

# 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](mailto:kemeryr7@frontier.com).

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Type 1 (top), Type 2 (middle) and Type 3 (bottom) fairy rings.

## Fairy Rings Compiled from University of Wisconsin Extension

I used to joke around with folks calling me to ask about weird green rings that would appear in their lawns. I would say “why those are fairy rings of course” “What causes them?” they would ask. “Fairies” I would answer..

Fairy rings are circular areas of abnormal turf growth that are most commonly found on lawns and golf courses where soils have high levels of organic matter, and in areas where trees have recently been removed. Due to their mysterious, circular appearance, fairy rings have been of interest since ancient times. According to medieval lore, they were thought to appear after a band of fairies had danced in an area.

Fairy rings are rings of grass up to 15 feet in diameter that have a distinctly different color or texture than the grass inside or outside of the ring. Half- or other partial ring patterns occur as well. Depending on conditions, grass within fairy rings can be denser, greener, and faster growing, or alternatively browner and drier than surrounding grass. During wet weather, rings of mushrooms may form at the edge of the discolored grass.

Fairy rings are caused by certain fungi that feed on decaying organic matter (e.g., tree stumps, logs, leaves or roots) buried in the soil. Growth of fairy ring fungi begins in the center of the ring, expanding outward in a relatively uniform, circular pattern. Three different types of fairy rings can form depending on soil type, the specific fungus involved, and

environmental conditions. Type 1 fairy rings occur most commonly on golf course putting greens and occur less commonly on home lawns. The fungi involved produce compounds that reduce the amount of water that the soil can absorb, leading to drought conditions that cause the grass in the ring to brown and die. Type 2 fairy ring fungi efficiently decay organic matter releasing nitrogen that promotes lush growth and leads to a dense green ring of grass. Finally, Type 3 fairy rings have rings of mushrooms that appear during wet periods, particularly in the fall.

Fairy rings in home lawns do not typically cause turf death and thus are primarily cosmetic problems. They often disappear naturally following a change in environmental conditions. Therefore, waiting for fairy rings to naturally disappear is often the simplest option for management.

If you want to be more proactive in managing fairy rings, consider routine core aeration for your lawn. Core aeration reduces the buildup of thatch which can harbor fairy ring fungi and make fairy ring development more likely. If you are having a problem with Type 2 fairy rings, also consider applying a nitrogen fertilizer to the rest of your lawn to green up the surrounding grass to match the color of the fairy rings. For Type 3 fairy rings, consider hand removing (wearing gloves) or raking up the mushrooms and disposing of them in your garbage; DO NOT eat the mushrooms as they may be poisonous. Finally, DO NOT use fungicides for control, as products labeled for use in managing fairy rings are typically not effective in preventing fairy ring development or reducing the severity of symptoms.

## Rust Fungi – The Return of the Dodge Rust Bucket

Compiled from Rutgers University

My second wife Lynette drove a Dodge Dakota truck. She liked trucks and hauling her dogs in the back as we traveled back and forth between Fort Wayne and Steuben County.

Her dog Cotton, a large white retriever, would go ballistic while riding in the truck. It would bark and whine for the entire trip.

I took it upon myself to break the dog of this neurotic behavior. During the trip I would roll my window down and tell the dog –in my words.. to shut its piehole.

Over time all I had to do was to begin to roll down the window and the dog would shut up. After more episodes, all I had to do was to look at the dog in the rearview mirror and it would be quiet. The trip was much more peaceful.

The Dodge Dakota is famous for rusted wheel wells. This is classic Lynette. She put duct tape over the rust, and then painted it with a blue Rustoleum. White Dakota with duct tape painted blue over the wheel wells. Insanely barking dog riding in the back. Classic.

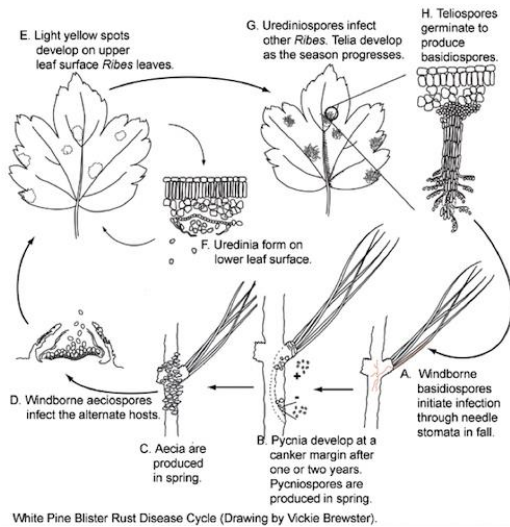
Rust diseases are fascinating; many require more than one host to survive, and all produce, in succession, two or more different types of spores during the growing season. Rust fungi are related to the mushrooms you purchase in the supermarket, but the spores produced by these organisms are found in “rusty” (yellow to orange to brown) pustules on leaves, stems, needles, and fruit. Rust fungi are **biotrophs**: they do not grow in absence of a living host, and they tend to have a narrow host range.

Some rust fungi have a unique life history; those fungi that need more than one host plant to complete their life cycle (called **alternate hosts**) are heteroecious. Examples of **heteroecious** rust diseases include Gymnosporangium rust (for example, cedar-apple rust and quince rust), ash rust, and fuchsia rust. Alternatively, other rust fungi do not require more than one host plant to survive; these rust fungi are autoecious and include hollyhock rust, pine-pine gall rust, and geranium rust.

White pine blister rust is an example of a heteroecious rust; the alternative hosts for this debilitating disease are 5-needle pines and species of *Ribes* (currant and gooseberry [*Ribes* subgenus *Grossularia*]). White pine was once dominant in northeast and north central forests; the pathogen, *Cronartium ribicola*, was introduced to the U.S. in 1898 on imported, diseased nursery stock. As the disease spread throughout pine growing regions, quarantines and a massive *Ribes* eradication program put in place to destroy the alternate host were only



marginally effective. Fungicides are not useful for control of white pine blister rust; today, the disease is managed by planting (where available) disease resistant currants, gooseberries, and pines, pruning diseased pine branches, and not planting susceptible pines in “high hazard zones



Learning to “read” disease cycle diagrams can be very useful. In this cycle, teliospores produced on *Ribes* give rise in the fall to basidiospores (H) that infect pine needles through the stomates (A). Basidiospores germinate, penetrate the needle, and grow through to the branch where a swollen canker develops. In the spring of the second year (B), pycnia develop at the canker margin, and in the spring of the following year, aecia, at first covered by a white membrane, erupt through the bark at the same spot (C). These aecial “blisters” give the disease its name. Aeciospores produced in the aecia are windblown (D) back to the alternate host (*Ribes*), where yellow spots (E) develop. On the lower leaf surface, new pustules, called uredia, release urediniospores (F) that re infect the same host (G). The urediniospore stage is called a “repeating” stage and serves to increase the amount of inoculum produced by the fungus. Later in the growing season, black telia form, and once again,

basidiospores produced from the germinating teliospores are windblown back to pine. This technical information shows how complicated rust fungus life cycles can be.

- **Manage the moisture.** Rust spores require moisture to germinate and infect host plants. Reducing humidity and leaf wetness (e.g., avoiding overhead irrigation, spacing plants to lower humidity and take advantage of prevailing winds, and using fans in greenhouses) will reduce the number of spores that successfully penetrate plant tissues.
- **Use resistant plant materials.** Where available, the use of resistant plants is the best strategy to disrupt the disease cycle.
- **Inspect stock for symptoms and signs of disease.** Scout! Purchase disease-free plants. Examine both existing and incoming stock for symptoms and signs of disease. Separate incoming stock from existing stock to prevent the introduction of pathogens and other pests.
- **Remove the alternate host.** Keep in mind that rusts are biotrophs. For heteroecious rusts, removal of the alternate host may help to disrupt the disease cycle. Rust spores are windblown, however, and may travel miles or hundreds of miles. For example, aeciospores can be disseminated up to 300 miles from pines affected by white pine blister rust. In most cases, it may be impossible to completely eradicate alternate host plants from the vicinity of economically important hosts, but this tactic may remove a good deal of inoculum.
- **Practice good sanitation.** In nurseries or greenhouses, carefully remove rust-infected leaves and other debris, and discard or isolate affected plants. Place diseased plant material in plastic bags to remove them from the greenhouse; destroy the refuse by burning, burying, or rapid-composting. At the end of the production cycle, clean up debris, and thoroughly clean and surface-disinfect greenhouse benches and propagation areas using a commercially available product for this purpose. Do not carry over plants exposed to rust to the next production cycle.
- **Fungicides.** Fungicides, used as preventives, can help disrupt the pathogen penetration process. In some crops, such as cereals, the cost of applying fungicides is prohibitive, and in other crops, they just don’t work. In landscapes, fungicides are not often recommended unless rust has been particularly severe on perennial plants for several years in a row. A combination of cultural



management strategies and chemical controls is needed to effectively combat rust diseases in commercial settings. Keep in mind that rust fungi may develop resistance to certain classes of compounds, so rotating chemistries is important.



Other common rusts include **cedar apple rust**, which involves an association between eastern red cedar and apple trees. In spring, red cedar can be covered with jellylike orange structures which release spores carried by wind, rain, and animals to apple or hawthorn trees. The leaves of these trees can be covered with orange spots and if conditions are right – can weaken the trees.

In early fall one can mow the lawn – only to discover your shoes are covered with orange powdery dust. If wet years are followed by drier conditions in late summer, **rust fungus** can develop in lawns. Unless you love the color orange, rust in lawns is no fun. Gradually, the rust will diminish, but some damage to lawns can occur in some years. Lawns seeded with a premium blend of turfgrass are much less likely to develop rust.



## Wayfaring Tree

Wayfaring tree viburnum (*Viburnum lantana*) is a very useful multi-stemmed large shrub with a rounded outline growing to a height of 10' to 15'. This viburnum has few issues - the large, broad leaves are feathery with a rough sandpapery texture. The flowers are a creamy white with no fragrance and are borne in clusters 5" in diameter. Bloom begins in early to mid-May and continues for two weeks. The fruit appears in late summer and goes through a series of color changes from yellow to red to black; often, all three colors appear at the same time on one plant. Wayfaring tree viburnum provides three seasons of interest with creamy flowers in spring, bluish-green leaf color, reddish-purple leaves in fall and tricolored autumn fruits. This viburnum is extremely adaptable -- it will grow well in a variety of conditions and thrives in the Midwest. The only time this shrub would do poorly if it was placed in a wet shady area.

*Viburnum lantana* is native to Europe, western Asia and North Africa. The wayfaring tree was named by herbalist John Gerard, who noticed it along paths between Wiltshire and London in the late 1500's. They became associated with being on or near a path, preventing travelers from getting lost.

The flowers attract many insects in May and June, providing an important source of pollen and nectar. In the autumn, the red and black berries are a food source for birds and small mammals.



The wayfaring tree branches are also known as 'twistwood' as they used to be twisted into whip handles.

'Mohican' is the most common cultivar – more compact which typically matures to 7-8' tall and 9-10' wide. Wayfaring trees make a great hedge or background plant for smaller shrubs and flowers. One can still find this plant at many crossroad locations in Great Britain.

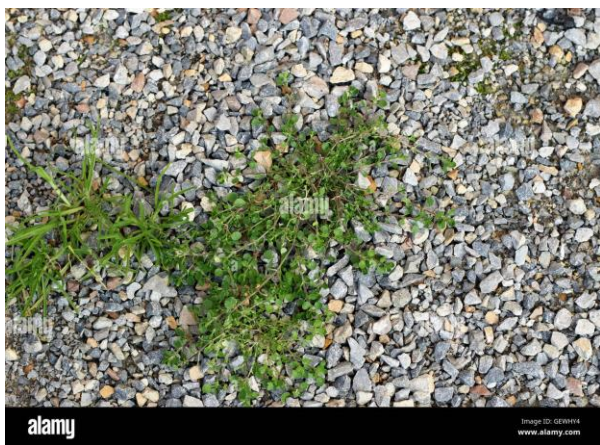
*V. lantana 'Variegatum'* grows 8-9' but very slow to get there. A very high quality foliage plant. Leaves are flecked with shades of light and dark green, chartreuse, lime and gold. Masses of creamy white, non-fragrant flowers followed by light green fruit which changes to red to black, with all colors in the same fruit cluster at one time, similar to *V. lantana 'Mohican'*. Partial to full shade is recommended to keep variegation vibrant. Zone 4



## Leave the Roses Alone

It is important to leave roses alone after mid-August. Don't fertilize, prune, or take them out for pizza on Saturday night. Roses need to rest as we head into fall. Giving them too much attention might cause the roses not to enter dormancy for the upcoming winter. This could lead to winter damage or death. My Oso Easy shrub roses I planted in late spring are in full bloom at the moment. They are gorgeous – and I just need to look at them and enjoy their beauty.

## Rocks Used as Mulch



Sometimes the temptation to use gravel or large rocks as mulch in a landscape is great. Instead of purchasing bark mulch every year, one can just put down rock and never have to mulch or weed again – Correct?

Recently my friend Gwendra decided to plant daylilies in a weedy area close to a chain link fence (you know how I feel about those). As she began to clear out the weeds, she discovered that some well-meaning person who loved rocks as a child had in the past piled up larger river rock near the fence to use as a mulch. Over time dirt had piled up over the mulch along with the weeds. The area was a nightmare. Folks don't realize that over time weeds will grow in these areas where stone is used as a mulch. Then the only choice to get rid of the

weeds in stone are herbicides as hand pulling weeds out of rock is nigh impossible.



My poor exhausted friend pulled out about 6 wheelbarrow loads of stone out of the ground before she could plant. The rocks had to be placed in an area out of the way where hopefully they will never do damage again.

I have seen massive weedy areas in stone near ponds and rivers – and even stone used as mulch under trees. This issue with mulch around trees or shrubs is that often the stone can heat up and cause stress on the plants- and yes weeds will still appear over time.



## Blossom End Rot – The Return

Folks and friends I know are reporting a fair amount of blossom end rot appearing on their tomatoes as we head into late summer. It is not surprising considering the very variable weather this year with cool periods, drought, wet and very hot weather. All of these conditions contribute to poor pollination conditions – which result in low calcium availability to developing fruit. This results in black lesions that appear on the blossom end of the fruit.

Usually blossom end rot will disappear or diminish over time. This year is tough because the blossom end rot appeared later because of the strange weather we have experienced. You can cut off the black portion and still use the tomatoes. Calcium sprays can help, but the window to develop “normal” tomatoes is shorter this season.

## Farmers’ Almanac – A shake, shiver, and shovel” winter

The 2023 edition of the Farmers’ Almanac is predicting this to be a “shake, shiver, and shovel” winter. The Almanac says that winter will likely come earlier than last year with storms and cold nationwide, and here to stay.

A winter storm track in the eastern United States is predicted to run from the western Gulf of Mexico to the northeast, across the Virginias, New York State and New England.

The Southeast will see storms with cold rains and a mix of snow, sleet, ice, freezing rain, and chilly temperatures.

Meanwhile, the North Central states may see a fair amount of snow throughout the winter, and the Southern Central States may see some snow accumulating in early January.



The Far West and Pacific Northwest will see about-normal winter precipitation, while the Southwest is predicted to remain in a drought with less than average amounts of moisture.

You may want to ask Santa Claus for a new coat (and shovel). Frigid temperatures are likely in many areas through January, especially in the North Central region

(get ready to shake and shiver!) The 2022-23 winter season may break some records with temperatures 40 below zero in the United States.

The Southeast will also likely make you want to bundle up while the **Great Lakes region** calls for “unreasonably cold” temperatures. During the first week of January, the Rockies and Plains may experience heavy snows that may reach Texas and Oklahoma followed by bitterly cold air. Thankfully February may ease the pressure a bit — making winter a little bit more bearable. After the vernal equinox, expect spring to go out like a lion at the end of March with a wide variety of weather conditions.

## A To Do List For the Fall

As we head into autumn, some gardeners suddenly are tired of all the hoopla over the garden. However, many gardeners love things to do, so we worry about what’s left to do before we can call the season over. Baby boomer gardeners in particular will rake leaves off of snow and put up Christmas decorations in October.

Fertilizer lawns in October/November with a high nitrogen fertilizer. Research shows that doing this will result in a healthy lawn next spring.



You can cut back and tidy up the perennial garden in October or wait until March of next year to do so. Cutting back does make the garden tidier, but some gardeners prefer to leave foliage over the winter months for birds and other critters. One can follow the Marie Kondo method and thank each plant before cutting it back.

Try not to put up Christmas decorations before Halloween.

Unless you have huge piles of leaves a foot deep in the lawn, try just mowing and mulching the leaves into the lawn. Its free fertilizer for next spring. One can also top off vegetable garden beds with leaves that will decompose and add nutrients to the bed next spring. One can also use leaves to protect tender plants like hydrangea and rhododendron - for example.

Fall is a great time to plant many tree and shrubs. These plants get a great head start so they quickly develop the following spring. Some perennials such as day lilies and tall lilies also prefer fall planting.

Peonies prefer fall planting and are great to use in landscapes of older homes in our area. Make sure to plant them at the proper depth. They are absolutely gorgeous along walkways.

One can also plant carrots, chard, and leeks in a fall vegetable garden to extend the season. Organic vegetables from the grocery are great to use as sprouting inhibitors are not used. Many carrots allowed to sprout are great to use. Mulch over the plants so they are available to use all winter.



# Some Places Where I Shop Online



One can shop locally for plants, but often it is hard to find a lot of variety in plant material. Here are a few places I have found for online plant shopping.

Home Depot continues to be a good place to find plants from various sources. They obtain plants from various vendors and ship you the plants for free. It's a sweet deal. I use their searchable database to find specific plants. They offer plants in smaller containers for better value.

Oakes Daylily farm is located in Tennessee. They offer hundreds of daylily cultivars. The daylily scapes they ship are very high quality and develop quickly. I choose the bargain varieties.

Fedco Nursery is located in Maine. They offer a wide variety of fruit trees – especially heirloom varieties. They offer a unique selection of trees, and a few perennials. Very fun place to shop and go there early in the season.

Gardens By the Sea offers a unique selection of pollinator plants for our gardens. The plants are good quality and packed well.

High Country Gardens offers perennials and wildflowers – both seed and transplants. The plants are small, but sometimes they offer some plants that are difficult to find anywhere else.

Sooner plant farms offers unusual woody plants that are hard to find. The quality of the plants is superb. They are more expensive, but sometimes it is worth it.

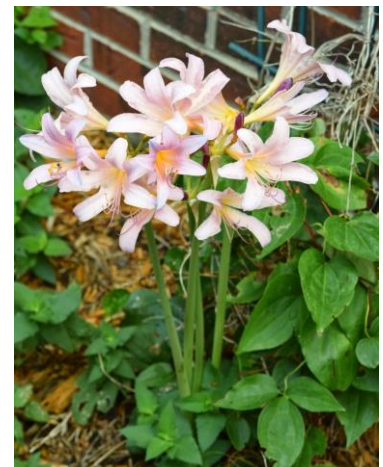
I have also used Etsy and eBay to purchase plants. The plants vary in quality and are generally small. The “starter” plants are usually quite small. Beware of additional shipping charges.

Forest Farm is a place to search for plants one can't find anywhere else. The quality of plants is very good, but they charge a lot for shipping.

## “Surprise” Lily in Bloom

“Surprise” Lily is in bloom all over the city of Fort Wayne. They are also called Naked Ladies, Resurrection Lily, and Hurricane Lily. They are native to Asia but have naturalized in the U.S. – in particular to the S.E. U.S. Surprise lily begins the year with low vegetative growth that disappears by summer. Then pink flowers appear on tall spikes in late summer or early fall. So these flowers “surprise” us by appearing from a bare area.

Well, some surprises are OK. Finding out you owe several hundred dollars more on a property tax bill is not a surprise one is looking for. Surprise lilies





are often found in areas of dappled shade along wooded areas in older landscapes.

My friend transplanted some surprise lilies this spring from an area where they were not wanted. It turns out that early spring and fall are the best times to move them. They have bloomed this year even after the rather hurried move. We will probably plant ferns or phlox over the area where the surprise lilies are planted so there is some interest in the area where the surprise lilies disappear in late spring. This avoids a bare area in summer and helps provide interest and also helps control weeds and erosion.



## Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

*To my caregiver: How humorous you are to fill my litterbox with course gravel in an attempt to make my bathroom experience a total nightmare. This obviously is an attempt to make me use an “updated” box filled with something called “pretty litter”. I can tell you the litterbox is never a “pretty” experience. Nuff said.....*

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