

# Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks

## and Home Horticulture

### October 2022 Issue

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

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## The Fall Prairie



In the fall of 1991 professor of Horticulture Mike Dana asked me if I wanted to travel with him to visit a tallgrass prairie remnant near Ambia, Indiana. I knew little about prairies – but I had read about them in the Little House books. My daughter Jessica loved to read and often I would read her books (like the Little House series) when she was finished with them. I was particularly touched when I read the “Long Winter” where Laura Ingalls and Pa twisted prairie grass hay into fuel for the stove so the family didn’t freeze to death that terrible winter.

We traveled to the Ambia prairie in the early afternoon on a beautiful fall day. When we arrived, I must say I wasn’t

too impressed at first glance. We were on a lonely road near a railroad track with farm fields nearby. We got out of the Purdue vehicle and headed towards the tracks. I quickly realized how tall the grasses were – way over my head. I read later on that the tall prairie grasses often scaled over the heads of early settlers on horseback. As we walked along the prairie Dr Dana would point out forbs, or prairie flowers along the way. Pale purple cornflower we found on a small slope surrounded by prairie grasses. We found a small clump of prairie blazing star nestled in a depression totally obscured from the road above. Farther on, towards a town called Talbot, we found tall coreopsis, and the equally tall Prairie Dock, with its large paddle-shaped leaves. We found a rare prairie plant – fringed gentian – hiding at ground level in a clump of Indian grass which swayed in the wind.

The prairie was beautiful – always in motion as the grasses swayed back and forth in the wind. The silence of the prairie was incredible, and I felt a peace within that I had never felt before. How awesome it was to realize this prairie was incredibly old – it existed before the towns, the farms, the railroad, the Native Americans who hunted buffalo, and it still survived. It was a visit that changed my life.

Later I would visit many prairie remnants in western Indiana. I would study how they were formed long, long ago when the uplifting Rocky mountains changed weather patterns that resulted in drier conditions in the Great Plains. Drought tolerant and deep-rooted short and tall grasses flourished from the mountains to the borders of what would become western Indiana. Some prairie grasses and forbs also became established in what were referred to as “oak openings” in areas farther east where drier conditions created open meadows scattered among the deep forest that existed in northeastern Indiana. Today, one can still find small areas of prairie that



still exist in old pioneer cemeteries and along highways. The fall is a good time to spot still surviving prairie grasses along U.S. 30 and even as far north as Steuben county.

I know it sounds sappy, but it makes me sad to realize that less than one percent of native prairie which once occupied 1/3 of the land area in the U.S. remains. In the spring, I might see prairie forbs such a butterfly milkweed growing along highways in urban areas, or a small clump of big bluestem growing near a freeway. Their time is limited, as development, herbicide use, or continua mowing eventually overtakes them and they disappear without a trace. In a way the prairie plant's

struggle to survive is similar to personal struggles I have endured in my life. There are always obstacles it seems, and I know that many others struggle with obstacles even greater than my own.

On September 20<sup>th</sup> my wife Lynnette Snyder died after a long - almost 11 year struggle - with early onset Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia. Many folks who have been a caregiver for a loved one with Alzheimer's say it is a terrible disease. It is true, especially considering the person you knew becomes a person you don't know - and they don't know you either. I deeply appreciate the caregivers at the memory care unit in Canterbury nursing home — and the caregivers who helped me at home for many years. The hardest thing I ever had to do was to decide (with my caregivers) that I could no longer care for her properly at home. Taking her to the nursing home was the toughest thing I ever did.



Lynette was a unique independent person who had never married and had always lived by herself. I had known her long ago as she played music with a group of fellow musicians in Steuben County. We reconnected much later in life. She had worked for the Indiana Toll Road for 23 years. She was a registered beautician. She was greatly valued by her friends, and she loved animals, nature, was very funny, and had a kind heart. She also loved to travel, and we travelled to New Mexico and Nevada and then to Great Britain and Ireland in 2007. It was a wonderful experience. We were married later that year.

The first sign something was really wrong was when Lynette could not find her parent's house in Montpelier Ohio circa 2011. In 2012, she was diagnosed with early - onset Alzheimer's and vascular dementia. The long ordeal had begun, and now, it is finally over. I scattered her ashes in Steuben County recently at some of her favorite places – including where we used to walk her beloved dogs down the dirt road near the beaver dam and the small lake where she taught me about kayaking, and the hill at the top of a moraine where we found Bigtooth aspen and a wonderful view of Snow Lake long ago.

I have always said that it is how you are remembered that is important, how one lives a life, and the mark one makes upon it. Like the prairie that gave me peace, Lynette's kindness and humor came into my life at a time when I needed it the most - and I know her kindness and humor were an inspiration to all that knew her.



## New England Aster

Late in the fall, the purple-lavender blooms of New England aster are noticeable along roadsides in our area. It is the last of the roadside flowers to bloom. It is the harbinger of cooler weather, and the beginning of fall color of trees. New England aster is a native prairie wildflower with an incredibly large range – stretching from new England all the way to the Great Plains.

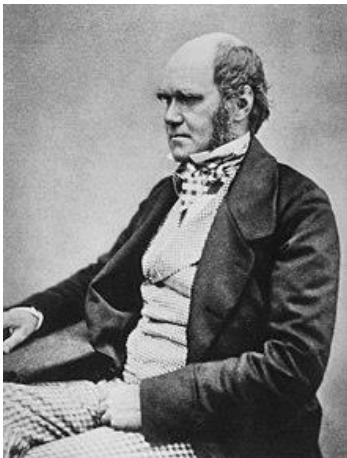
This is a tough drought-tolerant perennial. It is related to sunflowers, zinnias, marigolds, and many other species of flowers that make up this huge plant family of *Asteraceae* - or the Composite family. The flowers of composites are unusual, in that the actual tiny flowers are located on a showy disc that we are familiar with when we see sunflowers. This is an important plant for butterflies as the flowers are important as a energy source for monarch butterflies when they migrate south.

## Plant Hormones *some material adapted from Biology wise*

I know – it sounds exciting. As a student, I always found information about how plants worked very interesting. While other students yawned and rolled their eyes, I was fascinated by the fact that plants were hormonal – and very tiny amounts of these substances had a profound effect on how plants functioned and survived.

There are five major plant hormones which are: auxin, cytokinin, gibberellin, abscisic acid, and ethylene. Each hormone differs in its effects. The auxins, gibberellins, and cytokinins act as growth stimulators, and abscisic acid and ethylene act as growth inhibitors. There are no specific or specialized glands that produce these hormones. These hormones are produced in almost all parts of the plant. There is still a lot to be discovered about plant hormones and how they work.

### Auxin



In 1881, Charles Darwin and his son Francis performed experiments on coleoptiles, the sheaths enclosing young leaves in germinating grass seedlings. The experiment exposed the coleoptiles to light from a unidirectional source and observed that they bend towards the light. The Darwins discovered the seedlings showed no signs of development towards light if the tip was covered with an opaque cap, or if the tip was removed. The Darwins concluded that the tip of the coleoptile was responsible for sensing light and proposed that a messenger is transmitted in a downward direction from the tip of the coleoptile, causing it to bend.

In 1928, the Dutch botanist Frits Warmolt Went carried the Darwin's research further. Went's experiment identified how the growth promoting chemical causes a coleoptile to grow towards the light. Went cut the tips of the coleoptiles and placed them in the dark, putting a few tips on agar blocks that he predicted would absorb the growth-promoting chemical. On control coleoptiles, he placed a block that lacked the chemical. On others, he placed blocks containing the chemical, either centered on top of the coleoptile to distribute the chemical evenly or offset to increase the concentration on one side.



When the growth-promoting chemical was distributed evenly the coleoptile grew straight. If the chemical was distributed unevenly, the coleoptile curved away from the side with the cube, as if growing towards the light, even though it was grown in the dark. Went later proposed that the messenger substance is a growth-promoting hormone, which he named **auxin**, that becomes distributed in the bending region. Went correctly concluded that auxin is at a higher concentration on the shaded side, promoting cell elongation, which results in coleoptiles bending towards the light. This phenomenon is called **phototropism** and explains why plants grow towards light sources – a good example is when seedlings grown in a container grown indoors bend towards the light from a window.

Applications of auxin also **promote rooting**. Root tone is common product that is used to promote rooting in cuttings of houseplants, and trees and shrubs. Auxin is present in root stimulators that are useful when transplanting tree, shrubs and flowers to reduce transplant shock and promote quicker and better establishment.

Strong concentrations of auxin are commonly used as **broadleaved weed killers** for lawn weeds such as dandelion or plantain.

Auxins are also involved in **geotropism** – a plant's response to gravity. This happens when a tomato plant is grown upside-down. Auxin accumulates in the stems of the tomato and the plant stem turns back upward because the stems accumulate auxin on the bottom side - causing the stem to grow upwards against the force of gravity.

Auxins are also used on **potatoes** to prevent sprouting by prolonging the dormancy of buds in potato tubers.

Auxins present in **terminal buds** suppresses the growth of lateral buds. This is why when terminal buds are removed by pruning – the plant becomes bushier as the lateral buds develop.

**Sucker Stopper** is a product that contains auxins that inhibits the growth of suckers from the roots and trunks for up to six months. It works well on suckers that form under crabapple trees.



## Ethylene

Ethylene is present in the tissues of ripening fruits, nodes of stems, senescent leaves, and flowers.

Ethene is used routinely within the food industry to provide controlled ripening during storage and transport. Bananas are picked when they are green and treated with ethylene gas so they ripen during transport in trucks on the way to the grocery store.

The phrase “one bad apple ruins the whole bunch” is a classic case of ethylene gas released by a ripe apple that causes other apples in the bag to ripen more quickly. One can toss a ripe apple in a bag with unripened **tomatoes** collected before a hard freeze in the fall to allow the tomatoes to further ripen after being picked.

When apples are picked, they are often placed in cold storage in rooms with strong fans running to inhibit ethylene production and exposure so fruits can be stored for longer periods of time. Plants grown in a greenhouse can be adversely affected by ethylene gas produced from exhaust from vehicles or heaters that can cause flowers to drop from plants and other symptoms. A foliar spray with this growth regulator will increase

lateral branching in a number of ornamental trees and shrubs, both outdoors and in a greenhouse so your plants will thrive. Florel growth regulator modifies the flowering patterns of cantaloupe, cucumber, squash, and pumpkins for hybrid seed production. Plants sprayed with it often flower 7 to 10 days earlier than plants not treated.

Ethylene has been commercially exploited in a very big way all over the world for improving the quality or promoting ripening of fruits such as tomatoes, apples, coffee berries and grapes; to facilitate harvesting of cherries, walnuts and cotton by accelerating fruit drop; increasing rubber production by prolonging latex flow in rubber trees; increasing sugar production in sugarcane; synchronizing flowering in pineapple and accelerating senescence of tobacco leaves. For all such purposes 'liquid-ethylene' (ethephon), is sold in market under the trade name of Ethrel.

Florel is an ethylene-producing chemical that increases branching, takes off early flower buds in many crops and acts as a growth regulator. By spraying with Florel early, either during propagation or shortly after potting, you can get faster branching without pinching or with less pinching.

When folks have trees where they don't want fruit or seeds, Florel prevents fruit and seed formation on numerous trees listed on the label, including apple, maple, chestnut, olive, sweet orange and more. It works best when applied once during full bloom in the spring.

## **Cytokinin**

The first cytokinin was discovered from degraded autoclaved Herring sperm DNA by Miller in 1955. It also is present in coconut milk - and is also synthesized in roots and then transported to other parts of the plant. Some cytokinin synthesis also takes place in developing seeds, young fruits, and developing shoots or buds,

When one thinks of cytokinins – think growth promoter.

Cytokinins are sprayed on crops like apples and cotton to increase yields.

They are also used heavily in tissue culture – the development of plants in test tubes to promote growth.

Cytokinins are also used to increase lateral branching and flower bud formation in containerized annual and perennial flowering and foliage crops and tropical plants. This is why many flowering plants in garden centers are compact and flowering when you arrive at the garden center in early spring. In addition, cytokinins can reduce the overall height of plants resulting in more compact and marketable plants.

I have observed that cytokinins are being used in some fertilizer products, especially with other growth-promoting products. Daniels is a liquid soluble fertilizer that contains seed extracts which contain cytokinins to promote growth.

## **Gibberellin**

Gibberellins are present in apical buds and roots, young leaves, and seed embryos.

Gibberellins are sometimes used to enhance germination in barley which is used in production of malt for brewing industry.

Spraying sugarcane with gibberellins markedly increases sugarcane growth and sugar yields.

Seedless and large sized grapes are produced on commercial scale by gibberellin treatment. Gibberellins cause stalks of grapes to increase considerably, so that there is more space for grapes to enlarge in the grape bunches.

Gibberellins have also been sprayed on some citrus fruit trees at a time when the fruits have lost most of their green color, to prevent many post-harvest rind (fruit coat) disorders which appear during storage. Gibberellins delay senescence and maintain firmer rinds of the fruits.

Gibberellins are used to enhance seed production in conifers. In some biennial vegetables such as beet and cabbage, gibberellin treatment stimulates bolting and thus time for seed production can be considerably reduced.

Gibberellins can also promote flowering, which can result in more financially profitable flowers to sell due to the increased speed of flower growth. More attractive flowers and larger specimens are also produced.

## Abscisic Acid

Scientists P.F. Wareing and F.T. Addicott in 1961 discovered a growth inhibiting hormone in the leaves of sycamore maple and fruits of cotton plant.. It was named abscisic acid (ABA). It occurs in large amounts in the fruits of avocado and rose, dormant tubers of potato and seeds of apple. Abscisic acid is found mostly near leaves, stems, and unripe fruit.

Abscisic acid inhibits the growth of plants but also has other effects.

It is associated with drought resistance and cold tolerance in many plants.

ProTone® is a plant growth regulator containing s-abscisic acid (s-ABA). ProTone enhances color development in red table grapes by initiating rapid accumulation of red pigments into the skin of the berries.

In small quantities, abscisic acid is known to promote flowering in some short day plants, e.g., Strawberry, Black Currant.

Rooting of stem cuttings is promoted in some cases by abscisic acid, e.g., Bean, Ivy, Poinsettia

Abscisic acid is also present in many health promoting products for humans, but research is mixed about whether the products actually benefit health or are harmful.



## Bluestar

*Amsonia* is a genus of about 20 species mostly native to light woodlands or grasslands of the Central and Northeast United States. They are clump-forming perennials with narrow, alternate leaves and clusters of blue, 5-petaled flowers. The Genus name honors 18th-century Virginian physician Dr. Charles Amson.

*Amsonia* was given the common name Bluestar for its soft blue, star-shaped flowers. The individual flowers are small, but they bloom in fluffy clusters and put on a lovely show for several weeks. Blue star flowers are one of the truest blues you will find in flower colors. A bonus is the brilliant yellow/gold fall color of their foliage.

Like other members of the dogbane family, *Amsonia* has a white, milky sap that causes this plant to be unpalatable to insects, rabbits, deer and many other garden pests.

Its milky sap may cause a variety of skin irritations on humans and animals. However, the milky sap is not considered to be harmful to humans, although people with latex allergies are advised to wear gloves when handling the plants.

## Amsonia Varieties

**Arkansas amsonia** - Hubricht's blue star - Narrow leaf blue star (*Amsonia hubrichtii*): Narrow, needle-like leaves and bright blue flowers

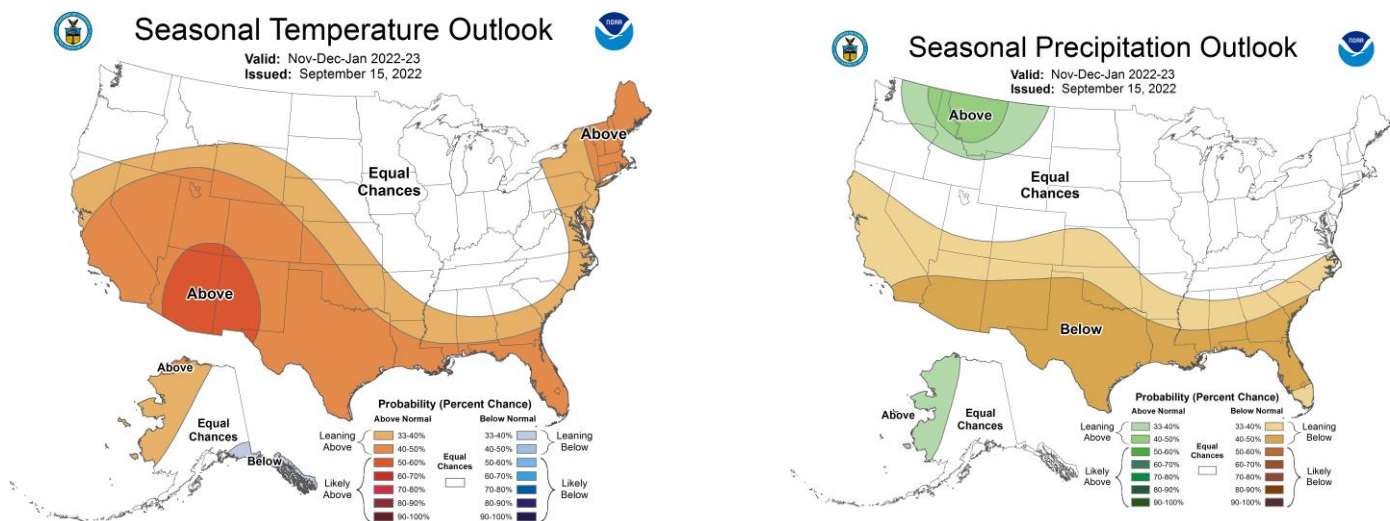
**Ozark blue star** (*Amsonia illustris*): Taller plant (4-feet) with glossy leaves and larger flowers

**Blue dogbane** - **Eastern blue star** - **Willow amsonia** - **Woodland blue star** (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*): Wider leaves and pale blue flowers

*Amsonia* plants prefer a soil pH between 6.2-7.0, but will grow just about anywhere, even in poor soil. I was always informed that Bluestar was incredibly drought tolerant. In reality, they do not like prolonged dry conditions, but once established, Bluestar plants can handle brief periods of drought and the heat and humidity of the Midwest. They have no known serious insect or disease problems. Deer tend to avoid this plant.

Bluestar is an exceptional and unusual native perennial for our area and should be used more.

## The Triple Dip La Nina- or a Dip a Dab'll Do Ya



Scientists and weather folk alike are all aflutter regarding the third seasonal La Nina event – referred to as the Triple Dip La Nina. NOAA forecasts that the expected La Niña winter season, which is from December 2022 to February 2023, in the U.S. won't be atypical, as the northern Plains, Rockies and Pacific Northwest will also experience cooler temperatures; the South will be hotter than normal and the East Coast may be warmer than it usually is during that time of the year. The new La Niña Update, unfortunately, confirms regional climate

projections that the devastating drought in the Horn of Africa will worsen and affect millions of people. According to experts, it isn't safe to say that the changing climate causes this type of La Niña pattern because it has happened before, but they acknowledge that climate change may play a role. The folks at NOAA do predict cooler temperatures and more precipitation for the Great Lakes region from February through April.

Way back in the mid-1950s, a men's hair grooming product called Brylcreem launched an advertising campaign featuring the slogan: A Little Dab'll Do Ya. Will a Triple Dab of la Nina mean anything? Maybe - maybe not.

Our recent cold temps came right on cue as the realistic frost/freeze date for our area is around October 10-15<sup>th</sup> – meaning after that date the chances for a frost or freeze is greater than 50%. This data doesn't make it any easier to know that cold crappy weather is here to stay. The wet heavy snow we experienced recently caused more tree damage because leaves haven't fallen off the trees quite yet. This produces more stress and weight on tree limbs- hence power outages once again in area of the city that have lots of mature trees. It is a wonder any tree limbs are left after the weather we experienced this year, Fall color is slightly delayed – I believe peak color is about 7-10 days away.

I was told recently that I needed to be a more of a glass half full person, so I would love to tell you the winter will be pleasant - with barely a whimper of snow or very cold weather. The holidays will be filled with joy and comradeship. However I will go out on a limb and suggest we will have more snow and cold weather this winter. I base my theory on the fact that most migrating birds left early this year, and the geese still flying about the sky have a surly attitude, and the price of grass-fed organic beef is about \$7.00 a pound.

## More About Alzheimer's

In an effort to help others faced with a loved one with Alzheimer's – here are some things I learned along the way. Make sure to consult with an Elder Law attorney and other experts as laws and regulations can change.

**Do the research** – Go to Alzheimer's seminars and support groups if you can. **The 36 hour Day** is an excellent book for all aspects of Alzheimer's. Unfortunately some Internet sources are incomplete or incorrect. Many well-meaning people will offer their advice on miracle cures and lifestyle changes in an effort to help.

**Get the diagnosis** – One can't receive the help you need without it. If there is something wrong, don't rationalize it away. Be aware of signs something is wrong. Losing items, or forgetting names can happen to anyone, but getting lost and not being able to find your way home is much bigger.

**Getting a diagnosis takes time.** Your family doctor can help refer you to a psychologist who can give screening tests, then **longer** tests, then usually an MRI to make the diagnosis.

**Don't believe there is a "cure" for Alzheimer's.** Certain drugs can slow it down sometimes and improve the quality of life for the short term, but many have bad side effects. They only delay the inevitable. Many folks try to take care of an Alzheimer's family member at home – and usually find out that they need help or cannot adequately care for the person by themselves. I think it is a good idea to get on **waiting lists for memory care units** in nursing homes early in the process. The waiting lists are very long, and it can take years to be admitted. If you wait too long, you might be out of luck.

**Visit memory care facilities** and look around and talk with caregivers there if you can. Try and choose facilities where patient to staff ratio is good, and they have enriching activities for all levels of patients. These visits will be real eye-openers because usually all levels of Alzheimer's patients are present. Be prepared as it can be a real shock to see patients farther along with the disease.



Once you have the diagnosis, **see a really good Elder Law attorney immediately**. Mine (Huffman and Babcock in Bluffton) was outstanding.

**Insurance companies and Medicare do not cover Long-Term Care services** in nursing homes for individuals with Alzheimer's. One can purchase special Long -Term care insurance policies pre-illness, but the premiums are very expensive. If you miss a payment - the policy is sometimes cancelled. Most only cover only a few years of long term care in a nursing home and then you are out of luck. **Medicaid** can cover long term care expenses, but special conditions should be met or most of your assets can be lost (see below).

Even if you have considerable resources nursing homes can cost \$10,000 - 20,000 a month or much more. Private - hire home health care can cost \$25.00 – \$50.00 an hour. I know I used private-hire caregivers for about a year and it cost a lot.

For most folks, it will be necessary to transfer assets and have the primary caregiver become the **POA** (Power of attorney) and the **POH** ( Power of Health Care). It is vital to have an **Elder Law attorney** help with this. Otherwise Medicaid will draw from all your assets to pay for long term care. The **timing** of how you do things matters a lot.

Have a discussion with your loved one before the Alzheimer's becomes too severe about end-of life preferences such as life saving measures such as feeding tubes, respirators - burial or cremation, memorial services. It's a good to create a living will – or amend the will you have. These discussions can be hard – but you need to have them. Pre-pay and make final arrangements if you can.

**Get ahold of Aging and In Home services** (or their equivalent) in your county ASAP. They have many helpful programs for seniors and can really help cover expenses for care at home – or a nursing home if needed.

**Apply for Social Security Disability** ASAP. In Indiana, a diagnosis of Alzheimer's is the only time SSI is not automatically denied.

Unless you are a millionaire, it will be necessary for the Alzheimer's patient to be as poor as a pauper **to qualify for Medicaid** – which can cover long term expenses. Again the Elder Law attorney can help so that you can protect some assets and still qualify.

Your loved one's personality and behavior usually will change. It can be easy for a caregiver to become frustrated. The most important thing to understand is patience, and the more quality of life you can provide - the better.

It is a given you will become exhausted. Try and find some time for yourself in the process and don't feel guilty for doing so. For about a year, Lynette qualified for **adult day care**. These facilities are wonderful enriching and caring facilities that can help with caregivers still trying to work or just need a break.

Make sure to confiscate items such as car keys, and lock doors so your loved one won't wander away. Put away items such as knives, cleaners, spray items, etc. so they won't inadvertently hurt themselves. Many times Alzheimer's patients will not sleep well and wander around at night.

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's is a long journey – a devastating journey that no one should have to take. Hopefully, the information I provided can help others with this journey.

# Gardening in Space

NASA is looking at ways to provide astronauts with nutrients in a long-lasting, easily absorbed form—freshly grown fresh fruits and vegetables. The challenge is how to do that in a closed environment without sunlight or Earth’s gravity.

## Veggie

The Vegetable Production System, known as Veggie, is a space garden residing on the space station. Veggie’s purpose is to help NASA study plant growth in microgravity, while adding fresh food to the astronauts’ diet and enhancing happiness and well-being on the orbiting laboratory. The Veggie garden is about the size of a carry-on piece of luggage and typically holds six plants. Each plant grows in a “pillow” filled with a clay-based growth media and fertilizer. The pillows are important to help distribute water, nutrients and air in a healthy balance around the roots. Otherwise, the roots would either drown in water or be engulfed by air because of the way fluids in space tend to form bubbles.



In the absence of gravity, plants use other environmental factors, such as light, to orient and guide growth. A bank of light emitting diodes (LEDs) above the plants produces a spectrum of light suited for the plants’ growth. Since plants reflect a lot of green light and use more red and blue wavelengths, the Veggie chamber typically glows magenta pink.

To date, Veggie has successfully grown a variety of plants, including three types of lettuce, Chinese cabbage, mizuna mustard, red Russian kale and zinnia flowers. The flowers were especially popular with astronaut Scott Kelly, who picked a bouquet and photographed it floating in the cupola against the backdrop of Earth. The team at Kennedy Space Center envisions planting more produce in the future, such as tomatoes and peppers. Foods like berries, certain beans and other antioxidant-rich foods would have the added benefit of providing some space radiation protection for crew members who eat them. [Veggie Fact Sheet](#)

**Advanced Plant Habitat** - The Advanced Plant Habitat (APH), like Veggie, is a growth chamber on the space station for plant research. It uses LED lights and a porous clay substrate with controlled release fertilizer to deliver water, nutrients and oxygen to the plant roots.

Unlike Veggie, it is enclosed and automated with cameras and more than 180 sensors that are in constant interactive contact with a team on the ground at Kennedy, so it doesn’t need much day-to-day care from the crew. Its water recovery and distribution, atmosphere content, moisture levels and temperature are all automated. It has more colors of LED lights than Veggie, with red, green, and blue lights, but also white, far red and even infrared to allow for nighttime imaging.

When a harvest is ready for research studies, the crew collects samples from the plants, freezes or chemically fixes them to preserve them, and sends them back down to Earth to be studied so scientists can better understand how space affected their growth and development.

Expedition 44 members became the first American astronauts to eat plants grown in space on August 10, 2015, when their crop of Red Romaine lettuce was harvested. Since 2003 Russian cosmonauts have been eating half of their crop while the other half goes towards further research. In 2012, a sunflower bloomed aboard the ISS under the care of NASA astronaut Donald Pettit.



## Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

**To my caregiver:** *I have petitioned NASA to become the first cat to visit the moon. As you know my needs are simple - a constant supply of premium cat food, computer and Internet access, a mechanized self-cleaning litter box, and a blockbuster movie deal upon my return, and lastly, I wish to be King (with my favorite and obedient royal line descendants) of all cats of the world - forever.*

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