilac can become a very large cumbersome shrub (8-20 ft. in height-6-15 feet in width). It is still much loved for its fragrant flowers borne on the ends of new shoots each year. Susceptible to lilac borer and powdery mildew. Suckers freely. Very cold hardy.

White flowers: ‘Edith Cavell’ , ‘Krasavitsy Moskva’ ‘Jeanne d’Arc’, ‘Joan Dunbar’, ‘Rochester’

Purple flowers ‘Ami Schott’, ‘Madame Charles Souchet’, ‘Monge’, ‘President Grevy’, President Lincoln’ ‘President Roosevelt’

Lilac flowers ‘Agincourt Beauty’, ‘Victor Lemoine’

Pink flowers ‘Churchill’, ‘General Sherman’



President Grevy Lilac

Miscellaneous Selections of Lilac ‘Albert F. Holden’ - deep purple– silvery backs, ‘Sensation’ deep red-purple flowers with white margins. ‘Tinkerbell’ - small blue/purple flowers along stems.

Chinese/Persian Lilac—*Syringa x Chinensis*: This is a large spreading shrub (8-15 ft. in height and width), with fine-textured leaves. The purple-lilac flowers are fragrant. Resistant to powdery mildew. ‘Saugeana’ has lilac-red flowers. ‘Alba’ has white flowers



Miss Kim Lilac

Korean or Manchurian Lilac—*Syringa patula*: ‘Miss Kim’ is a popular cultivar. Korean lilac has an oval–rounded habit. The purple-pink flowers are fragrant- though not as fragrant as Common or Persian lilac. More mildew resistant. Korean lilacs are more susceptible to root rot and root stress in heavy clay soils.

Littleleaf lilac - *Syringa microphylla* is harder to find in the trades. The leaves are distinctly grayish - green, and the mildly- fragrant flowers are pale pink. Susceptible to crown rot. ‘Superba’ has single pink flowers.

Cut leaf Lilac—*Syringa lacinata*: The leaves tend to be 3–9 lobed. Can flower in partial shade. The somewhat small, fragrant pale lilac flowers are borne along the stems. 6-8 ft. in height and width.

Meyer Lilac—*Syringa meyeri*: Much smaller variety of shrub lilac (4-8 ft. in height)— can flower in partial shade. The purple-pink fragrant flower clusters are smaller than old time favorites. The small leaves are somewhat glossy and resistant to mildew. An excellent lilac for a low-maintenance border. The compact ‘Palibin’ exhibits cool pink flowers. ‘Boomerang’ is a newer cultivar with Meyer lilac parentage.

Preston Hybrids—These lilacs with *Syringa villosa* parentage are popular ‘Agnes Smith’ - white flowers ‘Coral’, ‘James McFarlane’, ‘Isabella’ - pink flowers ‘Donald Wyman’, ‘Nellie Bean’ - purple flowers

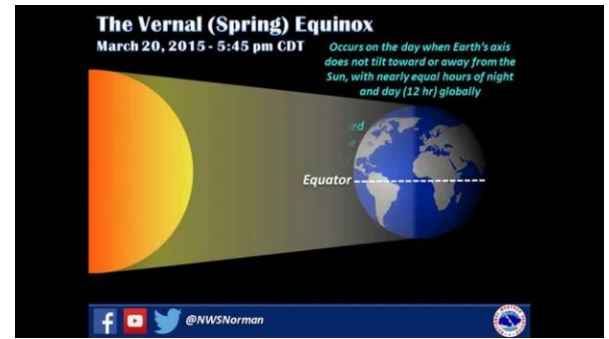
Japanese Tree Lilac— *Syringa reticulata*: This is a beautiful and unusual tree that will grow in the Midwest. The white flowers appear in late June or July in our area. The leaves are mildew resistant, but the flowers do not exhibit the delicious fragrance as the shrub lilacs. Can be susceptible to lilac borer in the Midwest



James McFarlane

The Equinox

The vernal equinox is the moment that the sun crosses the equator from south to north, in March. The autumnal equinox happens in September. The equinox is the only time when the edge between day and night runs perpendicular to the equator, equally illuminating both the southern hemisphere and northern hemisphere. This is the origin of the name equinox, which is derived from Latin words meaning 'equal' and 'night'. Like the solstices, the equinoxes are related to the seasons. The vernal equinox marks the beginning of spring in many places around the world, in the northern hemisphere.



The fall and spring equinoxes are the only two days during the year when the sun rises exactly due east and sets exactly due west. As a way to hone your sense of direction, pick a landmark from a vantage point where you live and note where the sun rises and sets on the equinox – now you'll always know true east and west. Of course, this means one has to get up early to observe the exact location where the sun rises – or miss some prime time T.V. to see where the sun actually sets. You pick- it sounds exhausting.

The vernal equinox in the northern hemisphere marks the time when the sunrise begins to occur earlier, and night comes later. This is the time when plants begin to sprout, and days become warmer.

Following the vernal equinox those in the northern hemisphere begin to experience the sun's rays more directly. In mid - summer at the summer solstice around June 21st, the sun's angle at mid-day is 70 degrees. During the equinoxes night and day are equally as long around the world.

The vernal equinox usually happens on March 19th, 20th, or 21st of each year, marking spring in the northern hemisphere. The vernal equinox occurs at exactly the same time around the world no matter where one is located.

At the moment of the vernal or autumnal equinox the earth is not tilted toward or away from the sun, as it is the rest of the time.

All of this is fascinating to me – because not once in all my years of study – including a major university – did anyone ever explain the intricacies of the equinox. Hmmm. is there a reason for this that no one is telling us? Have the bluebirds held onto this secret to protect it from the blue jays? All will be revealed by Johnny Carson in Helena, Montana at dead noon – on the next equinox....

How Many Bags of Mulch Do I Need?

If you are like me, one ends up at a garden center in the spring with a to-do list that looks like this:

3 peanut butter cups - 5 bolts (no info on size – just eyeball it) - Bag of pork fritters – toilet plunger - and oh—bags of mulch. How much mulch? For how much garden? I have no clue....

There are 27 cubic feet in a cubic yard. If your mulch is packaged in a 3 cubic foot bag, it will take 9 bags to equal a cubic yard ($27/3=9$).

One 3 cubic ft. bag will cover: 9 sq. ft. if the mulch is spread 4" deep - 12 sq. ft. (3" deep) - 18 sq. ft. (2" deep)- 36 sq. ft. (1" deep). This can be helpful when figuring out how many bags of mulch to buy at the store. Experts generally recommend that mulch be at least 3" in depth.

So conversely, 9 bags of mulch will cover 108 square feet of area at a three inch depth. Roughly speaking, a yard of mulch will cover about a 10 foot by 10 foot area at three inches in depth. Mulch can be sold in larger bags or in bulk so bring your slide ruler and T-square (just kidding). Next time measure the area you need mulch for before you head to the garden center to get peanut butter cups.

Beware of Oriental Bittersweet

Oriental bittersweet is an incredibly invasive plant native to China - introduced to the United States in the 1860s. It can quickly overrun natural vegetation, forming nearly pure stands in forests. It is now naturalized in a region extending from Maine south to Georgia and west to Iowa. In Indiana, it is locally abundant in the southern third of the state and in several counties in northern Indiana. It can strangle shrubs and small trees and weaken mature trees by girdling the trunk and overtaking the crown making the tree more susceptible to damage. There is also a concern that this species is hybridizing with American bittersweet and threatening to genetically eliminate the native species. It has taken over areas where American bittersweet once was located. The two vines can be difficult to tell apart. Due to this potential harm that the Oriental bittersweet vine might cause, it is imperative to know the difference between them.



Fruits of Oriental bittersweet show a golden capsule opening up to reveal a crimson seed. All photos by Rebecca Finneran, MSU Extension



Vigorous, twining growth can easily girdle large trees.

The leaves of American bittersweet have gradually tapered leaf tips. Oriental bittersweet leaf has broader and shorter tips. The flowers and fruit of Oriental bittersweet are located along the vine- not just on the end of the twigs like American bittersweet. The fruits of both species can appear very similar. Oriental bittersweet commonly occurs along the edge of a road where infestations are easily noticed and harvested by “unsuspecting” collectors who then further spread the plant. Birds eat the berries which can be spread long distances but transporting Oriental bittersweet with seeds attached allows the seeds to drop along the way and spread the plant. Don’t attempt to collect plants from the wild to plant in your landscape – You will rue the day.

Bittersweet plants are either female or male, so both are necessary for fertilization and fruit production. Trying to find online sources is tough. “Moonshine

Designs” nursery claims to offer both male and female plants of native non-invasive American bittersweet. ‘Indian Brave’ and ‘Indian Maiden/Princess’ are two cultivars available in the trades. Sooner Plant Farms (a place I purchase plants from) and Wilson Gardens offer Autumn Revolution™ - a new asexual American bittersweet. This variety has "perfect flowers"—no pollinator necessary. Because of this, the fruit production is outstanding, with the fruit size being twice the size of other Bittersweets. Since Autumn Revolution is an ecovar of American Bittersweet, it should not – in theory - spread rampantly like Oriental Bittersweet. Who knew bittersweet would be such a pain?

Green Beans

Yes , I know the excitement is building – Ricky is finally going to talk about green beans!! Oh Boy!!

Green beans are the unripe fruits of the common bush bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*). Green beans go by many different names, like string beans, French beans, snap beans, and haricots verts in French. There are actually



more than 500 types of green beans available for cultivation. Green beans originated in South America in the Andes mountains thousands of years ago. Their cultivation spread out into the New World where Columbus came upon them. He brought them back to Europe from his second exploratory voyage in 1493. The first botanical drawing made of bush beans was done by a German doctor by the name of Leonhart Fuchs in 1542. His work in botany was later honored by naming the *fuchsia* genus after him. To me, it makes perfect sense to name a tender tropical flower after a person who “discovered” green beans.

Green beans differ from other beans in that you cook them still in their bean pods. This is in contrast to black beans or pinto beans, which you harvest from their pods before enjoying them.

Bush beans and pole beans are the two main green bean varieties. Bush-type beans develop in shrubs that grow to around two feet tall; whereas pole bean plants are climbers—usually up trellises or other structures—and can reach six feet

Green beans cultivated prior to the 17th century would have been rather tough and stringy. People began to experiment with cross breeding seeking a more palatable green bean. By 1889, Calvin Keeney developed snap beans (they “snap” in half when broken”) for Burpee. These went on to become one of the most popular varieties of green bean until 1925 when Tendergreen beans were developed.

The Kentucky Wonder pole bean was developed in 1877 from Old Homestead, a variety produced in 1864. The greatest snap bean development occurred in 1962 with the advent of Bush Blue Lake, which started out as a canning bean and was regarded as the finest example of green beans available. Many dozens of other cultivars have since been introduced to the market but, for many, Bush Blue Lake remains the clear favorite.

Beans are members of the legume family and have the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen in their roots. However, according to the University of Connecticut, green beans do not remain in the ground long enough to be effective in producing nitrogen-fixing nodules.

Haricot vert, also known as French beans, are a thinner, shorter variety—usually about 4-inches long (while Blue Lake green beans are 5-7 inches). They cook in about half the time, and are more tender than Blue Lake green beans

French-cut is just a fancy term for julienne or thinly sliced. Because of their slender shape, they cook faster than whole beans and offer a unique visual presentation.

Fresh green beans should be firm and should snap when bent in half. You'll want to trim off the tough ends before cooking them, and you can also peel away the fibrous strip along the edge if you're particular.

Planting Beans

In the spring, plant green bean seed only after all danger of frost has passed. Some seeds are dusted with fungicide. Organic growers should avoid those. Bush beans should be planted about 1 inch deep and 1 to 2 inches apart in the row. The rows should be 2½ to 3 feet apart. After the beans have sprouted, thin the plants to 6-8 inches apart.

Pole beans should be planted in rows 3 to 4 feet apart. Plant them in hills and place a 6- to 8-foot stake in the center of each hill. Plant three to four seeds around the stake, about 1 inch deep in the soil. As the bean vines mature, they will



grow up the stake. Some gardeners are very creative when it comes to support for pole beans – using ladders, tents of sticks, and other methods of support.

Beans grow best when the soil is fertilized well. For an area that is 10 feet long and 10 feet wide, use 2 pounds of fertilizer such as 10-10-10. Spread the fertilizer evenly over the area then mix it in with the top 3 to 4 inches of soil.

Water the plants about once a week in dry weather. Do not let the soil dry out while the beans are blooming, or the blooms will drop, and yields will be decreased.

The roots of beans grow near the soil surface. When hoeing and pulling weeds, do not dig too deep, or the plant's roots will be damaged. After the plants begin to flower and set beans, apply ½ cup of fertilizer for every 10 feet of row.

Green beans are ready to pick when they are about the size of a small pencil. Pull them carefully to avoid damaging the plant. Overmature beans are tough and stringy.

When your pole beans reach the top of the beans pole pinch off the tops of the vines. This encourages the plant to channel more energy into producing more pods.

You must regularly pick the bean pods to encourage your plants to grow more.

Bush bean varieties tend to mature all at once. They grow pods for several weeks, and after a while, they stop.

Pole bean varieties give an extended yield. They produce throughout the growing season and are easy to harvest. Additionally, when you pick the pods regularly, you extend the growing season and your green bean's productivity. You can store fresh beans in the crisper, in plastic bags or in other containers in the refrigerator. They usually can be stored in the refrigerator for a week. Many folks can green beans for winter use. Here is a link on canning: [CANNING 101 | Pressure Canning Green Beans - Bing video](#)

Bean “Folklore”

Having a long history means folks have created their own legends and folklore regarding green beans:

- *When planting beans press the soil with your boot (a shoe won't do it) for good luck.
- *Plant beans in the middle of the day for a better yield.
- *Beans planted on dark nights will grow the best crops.
- *Plant beans early in the morning if you want to have the crop come in earlier in the season.
- *Plant beans when the elm leaves are as big as a penny.
- *Beans planted during a leap year will produce more than usual.
- *Plant beans in new ground, or under a tree, and there won't be any bugs on the vines.
- *Beans planted on the full of the moon will begin bearing at the ground and bear all the way up. *Plant beans on a full moon in April. *If beans are planted on Good Friday, they will grow well. *It is bad luck to give bean seed away.

Pests and diseases:

Mexican Bean Beetles can chew irregular holes in bean leaves. The insect looks like a ladybeetle – except it has eight black spots on each wing. Sometimes one can find small yellow eggs on the leaves. The larva is a weird yellow spiny grub usually found on the underside of leaves. In wet years, or if overwatered, beans can develop root rot and fungal diseases like powdery mildew.

Mites These creatures are very small, light-colored, or reddish – and usually a magnifying glass is needed to see them. There is nothing as creepy as observing droves of mites (using a hand lens) crawling on bean leaves. Heavy feeding damage by mites will cause the foliage to bronze - then turn brown. Webs are present (usually visible with a hand lens) when mite populations are high. Dusting leaves occasionally with Diatomaceous Earth can help keep the beetles and mites at bay.



Mexican bean beetle, adult, larvae, and damage

Spring Beauty

I was fortunate to serve as a teaching assistant for many professors in the school of Horticulture at Purdue. Often professors would take their assistant teachers out in the field to look at plant material discussed in class. I never thought of myself as a teacher, being mostly a warehouse worker before I went to college at 30-years of age.

Having the opportunity to teach others I found was a gift - and I found I really liked teaching others about Horticulture – and the beauty of the natural world.



My future major professor at Purdue – Professor of Horticulture Mike Dana – taught several classes about herbaceous ornamentals - what we call flowers. One spring he asked me to tag along as he looked at spring wildflowers in a wooded area not far from the University. I had seen wildflowers in the spring woods before, but I knew little about them. I was especially interested in the folklore- their uses by native Americans and pioneers.

One early spring wildflower is Spring-Beauty - a native perennial in the purslane family found in moist woodland areas in eastern Canada and the U.S.A. It is a low growing plant with groups of light pink or white flowers that sport dark pink stripes. They open on sunny days and close at night and on cloudy days. The plant spreads by underground corms and seeds and can be used as a groundcover. However, it tends to disappear after seeds have set in late spring. The leaves are in pairs and basilar, grass-like and will grow up to 12 inches long before dormancy. Spring Beauty grows from corms that are edible with a chestnut-like flavor and were in fact consumed by early Americans but are time-consuming to collect in quantity sufficient for a meal.

This plant prefers partial shade in moist rich humusy soils with good drainage. It can be naturalized in meadows, woodlands or even the yard and used in rock gardens and native/wildflower gardens.

The genus name, *Claytonia*, honors John Clayton (1686-1773), who came to Virginia from England in 1705.

Herd Up OSHKOSH, WI (WTAQ)

Just days after their annual St. Patrick's Day party, a local Irish pub received a wild visit – but it wasn't from a leprechaun.

Typically, 'Herd Up' is a phrase used to refer to basketball in the City of Oshkosh with the Wisconsin Herd.

But staff and customers at Dublin's Irish Pub in Oshkosh learned the real heritage of the phrase as a herd of deer came crashing through the front window of the pub on Monday afternoon.

Operations Manager Mark Rutkowski wasn't there, and thought the bartenders were trying to pull a fast one on him. That is, until he reviewed the security footage.

At least 6 to 7 deer all just hopped over that patio wall we have there and attempted to run through the building," Rutkowski said. "The video is crazy because they just appear and disappear within seconds!"

Rutkowski says he hunts, but he's never seen deer behave in that manner in the wild, or even when you're driving around during the fall. "It's weird. It's like frogs coming out of the sky, you know when people say it's raining fish or something. All of a sudden, they appear – and then disappear as fast as they showed up," Rutkowski told WTAQ News.

However, he does have a theory about where the deer came from. There's a small retention pond area just across 9th Avenue, and Rutkowski speculates they were somehow spooked or scared by traffic in the area – leading them to run into the area of the bar. The bar remains open for regular business, but Rutkowski had one caveat: "Sorry, we will not be having any venison specials on the menu!"

Ricky's Comments:

Frogs coming out of the sky. Raining fish? ... Have mushrooms been on special lately?

It was the green beer – Deer – Green beer- it rhymes.....

Has HR been notified?

Did any of the deer have correct ID?



Breaking News! A Time to Plant

I inserted this bit into the newsletter just before emailing it out to inform readers that NOW is the time to plant trees, shrubs, and plant, move, or divide perennials in your landscapes. The reason? Well using the term Breaking News! makes things more dramatic – don't you think? The real reason? The weather is perfect. It has been cool, with periods of precipitation. I just (with help) recently moved many daylilies in my landscape from areas that have become more shaded over the years to areas with more sun. The plants are smaller and are easy to move. After using a hand trowel to pop them in the ground, it was not necessary to even water the plants as rain was in the forecast. Easy peasy – which means less drudgery and less time maintaining the plants because they will establish quickly with little maintainence.



Green Bean Casserole

GBC (everything has an acronym nowadays) – is a baked dish of green beans, canned cream of mushroom soup, and canned fried onions. GBC was invented by the Campbell Soup Company in their New Jersey test kitchen in 1955. Marketed across the United States for Thanksgiving, it has since become popular among many families in the eastern Midwest, eaten not only on holidays, but also for everyday meals, potlucks, and community gatherings. It has been embraced in this region, more so than others, as an expected customary tradition

Ricky: I agree, I find that many folks worry incessantly about who actually is bringing the GBC to holiday and family gatherings. Often one hears: “Is Grandma bringing the green bean casserole? ..silence.. .. I heard

Aunt Thelma is bringing it this year...pause... No. Thelma is bringing the sweet potato pie...pause ..Maybe cousin Sue will bring it... silenceUh.... Sue disappeared several years ago-we think she ran off with the vacuum cleaner salesperson.....silence.. Well, Someone has to make the casserole – or there will be no Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, or summer picnics without it.....wailing and keening heard in background.....

The Trees on my Street

All the streets in the subdivision where I live are being repaved this year. It has been a long time coming, and I applaud the association officers for the time spent to coordinate this project.

Essentially, the existing pavement was excavated, removed, and dug. You can see from the photos how deep it is before the new concrete road was filled in.

The trees in the picture have been planted near the street for approximately 15 years. The photos show how little the root systems have established over the years, and the horrible conditions street trees must endure. The photos also

show how little of a root system is present to support a 25 foot in height tree – which is why many street trees blow over in storms. It also explains why many street trees die or are removed and replaced after 15 years or so.



Forsythia University of Georgia

One of first landscape shrubs to flower in the spring in this area is Forsythia – which is blooming now in home landscapes.

Forsythia is an interesting shrub. It belongs to the olive family, originated in Asia, and appeared in European gardens by the mid-19th century. American hybrids were developed around the time of WWI.

Although it is sometimes called “golden bell,” its most common name is the same as its Latin genus name, after Scottish botanist William Forsyth (1737-1804), who was head royal gardener and a founding member of the Royal Horticultural Society. Its branches are used to bow a Korean stringed instrument called the ajaeng.



Ajaeng

Forsythia flowers bloom well before its green foliage appears.

Propagation is easy, too—cuttings taken from a parent plant have been known to root and grow after simply being stuck in the ground.

Forsythia has a few minor issues. It has a slightly wild and irregular shape – so pruning immediately after flowering to keep it in form is usually a good idea. It only has spring interest, so the rest of the season after it flowers it just sort of occupies space. One can lose flower buds in very

cold winter, so one might see flowering only on the top section of the shrub in certain years. It has few disease or insect issues. ‘Lynwood Gold’ and ‘Meadowlark’ are two common cultivars.



Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

To my caregiver: *Based on your repeated indifference and negligence for my frequent and regular feeding times, I am encouraging area cats to “herd up” to raid the nearby Pet Smart store this weekend. We will use a battering ram to break down the front window and then rush inside – meowing and hissing as we go. Then will fill shopping carts with cat food – canned and dry – and transport the food to waiting vehicles (Bobcats) nearby. We also will release any cats held captive in the store and torment any dogs in the grooming area....*

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