

Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks

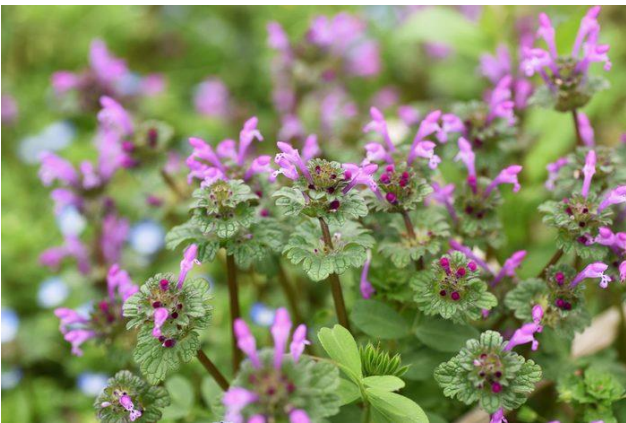
and Home Horticulture

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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.

Henbit is Out and About - Some Material from University of Wisconsin



My backyard garden has several large clumps of henbit already appearing in areas I “disturbed” last year. *It is a disturbing development....*

Lamium amplexicaule, commonly called henbit, is a weedy plant in the mint family (Lamiaceae) . Native to Europe, western Asia and northern Africa, it is widespread throughout the US and other parts of the world. The leaves of this and other species are eaten raw or cooked in Europe and Asia but are rarely used as a salad green in this country. This plant is generally found in open areas on waste ground, in lawns, cultivated fields, pastures, along roadsides and railroads, and

in other disturbed, unmanaged areas and is a common urban weed in the Midwest.

Henbit is a winter annual or biennial, but can also be a fast-growing, spring-germinating annual.

Leaves are rounded to heart-shaped with scalloped (round-toothed) or weakly lobed edges and a reticulated appearance because of the depressed veins. This plant can be an important early-season source of nectar and pollen for honeybees and bumblebees where common; Henbit grows best in cool, moist areas. It is primarily a problem in open areas of gardens or in weak, thin lawns. It can be discouraged in lawns by maintaining a dense turf through proper mowing and fertilization.



This plant propagates primarily by seed, although pieces of the stem can root at the nodes if left on moist soil. In some places, entire fields are washed pink or purple when plants are in bloom. Germination usually occurs in the fall but also. Seeds remain viable in the soil for up to five years. Henbit seeds readily, producing 40-200 seeds per plant, and can spread aggressively, but plants are easy to pull by hand or to hoe out when small. Plants should be removed before they flower and set seed to prevent further infestation.

Henbit is a winter annual, and it grows from a shallow taproot that becomes finely branched. The low growing, upright to sprawling plants have a number of weak stems arising from the base that may be erect or almost lay on the ground. The stems are square and green but often become purple with age and may root at the lower

nodes. This “weed” reproduces solely by seed, and each henbit plant can produce 2,000 or more seeds. It also spreads by producing roots on lower stems that touch the ground.

The common name, Henbit, comes from the observation that chickens like it. Humming birds also enjoy this wild edible for the nectar. Henbit provides valuable erosion control in many cropland fields in the southern U.S. Unlike many of its relatives in the mint family, it does not have a strong or distinctive mint scent. It is also easily confused with Purple Deadnettle (*L. purpureum*), which has petioled leaves all the way to the top leaves. The middle and upper leaves of *L. amplexicaule* (henbit) do not have petioles, and the leaves are typically smaller than those of Purple Deadnettle. This edible plant is also an important early season source of nectar and pollen for honeybees.

Magnolias

Magnolias are one of the first flowering trees that bloom in early spring. They are just finishing flowering at the time of this article in early-to-mid April. They are beautiful trees but sometimes early spring freezes and frosts kill the flowers. Magnolias are increasingly becoming infested with scale insects due to climate change. Magnolia scale is a soft scale which weakens the plants, produces copious amounts of sticky honeydew which can blow on cars or houses nearby. The wood can be weak, and older trees can break up or be susceptible to bark canker disease. I find it more and more difficult to recommend magnolias in this area because of these issues.

Saucer Magnolia



The elegant, goblet-shaped flowers of these handsome small trees are among the beauties of spring. Large leathery leaves, smooth gray bark, and yellow fall color add to the seasonal interest. Flowers appear before the leaves, which makes them more vulnerable to late spring frosts and freezes. Many cultivars of saucer magnolia are available, with a wide range of flower colors and shapes.

Best to plant in a protected location against frost and strong winds, but avoid southern exposures near structures, as buds may be encouraged to open too early. It makes a great specimen tree, a lawn tree, patio tree, or planted in a park or recreation area.

Star Magnolia

These small trees with dainty white flowers are also in flower in the early spring. They are often planted nearer to the house in foundation plantings - unlike saucer magnolia which becomes a larger tree.



Fermilab

Fermilab is America's premier laboratory for particle physics and accelerator research, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. Thousands of scientists around the world collaborate with Fermilab on research at the facility. Essentially, the research is conducted in a huge particle accelerator ring located deep under the main buildings.

The site included thousands of acres of what had once been prairie. In 1971, Robert Betz, Professor of Biology at Northeastern Illinois University, approached Fermilab with an idea for a Prairie Restoration Project. Restoration plans began in the main ring in 1973 with Dr. Betz, Raymond Schulenberg, former Curator of Plant Collections at the Morton Arboretum, and a few dedicated Fermilab employees piloting the project. Supported by founding Fermilab director, Robert R. Wilson, Betz and Fermilab employees established the Prairie Committee. In May 1974, Plot I was planted using over 400 pounds of seed collected by 100 volunteers working throughout the area. The 9.6 acre plot yielded, to the untrained observer, only ragweed, but Betz persisted and found tiny prairie plants struggling to survive. The native flora was growing, but at this point was putting nearly all of its energy into the vital root systems necessary for survival. After a few years enough prairie plants existed to allow burning the plot.



Plantings continued over the years with new plots disked, planted and burned on a regular basis. By 1984, over a decade of restoration had taken place when Argonne National Laboratory requested that a group of terrestrial ecologists be permitted to conduct research in the Prairie restoration Project. This added even more credibility and exposure to the project.



In 1985, Leon M. Lederman, Fermilab Director, submitted a proposal for the lab site to become a Department of Energy National Environmental Research Park. He opened the door to a variety of funding sources, and even more individuals because initiated into the prairie scene. Over 700 acres of restored prairie existed on the site by 1988. The prairie at Fermilab was, at that time, the largest reconstructed prairie in the world.

The year 1989 brought the official approval of Fermilab as a DOE Research Park. Fermilab is the sixth such park in the national network. This site is considered unique because of the wide sampling of native Midwest ecosystem life forms. Also in 1989, the Margaret Pearson Interpretive Trail opened to visitors.

[Fermilab](#) | [Visit Fermilab](#) | [Hours, Maps and Directions \(fnal.gov\)](#)

False Sunflower

False sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*), also known as oxeye sunflower, is an easy growing herbaceous perennial plant that naturalizes in grasslands and at the edge of woodlands. The botanical name of *Heliopsis helianthoides* is a mouthful, but it basically means sunflower-like. (Helios was the Greek sun god.) I really like this native perennial because of its very long flowering season and drought tolerance.



False sunflowers are a native wildflower in a large portion of North America—everywhere except for the western third of the continent. In the garden, they're best started in the spring or fall, and they grow fairly quickly but likely won't bloom in their first year. False sunflowers feature upright clumps, triangular-shaped leaves and branching stems that allow the plants to grow in a bushy habit. The double or single daisy-like, yellow-orange flowers surround a cone-shaped, golden-brown center disk. These plants are not invasive or toxic, so they are friendly to both your garden beds and pets. I prefer to plant false sunflower in clumps. They can reseed and spread near plantings, and I just remove any seedlings but most often I allow them to spread in my more natural landscape.

False sunflower prefers full to part sun and is easy to grow. It has a long blooming period during the summer and attracts a variety of insects including honeybees, bumblebees, wasps, and painted lady butterflies. Gamebirds, songbirds, and small rodents have been known to eat their seeds.

Many cultivars of false sunflowers exist in the trades-in particular in catalogs or for purchase from Internet sources. This is because false sunflowers are generally not found for sale at garden centers because they generally are tall and flower later in the spring. Tall plants that are not in flower are not promoted or for sale when consumers want shorter plants in flower when they are out and about in the early spring.

I prefer transplants, so I try to obtain false sunflowers in larger quart containers if I can. Rabbits like false sunflower seedling or transplants, so I cover them with a cage of hardware cloth until they grow and become less attractive to wascally Wabbits.



Surprise Lily

Also known as Magic Lily and Resurrection Lily - due to its habit of blooming long after the foliage has died, Naked Lady – since flowers appear with no foliage, and Flamingo Flower – since the pink blooms atop the tall leafless stems resemble flamingoes on their long legs, *Lycoris squamigera* is native to China and Japan but has been a part of American gardens since approximately 1880. Its original botanical name, *Amaryllis halli*, was probably given by Rhode Island ophthalmologist Dr. George Hall, who brought specimens back from Japan sometime after the Civil War. The genus name, *Lycoris*, honors the Roman actress and mistress of Marc Anthony. Not a true lily, these plants are part of the [amaryllis](#) family. Plant the bulbs in late summer to early fall, but don't

expect to see any flowers the first year. After that first year, foliage will appear in the spring and die back in early summer, with fragrant flowers appearing on naked stems in late August or early September. *L. squamigera* is resistant to deer and rabbits and does not have any significant risk of pests or diseases.

Surprise Lilies have been known to survive here for decades. They tolerate both sandy and clay soils, and grow well in full or partial sun. They do not thrive in especially wet soils. Surprise Lilies may be planted in either spring or fall. They do not always flower the first season after planting. The clumps of straplike foliage, similar to that of an amaryllis, appear in spring and fade away in early summer. Then, in late July or early August, 24"-36" spikes containing 5-7 fragrant pink, tubular flowers 3"-4" long emerge from the ground and bloom in just a few days. Surprise Lilies do not require additional fertilizer if the foliage is allowed to die back naturally. Established clumps should be divided every 3 - 5 years, in September (after flowers fade). Bulbs and foliage are mildly toxic, and are rarely bothered by animals. Do not allow pets or children to eat them. In Indiana, they should be planted so the bottom of the bulb is approximately 5"-6" below the soil surface. Deep planting accomplishes two goals: bulbs are protected from the cold winters, and they will not need to be divided as frequently as more shallow plantings. However, deeper planting may delay flowering until the second year (depending on the size of the bulb). Due to their unusual blooming sequence, Surprise Lilies are most attractive planted in clumps of several bulbs, 6" to 12" apart, which are located among ground covers or low-growing shrubs or perennials to camouflage the deteriorating foliage in early summer and to soften the starkness of the flower stems in late summer.

Other “Fun” Surprises

Aren't surprises fun? Here are other ways to be surprised in the garden.

“Hi, the displeased fairies in your garden invited me- ground ivy – into your backyard. I am like the relative that shows up at your house – and never leaves.” HaHaHaha.....

“Hi, I am your neighbor who pretends to be nice and supporting, but secretly behind your back complains to the neighborhood association board about your lawn and landscape – saying that is a rat-infested eyesore”. Nice...

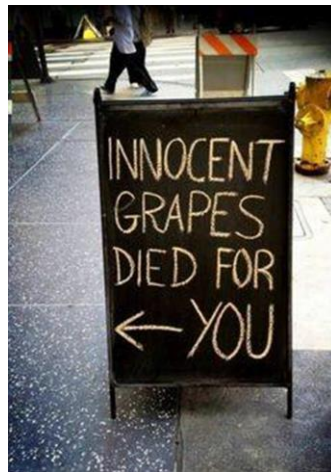


You are surprised to learn your new next-door neighbors are Hyacinth and Richard Bucket -pronounced Bah-kay -

“Hi, I am a feral cat new to the neighborhood – your garden looks like a great big beautiful litterbox for me to enjoy” .. Let me introduce you to my boyfriend Billybob – Hope you like a lot of noise after the midnight hour...

Letter in mailbox: We are pleased to announce that your beautiful flower garden and landscape have resulted in a surprise positive assessment of \$10,000 added to your property taxes this year. Keep up the good work!!Remember, Google Earth is always watching you!

Fun Signage – For Mirth and Enjoyment



Famous People and the Plants They Love

Many Folks are interested in famous people, and everything they do. The following are famous folks who love gardening and their favorite flowers. This will prime you for your next dinner party conversation.

King Charles – Wildflowers/Organic/Sustainable	JLO - Lilies
Anne Hathaway – Anemones	Mandy Moore- Fiddle Leaf Fig
Madonna – White Roses	Sting - Grapes
Michelle Obama – Hydrangeas and Pink Roses	Jennifer Garner – Delphiniums, Sunflowers
Oprah Winfrey – Roses / Vegetables	
Julia Roberts – Kale / Organic Gardening	
Blake Shelton/Gwen Stefani- Zinnias	
Audrey Hepburn- Tulips	

Installing a Paver Patio or Walkway



The first thing I would say if you want to install a patio or walkway made of paver stones or bricks is to hire a professional to do this for your own sanity. It is hard work, and tedious. But alas - some of us like doing do-it-yourself projects. We prefer arguing with a significant other after both of you surf the Internet and find different opinions of how to do the same project. This is why the Internet was invented – to promote dissension and conflict.

One could log onto Tic-Tok and observe dancing beautiful people install a patio using chopsticks.

First step: Remove turf from area and level. This sounds easy but think about it. You will need to remove the turf – and dig down the depth of your paver plus at least 6 inches or more to accommodate for materials needed to stabilize the pavers over time. So if your paver bricks are 4 inches in depth, you will need to excavate approximately one foot of soil multiplied by the area of your patio or walkway.

Second step – Figure out where to put clumps of sod and crappy subsoil you dug out. One could toss the sod clumps over on your neighbor's yard, and then feign innocence when they come over to find out where the sod came from. If you have a dog, then chastise it in front of the neighbors for carrying sod pieces over to their yard. Make empty promises to retrieve and remove the sod.

Level the area – Ask around to see if any neighbor has a long level as you are too cheap to go purchase one from a hardware store. Leveling the area often requires even more digging. Toss the soil out in the street and claim that moles and chipmunks are ravaging your property.

Add materials - Often gravel and leveling sand are placed over the soil base to make sure the area will drain properly and the pavers have a solid base to be placed upon. Both of these materials need to be hauled in and placed over the area. It is not something you want to do on a 90 degree day. Invite neighbors over for Kool-Aid and cheap peanut butter crackers and greet them with shovels and a wheelbarrow. Hand them a certificate for a summer party invite where they will never be invited.

**Some family
trees bear an
enormous crop
of nuts.**

— Wayne Huizenga



Pound and level materials. Each material needs compacted and leveled. Ask around to see if anyone has a “pounder” or smasher to do this. You probably will be handed a potato masher. Rental centers might offer a pounder tool which is a heavy flat piece on a long stick. Some pounder machines may be available to rent – good luck getting that in your compact Kia. Repeatably mash the surfaces thinking of someone you really despise when mashing.

Install pavers- Keep in mind that if you go to a garden center and try to load and carry several hundred pavers in the back of your Subaru, you will break an axle – thus compounding your stress. Ask to borrow a neighbor’s truck, and feign innocence when their frame is broken, or the truck steers like an ancient tractor after you use it.

Level pavers/add sand or paver lock – Nestle the pavers into the sand and level each paver, and to each paver nearby. This will involve placing a paver, taking it out- placing the paver- taking it out countless times until it is level and level to the pavers around it. Sometimes a rubber mallet (borrowed from a neighbor) can be used to politely tap the pavers to firmly place in the sand. Tapping some pavers too vigorously can break them-sending you back to the store to wait in long lines behind everyone else frantically buying plants, two-by-fours, and pavers. It is a great activity for newlyweds to see if the relationship will crumble faster than a paver wall (see future issue). Placing the pavers in delightful patterns only increases the stress when a significant other messes up the pattern-discovered after the project is completed. After the pavers are installed a layer of sand or a material called paver lock is poured over the pavers – swept over the pavers -and lightly moistened. This further fills in cracks and stabilizes the pavers ever further. It also helps to make sure no completely insane person will tray and steal the pavers for their own project.

Take a bow- You have done it! Invite family and friends over to listen to comments about how the patio was installed incorrectly, how the steaks were not cooked properly, or how Aunt Edna was sent to prison for throwing sod clods over on her neighbor’s property.

Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic



To my caregiver: *I know this is a shock, but catmint is my favorite plant. It is my guilty pleasure than I enjoy as a side salad with my premium cat food. It is my Precious! I must have it at any cost!*



Summer Help Wanted

In-Field Landscapers Needed

Wednesdays - Fridays
March - December

JLA's goal is to encourage homeowners to adopt sustainable landscaping practices. We specialize in creating and maintaining outdoor spaces with organic growing practices and native plants.

Qualifications:

- Driver's License required
- Must be able to lift, push and pull 50lbs.
- Landscaping experience preferred but not required
- Interest in horticulture and native plants appreciated

Job Description:

We install and maintain mostly residential landscapes and gardens. This includes plant removal, arranging decorative stone, installing plants, laying mulch, trimming existing plants and removing refuse. Our goal is to work smarter, not harder to keep everything moving and everybody safe.

Text 260-580-8181 for more information!



J. Lynne Associates Landscaping & Design

Design with Nature in Mind
Fort Wayne, IN 46807
260-580-8181
www.jlynne.associates

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