

Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture

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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.

A Closer Look at Diseases of Tomatoes

I expect to see a multitude of disease in gardens and landscapes this season because of the abundant precipitation we have received so far. Since we are growing tomatoes here in the lovely Midwest instead of the regions of central and south America where they came from – it is no surprise they are under stress here and more susceptible to various issues not found in South America.



There are many fungal leaf spots and blotches (blights) that can appear on tomatoes. The most common are **Early and Late Blight, Alternaria Leaf Spot, Anthracnose, and Septoria Leaf spot**. The symptoms are all very similar. Yellow or tan to brown spots or blotches appear on the leaves of the tomato; usually about the time the plant begins to bear fruit. The lower leaves are usually affected first. Notice the **early blight sample to the left** – the dark circular spots contain the spores of the fungus. If one looks at these spots using a hand lens, one can see dark spots within the lesions. Often the bottom of the leaf yellows first with a characteristic “V” shape. The leaves eventually turn yellow then crispy

brown and fall off the plant. If nothing is done, the disease progresses upward until the entire plant is crispy – like cold overdone French fries.



Alternaria and Septoria leaf spot
– The spots are smaller and scattered over the leaf



To help control these leaf diseases, pick the diseased leaves off the plant and pick up any that have fallen on the ground. Sometimes this is all you need to do. Water in the morning and not in the late afternoon or evening. Water helps fungal disease spread. Use a mulch around the plants attached to a very sturdy tall stake, trellis, or cage. Most cages I see sold at garden centers are piddly things that would not support a chipmunk. Some folks make their own sturdy cages. Organic gardeners can use Bordeaux Mix or other copper and sulfur based products - Actinovate, or Monterey Complete Disease Control (same active ingredient as Serenade fungicide but cheaper and more widely available).

Though not as common, bacterial diseases of tomatoes also exist. The main difference is that the lesions or blotches have a water soaked and slimy appearance. In theory, the Monterey product should also work against these diseases.

Viral diseases exhibit a phenomenon called mosaic, which essentially means streaked with yellow and stunted. The most common viral disease of tomato is Tobacco Mosaic virus. This can be spread to the plant by smokers, so wash your hands after smoking if you plan to work in the garden around your peppers and tomato plants. The plants must be removed from the garden and destroyed



Verticillium wilt is a major disease of tomatoes. It is different from the leaf spots and blotches in that Verticillium wilt is a fungus that grows in the soil. Everything is fine once again until fruiting occurs. Then - even when the plants have plenty of moisture in the root zone - the plants begin to wilt in the heat of the day. Often in the early stages of the disease, the plants recover in the late afternoon when the temperature falls. This is only temporary. Soon the plants never recover. They just wilt and die, especially if the unsuspecting gardener waters more frequently when the wilting is first noticed. This disease can

build up in the soil if tomatoes are grown in the same place year- after-year. Rotate your tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant to different spots in the garden yearly to avoid this disease.

There is no "cure" for tomatoes that have Verticillium Wilt. However, one can sometimes nurse the plant to the harvest stage if one follows proper watering procedures.



Fusarium or Pythium diseases are similar to Verticillium in that the plant wilts. However, the fungus first attacks the crown area (where the main stem meets the ground). Often, brown or purple discoloration is present. This discoloration is also present when one cuts into the stem. There is no cure for these diseases.

Blossom end rot occurs when the plant cannot absorb calcium because of overly wet or dry conditions in the soil. Use a mulch and keep the soil moist, but not overly wet or soggy. Some gardeners purchase calcium sprays to remedy the problem. No real research exists to prove that this helps. Some varieties will be more susceptible to blossom end rot than others. Finally, simply use the tomato portion that is not affected if you still want to eat tomatoes.



Bellflower



Campanula glomerata, or Clustered Bellflower, is a herbaceous, clumping, perennial with some of the most intense purple/blue flowers one can find in a landscape. Most species of *Campanula* perform best in areas with cool nights. If your summer climate is cool, site the plant in full sun; however, if the summer climate is hot, you will have more success with a site in partial shade. Regardless of the site, the plant requires regular moisture.

A Close Look at Compost

From ACH-221 – Using Compost in the Landscape & Garden – by Ricky Kemery

The idea behind using compost in the garden is that one wants to enrich and rejuvenate the soil and plants by providing nutrients and micro-organisms that plants need for health and vigor. Research shows that healthy plants are just more resistant to insect and disease attack compared with plants that are stressed.



Benefits of Compost: Compost contains macro and micronutrients often absent in synthetic fertilizers. Compost also releases nutrients slowly—over months or years, unlike synthetic fertilizers. Compost also buffers the soil, neutralizing both acid & alkaline soils, bringing pH levels to the optimum range for nutrient availability to plants. Compost helps sandy soil retain water and nutrients and loosens tightly bound particles in clay or silt soil so roots can spread. Compost enriched soil attracts beneficial insects, worms

and other organisms that burrow through soil keeping it well aerated. Most yard wastes can be composted, including leaves, grass clippings, plant stalks, vines, weeds, twigs, and branches. Compostable food wastes include fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, eggshells, and nutshells. Other compostable materials are hair clippings, feathers, straw, livestock manure, bonemeal and bloodmeal.

Materials should NOT be composted are meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, foods containing animal fats, human/pet feces, weeds with developed seed heads, and plants infected with or highly susceptible to disease. Plants recently (within 6 months) treated with herbicides or pesticides should not be used.

For faster and more efficient composting. The compost pile should be located in a warm area and protected from overexposure to wind and too much direct sunlight. It takes at least a (4'X4'X4') pile of material to form a compost pile that will heat up and function properly. The compost pile and its enclosure should be well ventilated. Materials in the compost pile should be kept as moist as a squeezed sponge. Too little or too much water retards decomposition. Overwatering causes odors and loss of nutrients.

Piles can be built in layers to ensure the proper proportion of carbon-based brown material (e.g., leaves, woody materials) to nitrogen-based green material (grass, scraps, fertilizer), but the layers should be thoroughly intermixed after the pile is built. In general, 1/3 of green material and 2/3 brown material is a good starting point. Turning and mixing the pile with a pitchfork or shovel, or shifting it into another bin, provides the oxygen necessary for decomposition and compensates for excess moisture. A pile that is not mixed may take 34 times longer to decompose. Odors indicate that the pile is too damp or lacks oxygen, and that more frequent turning is necessary. Occasional watering may be necessary to keep the pile damp, especially in dry weather. Covering the pile with black plastic reduces the need for watering; it also prevents rainwater from leaching out the nutrients.

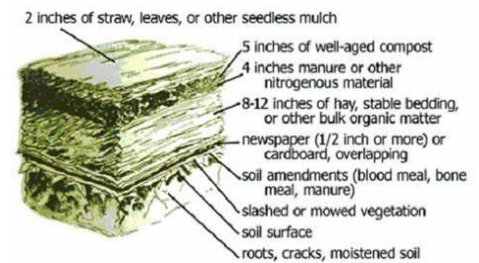
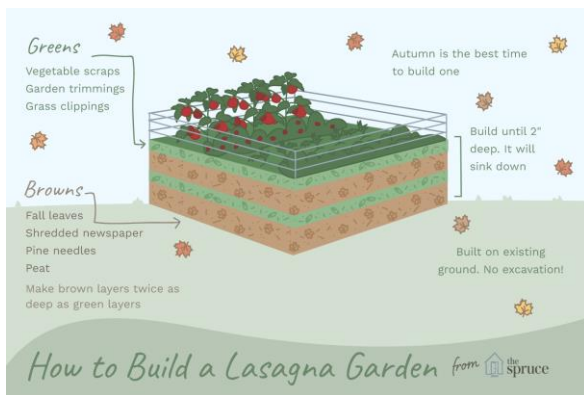
A pile that is decomposing properly should generate temperatures of 140°-160°F at its center. The heat kills most weed seeds, insect eggs and diseases. The pile should be turned when the center begins to cool. When the compost is finished, the pile will no longer heat up. Long thermometers are available to check compost temperatures. Once compost is finished, use the fresh compost immediately or cover the pile to avoid runoff and loss of nutrients and micro-organisms.

Aged or composted manure is compost derived from animal wastes mixed with bedding which has been allowed to decompose for at least six months. It is riskier to use composted manure from exotic animals or house pets because there is a slight chance that parasites within those manures may survive the composting

process- especially if the pile is small or does not heat up properly. Cow, chicken, rabbit, and horse manure aged composts are generally safe to use in gardens. Most experts agree that fresh manure from any source should not be used in gardens because of the chance that e-coli and other organisms could cause sickness in humans.

ALTERNATE COMPOSTING METHODS : Compost can be made in a garbage can, barrel or drum that has a secure lid. Drill holes in the sides and bottom of the container to allow for air circulation and water drainage and place it upright on blocks. Fill 3/4 of the container with organic wastes, add a little nitrogenous fertilizer (about 1/4 cup for a 55 gallon barrel), and moisten the materials. Every few days shake the container or turn it on its side and roll it to mix the compost. The lid should be removed after turning to allow air penetration. Commercially available drums and barrels are more expensive but can produce compost more quickly. There are even small kitchen composters that are available - some contain charcoal filters to reduce odors. Keep in mind that smaller containers may not heat up properly.

Sheet Composting / The Plop Method are methods where one layers the traditional compost ingredients on top of the soil in an area where one wants to improve the soil - or build a bed over lousy soil. Many gardeners do this already by raking leaves from their landscape and placing over a vegetable garden area in the fall. Over the winter, the leaves decompose, and the resulting composted material is tilled into the garden in the spring.



Lasagna Raised Bed

One can also build the layers to fill a raised bed - so that when a plant grows, it encounters nutrient- rich layers that are composting as the plants develop.

Hole or Trench composting involves digging a hole the size of a 2 1/2 to 5 gallon bucket or a trench 12 inches in depth by no more than 12 inches wide in an existing soil that needs improving. Fill the hole or trench with kitchen scraps , and other compostable materials - again trying to stay within the same 1/3

- 2/3 ratio. Place a board or bucket over the hole or trench- so no one falls into the hole or trench inadvertently. When the trench or hole is full, cover with soil you will remove for the next hole or trench. Over time the soil in an area will be vastly improved, and you will help recycle materials that may have gone to a landfill back into good soil for the garden or landscape.

Compost Tea: Compost tea is easy to make-and has many benefits. Mark Smallwood, the executive director of the Rodale Institute, uses panty hose and a 5 gallon bucket to make a compost tea. He takes a fistful of finished compost and places it in the panty hose; tying off the top tightly. He places the hose 'teabag' in a 5 gallon bucket of water and "steeps" the tea for 24- 48 hours. He squeezes the excess tea out of the panty hose before removing. One can then place the tea in a backpack sprayer or even a spray bottle to spray on your plants. Make sure there is no debris in the tea that can clog the sprayer. One could use cheesecloth or a fine sieve to further strain the tea. Some sprayers come with a filter to prevent clogging



Compost tea won't burn plants, so it can be used weekly in the vegetable and flower garden. It can also be used to spray on the foliage of small trees and shrubs. Fruit trees and brambles can also benefit greatly from tea applications. Compost tea can also be used to water plants directly in the garden or landscape. Obviously, one would have to make a lot of tea to water a large garden, but if your garden is small, or you just want to "pep" up one or two plants- then watering directly with the tea is fine.

Compost as Mulch: Compost can also be used as beneficial mulch around ornamental trees, fruit trees and shrubs. Create a 5-7 foot diameter (or more depending on the size of the tree) by cutting the grass as short as you can in the circle. Place layers of newspaper in the circle (3-4 layers are optimal) and wet down the paper. Place a two inch layer of compost over the paper – keeping the mulch at least 6 inches from where the trunk of the tree meets the ground. You can then cover this layer with a thin layer (one inch) of bark mulch if you like the appearance of bark mulch better- and for better weed control. In theory, properly finished compost should contain no weed seeds- but weed seed can blow in or encroach upon the planting. Covering the compost mulch layer with bark mulch can help reduce weed encroachment.

GMO Cockroaches



For the first time, researchers have successfully used CRISPR, a gene editing technology, on cockroaches in a first that opens the door to future gene-editing research on insects.

CRISPR allows scientists to target a specific bit of DNA inside a cell and then alter it. This technology was a breakthrough for research into evolutionary biology and disease treatments, earning it the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. "Knockout cockroaches" essentially have artificially inactivated genes, opening up applications for the technology to be used on other insects for pest control and evolutionary biology. They are labelled 'knockout' because part of their DNA has been 'knocked out'.

While scientists have previously used CRISPR on other species, it was impossible until now to apply it to insects like cockroaches that have inaccessible embryos. Cockroaches shield their fertilized eggs in hard cases for days or weeks until the offspring hatch. Due to this 'unique reproduction system, it is impracticable to inject materials into very early embryos' for gene editing. Scientists at Kyoto University, have instead managed to inject genetic materials into adult female cockroaches to produce mutant offspring, according to a study published this week in Cell Reports Methods. The 'mutant' cockroach offspring created using this method also passed the artificial mutations onto the next generation on mating. The study was inspired by similar ones that achieved this technique in mosquitoes and wasps. Imagine this scenario – Giant mutant GMO cockroaches roam the streets, restaurants, and grocery stores - feeding on unsuspecting citizens going about their daily business – Sorry, I have a wild imagination....



Oakes Daylilies is a nursey in Tennessee that specializes in... you guessed it - Daylilies. It is difficult nowadays to find superior daylilies in this area. This nursery has hundreds of daylilies running from ten dollars a scape to over one hundred dollars a plant. The scapes are large and healthy and shipped well and promptly. A scape btw is the swollen root with a bit of top growth. I am transitioning beds to massed perennials (including some natives) in what I call American cottage style where perennials are massed to cut down on pesky weeds,,, and work.

A Blissful Sunday Morning

The 20 year-old Toro mower waited patiently in the garage for its owner to arrive back from church. The neighborhood was quiet – with the occasional tweet of a bird flying overhead. The Toro waited patiently, gas dripping slightly from a small leak in its gas tank. The owner purchased the Toro at an estate sale several years ago. The mower was in the garage at the sale, surrounded by a velvet-covered chaise lounge, an incomplete Sorry game, curler irons, old, mismatched silverware, and plastic figurines purchased from long ago vacations to The Dells, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Upper New York resort towns - along with items from the Florida Keys.



The Toro had a broken muffler and required a gas/oil mixture to run properly. It still had the ten dollar price written in marker on its mower body.

Finally, the Toro heard its owner enter the garage. Today was Sunday, the day for yard work. It took many pulls and adjustment to the choke/throttle to start the Toro. Great clouds of blue smoke erupted from the mower as it warmed up. Finally, owner began to mow. The mower engine, revved up in decibels, and then slowed as the Toro made turns. The droning sound from the Toro sounded like a small roar from a jet engine. Blue smoke hung over the yard like a fog in London town.

Other mowers heard the Toro and knew it was time. Large rider mowers capable of mowing with zero turn ratios, roared across the lawns at 25 mph like greyhounds on a racetrack. Other mowers self-propelled and hand pushed - were brought out of their storage places to join the fray. Soon the entire Sunday morning neighborhood was filled with the sound of mowers – traveling back and forth across the lawns- some in overlapping patterns like a golf green – or an artistic statement.

Some mowers finished their work, which was a signal for the gas or electric-powered leaf and hedge trimmers to make their appearance. Soon the sound of revving trimmers filled the neighborhood, followed by the roar of leaf blowers making the sidewalks absolutely perfect. It was a lovely day for a perfect lawn and landscape – filled with round pasty shrubs pruned like shrubs and hedges in merry old England.

Finally, the mowing a clipping and blowing ended. It was time to enjoy the results of all the work. Barbecue grills fired up, and music of all sorts began to emanate everywhere. Loud rap music with throbbing bass, the Beastie Boys, The Osmond's, and the perennial favorites "*Free Bird*" and "*Sweet Home Alabama*" filled the neighborhood airwaves with everyone's favorite music.

As the afternoon turns to evening, fireworks fill the air and dogs huddle under beds as loud explosions resonate with the hoots and hollers of folks just having fun – until next weekend - when it starts all over again - on Sunday morning.

Ricky's Notes: Sorry to all the "*Free Bird*" Lovers.... Gas Powered Lawn Mowers are the number one polluters of air in the city during summer months. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a new gas powered lawn mower produces as many volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide pollution in one hour of operation as 11 new cars each being driven for one hour.

The alternative: Use electric mowers (even rider mowers are going electric) or reel type mowers. I do worry about the disposal of used lithium batteries, and reel mowers can be potentially dangerous because their very sharp blades are exposed.

Gypsy Moth is Now Spongy Moth – Or “G” Moth



Previously known as "gypsy moth," the species *Lymantria dispar* is now "spongy moth," according to the Entomological Society of America, which makes the Common Names of Insects and Related Organisms List, an essential database for anyone working with insects.

For the Romani people -- an ethnic group originating in northern India that was at one time misidentified as Egyptian -- the word "gypsy" has been offensive, dangerous and dehumanizing since it first appeared in the 1500s, Margareta Matache, director of the Roma Program at the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University, told CNN in July 2021. Matache was one of several Romani scholars consulted during the name removal process.

The moth's new name was chosen from more than 200 nominations evaluated by a group of more than 50 scientists convened by the society. "Spongy moth" refers to its sponge-like egg masses and comes from the common name "spongieuse," used for the insect in France and French-speaking Canada, according to the news release. Experts say the name spongy moth is already beginning to appear in media stories and other online resources, but they know this name change won't happen overnight.

Native to Europe, Asia and North Africa, the spongy moth is an invasive pest in North American forests, destroying the leaves of hundreds of tree and shrub species and costing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage and management efforts annually, according to the Entomological Society of America. This moth spends most of its 10-month life in the egg stage, which is when it travels on firewood, outdoor equipment, and vehicles en masse. **Note:** The IDNR just sprayed several sites in our area for spongy moth. Homeowners with oak trees should check their trees for leaf damage by the “G” moth. Here are some homeowner tips from the IDNR for dealing with spongy moths

Burlap Folded Strips - Newly hatched gypsy moths feed day and night. But when they get to about ¾ inch in length, they feed mainly at night. They crawl down the tree in the early morning and look for a place to hide.



They like the burlap; it makes a good hiding place. In the early evening, go out and lift up the folds of the burlap. Collect and destroy all the ones you find there. Repeat this process at least once every day. The burlap can also be sprayed with the insecticide Deltamethrin. When the caterpillars walk across the burlap, the insecticide gets on their feet. As the insecticide gets absorbed into their bodies, it kills them. In theory one could also try an organic insecticide such as Spinosad to spray on the burlap. This tree to right is wrapped with 2 widths of **duct tape** (the handyperson's friend) at about chest height from the ground.

Then Tanglefoot, a very sticky substance, is smeared around the center of the duct tape. (Hint: Use a popsicle stick, and don't get any on you!) (It doesn't come off of clothing, either.) G moths trying to climb up the tree will not go past the sticky tape – or become hopelessly stuck. Other methods include finding the egg masses and removing them physically or spraying or soaking them in a mineral oil solution. One can make homemade



Spongy moth egg masses

traps for the spongy moths using lures purchased from Amazon (of

course Amazon has the lures). Info is here: (gypsymothalert.com). I propose a new logo for “spongy” moth that includes the photo to right.

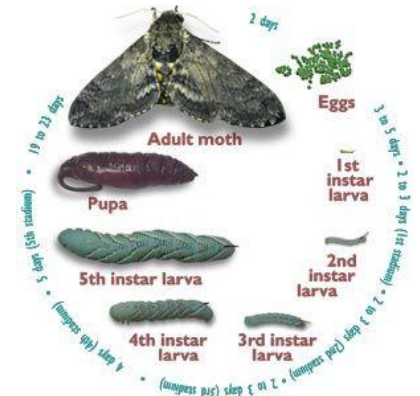


Tomato or Tobacco Hornworm

These large worms can do a lot of damage when they appear in late May into June on the tomato plant. The worms also camouflage very well, so they are hard to see. Leaves are eaten, and the hornworms will eat and damage developing and mature



fruit as seen to left. The most environmentally-friendly material one can use for hornworm control is Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). This material is sold as Dipel, Javelin, or M-Trak. If you observe a tomato hornworm with what appears to be white spikes covering its body; leave it alone. The white spikes contain parasitic wasps that will eventually "infect" other hornworms in the garden.



Maximalism

compiled by a freelance article by SARAH LYON

In recent years, more designers from all areas of the field have turned away from the simplicity of minimalism and have decided to go for maximalism. This design trend is not new in any way but recently people have taken a shine to the garish and almost overwhelming style this presents.

Maximalism has been a part of the design world for centuries—the ways in which it has manifested in our homes has changed over time, of course, but the idea of showing off all of one's favorite things is by no means a new concept.

Maximalism is by no means a modern trend; maximalists have existed across the globe for centuries. "Wealthy people throughout history have practiced forms of maximalism as ways to showcase their riches," notes Alessandra Wood, vice president of style at interior design service Modsy. "One of my favorite examples of this practice can be traced to 16th-century cabinets of curiosities." The items placed on display would vary—first, animal specimens were popular, while in later years, individuals chose to highlight artwork and other goods, Wood explains. "Cabinets of curiosities were like small, private museums that were stuffed top to bottom with treasures," she adds. "Every surface covered with something."



Maximalism emerged once again during the Victorian era. "The Victorians loved the material world, and they lived during a time when consumable goods became much more accessible and affordable. Every inch of their homes was covered with some decorative element from wallpaper to rugs to drapery to decorative accessories. As a culture, they invested in the idea that each person had their own personality and [the] maximalist element of their homes reflected an attempt to showcase their private selves to visitors.

Maximalism is particularly popular nowadays among younger generations, particularly millennials, who were eager to incorporate plants, eclectic colors, and other accessories into their spaces. Maximalism became a way to

define an eclectic home with a chaotic array of colors, prints, objects, and textures in a single space. And by way of social media, consumers fell in love with overly saturated and overly appointed images of rooms in a kaleidoscope of design.

Ricky's Notes: I recently viewed a YouTube video of a young Gen Y who spent over an hour showcasing her maximalist design in a small rented apartment which showcased hundreds of small dolls lined up on shelves and tables, along with posters, art, and articles plastered on every square inch of the walls. For her sake, I hope she never moves. I have spent a decade ridding myself of unwanted and un-needed items in my house. Personally, I tired of all the clutter and dirt.

Plant Disease Forecast 2022

It seems to me as if we are at least 2 weeks behind this year as far as bloom time for many flowering plants. Plant disease I normally see in May will most likely appear in June this year.



Apple Scab is a fungal disease that depends on prolonged leaf wetness and cooler temperatures to infect developing leaves. I am just now seeing apple scab appear on crabapples in our area. Velvety spots and blotches appear on leaves, which can yellow and then drop off the tree. By mid-summer, partially or fully defoliated trees can be a sad site to see. Don't waste time and money trying to spray the trees. Walk away- I mean it -walk away. Your trees will not die, and next year may be drier.

Anthracnose – A fancy word invented by plant disease experts to describe a fungal blotch which can appear on sycamore, ash, and oak leaves in wet springs. Folks become concerned when sycamore and or oak trees develop brown blotches on their leaves which then can fall off the tree. I have seen American sycamore trees in Fort Wayne almost completely defoliated this year. Again, walk away – too late – too bad-the trees will survive.



Dogwood anthracnose is a different story on native dogwood trees. Though not as prevalent as in states to the east and south, this anthracnose can kill a native flowering dogwood if left unchecked. The disease spreads from infected leaves into the twigs and branches and can cause dieback of the limbs. Examine the underside of the leaves (with a hand lens or magnifying glass) for numerous small tan to brown dots, about the size of a printed period, scattered within the blighted tissue (which can have a purplish margin). These dots are the source of spores

that will be washed away by rain or dew or spread by insects to healthy leaves and neighboring trees. The disease overwinters in twig and stem cankers that initiate new infections in the spring. Daconil and Immunox are two conventional fungicides that work well against dogwood anthracnose.



Tip Blight - This is a serious incurable fungal disease that leads to the death of Scots and Austrian pines in our area. I am already observing these pines beginning to turn brown this year. Symptoms include blighted needles at the tip of branches – spreading to other parts of the tree over time. Often oozing sap can be seen on infected needles twigs and branches on the tree. Planting Austrian and Scots pine in our area is like burning money as kindling for a backyard fire. Don't plant these pines – who also have severe insect issues. If I can gather the strength, I will talk about those in a later issue.



Black Knot – Another incurable disease of plum and cherry trees in our area. Large areas of rough black swollen structures form on twigs and the main tree trunk. Black knot galls on trunks are often cracked and may ooze sticky liquid. Info Penn State here: [Plum Disease - Black Knot \(psu.edu\)](http://www.psu.edu/plum-disease-black-knot)



Fire blight is also appearing on crabapples, apples, and pear. This is an unusual disease because it is bacterial. In wet years the bacterial enters the plant through the flowers and spreads to the twigs and sometimes even branches. It can be a devastating disease that can kill trees quickly. Look for the characteristic “Shepherd’s crook on blighted twigs and branch tips. Prune out below damage and sterilize the shears after each cut and destroy the debris. Once again the Monterey Complete disease control is also labeled for fire blight.

Pee as Garden Fertilizer

I have seen some Internet info and posts from individuals who swear that using their urine as fertilizer in a garden is the best thing since butter on bread. Even Gene Logsdon - a sustainable icon who wrote “The Contrary Farmer” promoted the idea of using human waste to grow food. It all seems plausible. Other countries use human waste to grow crops. I ask... Why? It seems to me as most folks take medicines - have some sort of immune system disease – or other issues that make their pee suspect to use as fertilizer in their garden. In addition, there have been more recent

cases of illness caused by fresh manure use in organic food – some from counties with a history of using their waste as fertilizer. Until there is definitive research from a trusted resource – I am not sold on this issue. Why not just use compost or well composted manure in our gardens? The article at the beginning of this issue shows the benefits and safety of using compost. Plus, I don't want my garden soil to smell like a urinal. Just my opinion.





Clover Mites – Oh My Paws and Claws!

It seems as if sensationalist headlines are the rage nowadays. I am tired of the words “Breaking News” - when it seems as if all news is breaking. In the world of gardening – every new weed or insect is going to result in world annihilation. Examples include Gypsy Moth (sorry spongy moth). IDNR officials predicted the death of all oak in Indiana when it first appeared on the scene over 15 years ago. Emerald Ash borer has not killed every ash in the state of Indiana as predicted. Here’s a headline:

Breaking News: Clover Mites have Invaded Indiana Landscapes.!! Thousands - even Millions - of orange spider-like creatures have appeared to invade lawns, landscapes, and gasp-even homes in the Hoosier state – according to experts. These tiny mites can cover concrete slabs and sidewalks and make their way into homes - sending some residents screaming for cover. As far as we can tell – there really are no harmful effects- or even purpose – of why clover mites appear or even what they actually do – except crawl around and create a nuisance. They are harmless; they cannot bite or sting, do not infest stored foods and do no damage to house structures.

Folks can vacuum the mites or simply sweep them back outdoors. Hear more of this invasion at 11:00....yawn....



Hoggles – Demented Cat

Logic To my caregiver: *This is what happens when I am allowed to drive a tractor in a very wet year.*



4-Lined Plant Bugs and Ground Beetles



I am seeing 4-lined plant bug and beetle damage to some perennials at this time. 4-lined plant bug is rarely seen, but the damage it does is distinctive. This little bug pierces nicely arranged holes in rows on plant foliage as seen in the picture. In addition, various ground beetles will damage some plants because – well they are hungry.



Beetle damage usually appears as damage between the veins of a leaf as holes, though sometimes the entire leaf can be shredded. Captain Jack’s Deadbug Brew or an insecticide containing Spinosad, or neem, can be applied as an organic control.



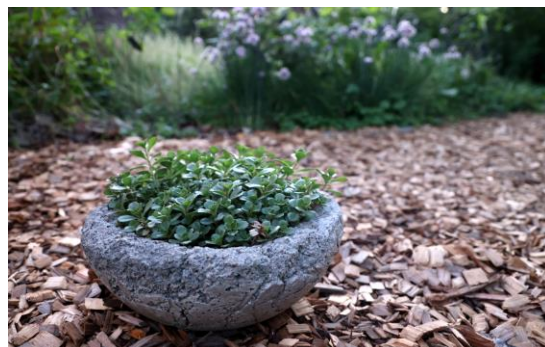
Potato Bug Many folks who grow potatoes in the garden are perplexed when damage appears on the foliage early on in the year. Colorado potato beetle larvae are the culprit. If left unchecked, they can do considerable damage and then turn into adult beetle later in the season that can do even more damage. The adults are highly resistant to insecticides, so it is better to treat the soft pinkish red larvae. Dipel dust is once again needed to give the larvae a big organic stomachache and make them go away.

Tales From Ricky's Garden – with pictures!!!!



So, what does one do with a bench purchased at a thrift shop that was sitting in a garage because it was too narrow and uncomfortable to sit on? The answer: Remove the bench lid - drill holes in the bottom for drainage - add trash bag liners to the bottom – fill with soil – and plant bedding impatiens. The zinnia painting (purchased at a yard sale) used to hang in my office. It is sprayed with a clear polyurethane to waterproof it. Yes, I know bedding impatiens are disease susceptible, but I will remove them if impatiens blight appears.

Advanced Master Gardener Jane Ford and I made these trough containers long ago at the Extension office. They are a bit heavier than the average trough container, but the sedum I planted then still survives – as do the wonderful memories of Jane and I laughing because we really didn't know what we were doing. It is a lesson in that even though one isn't perfect – things can still work out.



This Mock orange planted a few years ago in a tough dry spot in my backyard has finally matured and produces wonderful, scented flowers. Mock orange is an old-fashioned plant that I believe should be a part of everyone's landscape. Like lilac- the old wood needs pruned over time to keep it a little better behaved.

I ordered garlic chives – and lo and behold – I received regular chives instead. They are beautiful and show that plants can have multiple uses. I like edible plants that also can be used as ornamentals.



Goodbye Harrison Flint

I was sad to learn that Purdue University's Dr. Harrison Flint passed away on April 13, 2021. Many horticulturists have utilized Dr. Flint's book "Landscape Plants for Eastern North America" as well as had him as their professor at Purdue University. Dr. Flint taught several courses, but it was HORT 217 – Woody Landscape Plants – for which he was best known. This arduous yet rewarding class taught 1000s of horticulture, landscape architecture, and urban forestry students not just to identify trees and shrubs (often when leafless), but also their stress tolerances, landscape usage, and cultural histories. I was honored to be Dr. Flint's top student in the 5 credit hell course HORT 217, and also honored to teach students for 2 years as a part of that course. It is one of my best memories – and there were many – at Purdue University. Dr. Flint was demanding-but never arrogant – and his dry humor was a delight. My favorite quote "You can always tell a dogwood tree by its bark" I will miss him.

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