

Green Thumb Prints

Newsletter of the Hancock County
Master Gardener Volunteers



September 2011

*Gardening is our Passion
Education is our Purpose*



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- **This year's foliage plant by Bob Campbell**
- **Refresher Course: ALB**
- **Chiggers (scratch, scratch)**
- **Harvesting & Storage: Melons, Onions, Garlic**

Dates to Remember!

Fridays: 9:00 am or anytime, demonstration garden. Bill Jones will let everyone know when tomato trials have been completed and free tomatoes are available. Watch for an e-mail.

August 31—September 5: Hancock County Fair - schedule page 8

Thursday, September 8: Brown Bag Presentation by Marilyn Beltz on Houseplants, 6:00 PM, Extension Office.

Thursday, September 8: MGV Monthly Meeting, Extension Office, 7:00 PM.

Sunday, September 18: Retirement Party for Gary Wilson. 2 pm - 5 pm at Brugeman Lodge at Riverbend. Call Marilyn Beltz if you can help prepare Veggie & cheese trays on Saturday 9/17

Wednesday, September 21: WFIN Phone Club, 9:00-11:00. Bill Jones & Barbara Phillips

Coordinator's Corner

by Nancy Kronberg

Thanks to Tracey Pierce for hosting our annual MGV picnic. Thanks also to everyone who attended. It was great fun with lots of yummy food.

Many of you have asked why I am moving to Chattanooga area when my son's family is in Atlanta. Anyone who has visited Atlanta and been submitted to the endless traffic and less than tolerable air quality will understand. We will be close enough to assist whenever needed as well as provide a getaway location for them. Being at a higher elevation and north of a smaller city make for a much more pleasant location.

With that said, my last day will be Friday, October 21 (end of final October pay period). Details are still being worked out as to will become coordinator. Regardless of who takes over, 2011 and 2012 will be rebuilding years. Every mgv will be expected to pitch in and assist. Every mgv will have to participate in and/or lead at least one committee. New committees will be set up and there will be adequate choices for everyone. Just attending monthly meetings and social events will not be an option. Of course, brown bag advanced training will continue to count as education hours.

I've enjoyed my time leading one of the finest MGV groups in Ohio. I know that even with changes, our group will continue to maintain that status. Thanks to technology, I will stay in touch and let you know what's happening in Tennessee.

See you at the Fair!
Nancy

Harvest and storage: Onions and Garlic

Harvesting vegetables at the right stage of maturity results in high quality, nutritious products. If properly harvested and stored, onions and garlic will keep most of their original flavor and food value for months.

When should you harvest onions?



Onions should be harvested when most of the tops have fallen over and begun to dry. Carefully pull or dig the bulbs with the tops attached.

What is the proper way to store onions?

After harvesting the onions, dry or cure the onions in a warm, dry, well-ventilated location, such as a shed or garage. Spread out the onions in a single layer on a clean, dry surface. Cure the onions for two to three weeks until the onion tops and necks are thoroughly dry and the outer bulb scales begin to rustle. After the onions are properly cured, cut off the tops about 1 inch above the bulbs. As the onions are topped, discard any that show signs of decay. Use the thick-necked bulbs as soon as possible as they don't store well. An alternate preparation method is to leave the onion tops untrimmed and braid the dry foliage together.

Place the cured onions in a mesh bag, old nylon stocking, wire basket or crate. It's important that the storage container allow air to circulate through the onions. Store the onions in a cool, moderately dry

location. Storage temperatures should be 32 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The relative humidity should be 65 to 70 percent. Possible storage locations include a basement, cellar or garage. Hang the braided onions from a rafter or ceiling. If storing the onions in an unheated garage, move the onions to an alternate storage site before temperatures drop below 32 F.

What is the storage life of onions?

The storage life of onions is determined by the variety and storage conditions. When properly stored, good keepers, such as 'Copra' and 'Stuttgarter,' can be successfully stored for several months. Poor keepers, such as 'Walla Walla' and 'Sweet Spanish,' can only be stored for a few weeks. If the storage temperatures are too warm, the onions may sprout. Rotting may be a problem in damp locations. Inspect the stored onions on a regular basis in fall and winter. Discard any that are starting to rot.

When should you harvest garlic?

Harvest garlic when the foliage begins to dry. In Iowa, garlic is usually harvested in August or September. Carefully dig the bulbs with a garden fork or shovel.

How do you store garlic?

After harvesting the garlic, dry the garlic in a warm, dry, well-ventilated location. Place the garlic on an elevated wire screen or slotted tray to promote drying. When the tops have dried, cut off the dry foliage 1 inch above the bulbs. Also, trim off the roots and brush off any loose soil. Place the bulbs in a mesh bag or open crate and store in a cool (32 F to 40 F), dry (65 to 70 percent relative humidity) area. Garlic can be stored for three to six months if properly dried and stored. An alternate way to store garlic is to braid the foliage together immediately after harvest, dry and then hang the braided garlic in a cool, dry location.

Source: [Richard Jauron](#), [Willy Klein](#), Iowa State University Extension and hortline@iastate.edu

"This Year's Foliage Plant"

- Bob Campbell

Each year I try to grow a new plant with interesting and unusual foliage. Growing in my beds and borders from past years are Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*), Siberian Culver's Root (*Veronicastrum sibiricum*), and Showy Tick Trefoil (*Desmodium canadense*).

This year's foliage plant, *Althea cannabina*, (common name: Hemp Leaf Marshmallow) is a cousin of Marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*). It differs from *A. officinalis* both in its leaf-shape and its bloom. *A. officinalis* has lobed shaped leaves and soft pink (sometimes nearly white) blooms. The height of each is similar, *A. cannabina* reaching anywhere from 2-5 feet; *A. officinalis*, 2-4 feet. Both have a spread of about two feet.

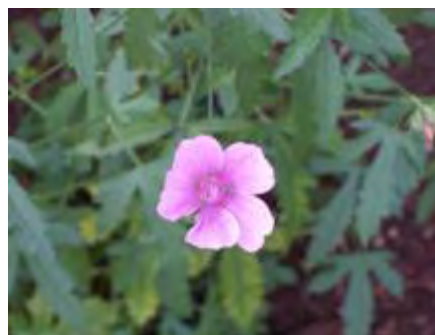
A. cannabina differs from its cousin by producing hemp-like leaves, from which it picks up its name. Their beautiful design has lived up to my expectations. Counting the two projections at the base, each leaf forms a hand with five serrated fingers.



August 14th photos



A. cannabina delivers much deeper pink blooms than its cousin. J. L. Hudson says that *A. cannabina* resembles a miniature *Hibiscus*, and blooms until fall. In this its first year, the blooms have been sparse, usually no more than one or two at a time. But, as shown in this image of one its first blooms this year, it's enough to hope for abundance of beauty next year and in years to come.



July 29th photo

A. cannabina, from what I have read and experienced so far, is an easy plant to grow.

The hardest part may be getting it started. I found it both difficult and easy to germinate. It was difficult in 2010. That spring I followed some expert advice to stratify the seed and nick them before planting. I did both. Not a single seed germinated. In 2011, I skipped the special treatment, waited until my sun room was good and warm (mid-April) and tried again. This time I had several germinations within the first two weeks.

The plant may require staking. In one location, the plant shot up a central stem that required support; the other stems were somewhat leggy. In the other location, the plant has grown only five inches high, but spread close to two feet. I'm waiting to see what the more mature years will bring.

Other than this, *A. cannabina* has few requirements.

- It is happy with either full sun or part shade.
- It will grow in almost any soil, although prefers it on the moist side.
- It may be wise to plant *A. cannabina* in a protected location. Various nurseries list it as hardy to Zone 3 but a few put it at Zone 6. J.L. Hudson does not specify a hardiness zone.

Plant and Information Source: J.L. Hudson, Seedsman, www.JLHudsonSeeds.net

Asian Longhorned Beetle *Refresher Course*



What does it look like?

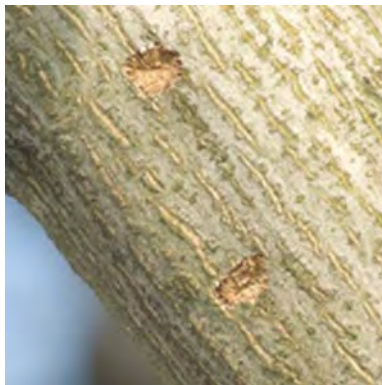
The Beetle:

If you are seeing spots, you may have ALB. While the ALB may appear threatening, it is harmless to humans and pets. The adult ALB is a distinctive-looking insect with the following unique characteristics:

- 1 to 1 ½ inches in length
- Long antennae banded with black and white (longer than the insect's body)
- Shiny, jet black body with distinctive white spots
- Six legs
- May have blue feet

Adult beetles are most active during the summer and early fall. Throughout the summer, they can be seen on tree branches, walls, outdoor furniture, cars and sidewalks. If you see the beetle or any signs of infestation, you need to report it immediately. You won't see the beetle after the first frost until it emerges again in the summer. During the winter months, the beetle's larvae tunnel deep into the trees they infest. Although you can't spot it, you can still be a beetle buster by not moving firewood. Moving firewood can spread the beetle, its larvae and its eggs to healthy trees. So buy it locally and burn it locally, and don't move firewood off of your property.

Know the signs:

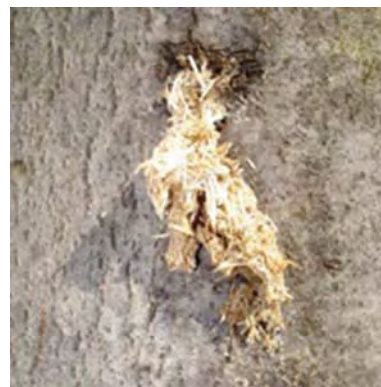


Throughout its life cycle, the ALB leaves obvious signs of its presence in and around host trees. The adult female chews 35-90 oval depressions, called oviposition sites, into the bark of the host tree. She lays a single egg beneath the bark at each site.



The egg then hatches into a white caterpillar-like larva that tunnels deeper into the tree, where it feeds and develops over the winter.

In the spring, beetle larvae inside the host tree build a hard case for themselves called a pupa and develop within it. In the summer, the adult beetles chew their way out, leaving dime-sized (1/4" or greater), perfectly round exit holes.



As the beetle tunnels, the ALB often pushes sawdust-like material, called frass, out onto the ground or tree branches.

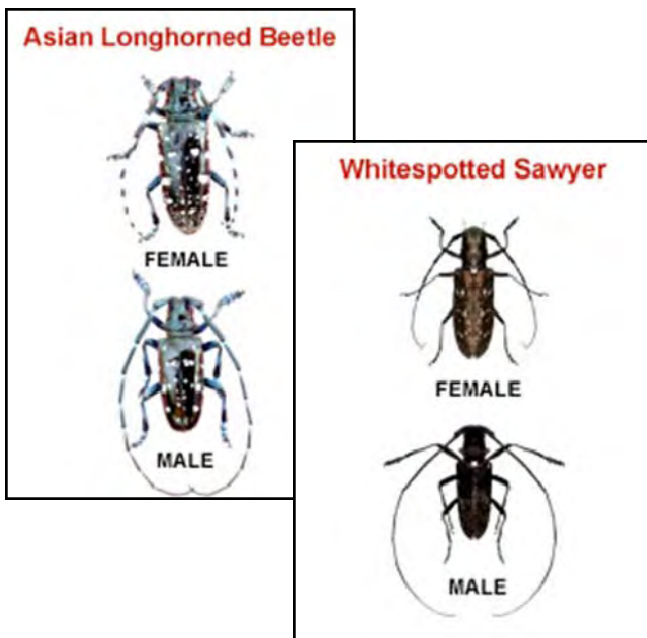
(Continued on page 5)

ALB Refresher Course

(Continued from page 4)



Infested tree.



Looks Like ALB, But It's Not:

The Whitespotted pine sawyer beetle is often mistaken for the ALB. Here are the telltale differences:

- The Whitespotted sawyer has one white dot between the top of its wings. ALB does not have this dot.

The Whitespotted sawyer's wings are rough and bronzy-black as opposed to the ALB's shiny smooth black wings.

For more photos of the Whitespotted pine sawyer, and other insects similar in appearance to the ALB, go to: USDA APHIS site [Asian Longhorned Beetle Public Identification](#).

Source: USDA Beetle Busters Website

Which house plants are sensitive to fluoride from city water?

Not only is municipal water a source of fluoride, but perlite (the white, spongy material incorporated in many potting mixes) and some fertilizer products may release enough fluoride to harm sensitive plants. Easter lilies, *Dracena*, *Spathiphyllum* (peace lily), cast iron plants, parlor palms, prayer plants, *Freesia*, and spider plants can all show symptoms of marginal leaf or tip burn (browning) from fluoride. Spider plants, especially the variegated type, are very sensitive to fluoride and often show symptoms of leaf tip burn. Flushing the soil occasionally with rainwater or bottled water helps reduce fluoride salt buildup.

Source: Plantfacts

What vegetables can tolerate a light fall frost?

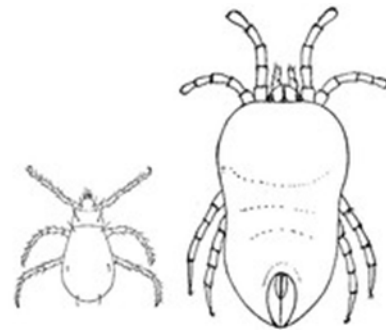
Vegetables that are semi-hardy and can tolerate light frost include beets, carrots, chard, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, parsnips, and potatoes. Those that are hardy and can tolerate a hard frost include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, onions, radishes, spinach, and turnips.

Gardeners often protect plants in the vegetable garden in early fall to extend yield. Covering plants with layers of newspaper, sheets, or a floating row cover will offer some frost protection. A loose straw mulch over low-growing plants will work well, too. In the vegetable garden, consider covering "tender" plants such as beans, cucumber, melons, peppers, summer squashes, and tomatoes.

Source: Plantfacts

Chiggers

(Scratch! Scratch!)



Are chiggers more common this year than in the past and why? This was the BugDoc's response:

This seems to be possibly related to the general trend of warming environments. We used to only get complaints about chiggers in Ohio along the Ohio River Valley counties, but they have been increasingly reported in mid-Ohio and now northern Ohio! Chiggers were a fact of life in Oklahoma where I grew up and you always put on insect repellent, especially around your socks, lower legs and pant legs (if you weren't wearing shorts). Even then, you would get a couple of chiggers burrowing into your skin under your underwear bands or other "delicate" areas! LOL! I also suggest that chigger outbreaks are related to small mammal populations as mice, rats, chipmunks and squirrels which are the intended hosts of chigger larvae. They can build up incredible populations on these animals (as well as ground-nesting birds, which are less common in Ohio than in the Prairie States). Remember that chigger larvae get onto any warm-blooded animal and try to get a blood meal. On humans, the larvae burrow into a hair follicle and use their mouth parts to rasp through the thin skin to find capillaries. They also secrete an anticoagulant into the wound and our bodies usually set up a quick reaction to this foreign protein which induces swelling. The swelling closes the hair follicle, thereby trapping the chigger larva inside the follicle! The chigger dies and even more allergenic, foreign proteins are introduced. This causes even more intense swelling and itching. Occasionally, these areas get infected and secondary damage can be caused! Not fun!

So, in answer to this question: Yes, this is a "good" year for chiggers as the weather and moisture conditions have been good for their growth and reproduction, and we are seeing a significant increase in local field rodent populations! The normal recommendation is to use a DEET-based product on the lower body when out in wildlife habitats (especially tall grassy areas adjacent to wood lots). The data on some of the new alternate insect repellents seems to be lacking related to chigger repellency. As soon as you are through with your activities, it is recommended to get home as soon as possible, place all your clothing in the dryer for 20 minutes (or wash immediately). The person should also take a shower and use lots of soap to try to knock out any chigger larvae before they have burrowed in. Those suffering from chigger bites should use antihistamine products to reduce the swelling and itching and the old standard, Calamine Lotion, can certainly help!

Source: Buckeyeturf.OSU.edu

You are appreciated!!!!!!

Thanks to all the volunteers who will be working at the Fair and at other activities throughout the year. YOU are what makes our Master Gardener Volunteers Group successful. Your hard work is appreciated!

Reminder and Thank you!

Thanks to Barbara Phillips, Lauri Inkrott, and Jeannette Miller for providing refreshments at the September meeting.

Harvesting and Storing Melons

Watermelons, muskmelons, and honeydews are delicious summertime treats. To obtain the best flavor, melons must be harvested at the right stage of maturity. Once harvested, proper storage prolongs their storage life for as long as possible. Guidelines for harvesting and storing watermelons, muskmelons, and honeydews are presented below.

Watermelon. Harvest when the underside or "belly" of the melon turns from a greenish white to buttery yellow or cream. This color change is especially pronounced on the dark green skinned varieties. In addition, the fruit tends to lose its slick appearance on top and becomes dull when ripe.

For most individuals, thumping or tapping the melon is generally not a good indicator of ripeness. Rapping an immature melon with your knuckles produces a metallic ring. A ripe melon gives off a hollow or dull ring. While experienced home gardeners may be able to determine the maturity of watermelons using the "thump test," most individuals will have difficulty differentiating between the sounds.

When harvesting watermelons, leave 2 inches of the stem on the fruit. Watermelons can be stored at room tempera-

ture for about one week and for two to three weeks at 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Muskmelon. The fruit of muskmelon or cantaloupe are mature when the stem pulls (slips) easily from the melon. The melon is not ripe if the stem has to be forcibly separated from the fruit. Other indicators of maturity are based on touch, appearance, and aroma. The flower end (the end opposite the stem) of the melon should be slightly soft. The skin between the netting turns from green to yellow at maturity. Finally, a ripe melon produces a strong "muskmelon" aroma. Muskmelons can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. The optimum storage temperature is 32 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit. Before refrigerating, place the melons in a plastic bag to prevent the muskmelon aroma from flavoring other stored foods.

Honeydew. Unlike muskmelons, the fruit of honeydews do not slip off the vine when mature. The best indicator of ripeness is a slight softening of the blossom end of the fruit. There may also be a subtle change in the color of the honeydew. Honeydews can be stored for 2 to 3 weeks at a temperature of 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Source: Richard Jauron, Department of Horticulture,
Iowa State University Extension



The Master Gardener *Green Thumb Print* is a publication of the Hancock County Extension Office, 7868 Hancock County Road 140, Findlay, OH, 45840, 419-422-3851. The Master Gardener Coordinator is Nancy Kronberg.

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related

educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA.

Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

2011 Hancock County Fair Booth Schedule

As of Tuesday, August 30

If you cannot work as scheduled, it is your responsibility to find a replacement.

All slots have at least 2 mgvs except Saturday from 5 - 8 pm.

Please don't make Bill Jones work by himself!

There are no fair passes this year

Time	Wed. 8/31	Thurs. 9/1	Fri. 9/2	Sat. 9/3	Sun. 9/4	Mon. 9/5
10 am - 1 pm	Richard K	JoAnn R	Bill J	Marilynn B	Cheryl M	Cheryl M
	Barbara P	Nancy K	Cheryl M	Patty W	Marty D	Barb L
	Linda L		Ann W			
	John A					
1 pm - 4 pm	Donna J	Norma S	Nancy K	Patty W	Barb S	Bill J
	Jerry B	Dick S	Bill J	Bill J	Terrie C	Betty S
	Carol B		Betty S		Mary Jane B	
5 pm - 8 pm	Ann W	Ann W	Dick D	Bill J	Dick D	
	Nancy K	Larry S	Lyn M	<i>Need Volunteer</i>	Lyn M	
	Betty S	Jeannette M				
		Pam M				