

Green Thumb Prints

Newsletter of the Hancock County
Master Gardener Volunteers



June 2011

*Gardening is our Passion
Education is our Purpose*



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Plant Exchange, Fertilizing annuals
- Ant Mounds, Eliminating tree suckers
- Planting Melons
- Caring for Mandevilla
- Flowers dropping from tomatoes

Dates to Remember!

Mondays: 9:00-noon, workstation (see page 2).

Fridays: 9:00, demonstration garden. Or pick your own time!

NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION

Thursday, June 9: Brown Bag Presentation, Marty Davis on "straw bale gardening." 6:00 PM at Findlay Library, 206 Broadway. Regular monthly meeting follows at 7 pm.

Wednesday, June 15: WFIN Phone Club, 9:00-11:00, Nancy K & Barb Phillips

Upcoming Events

No July Meeting! See you in August at Tracey Pierce's home for the summer picnic.

Coordinator's Corner

by Nancy Kronberg

Due to a scheduling conflict, we will hold our monthly MGV meeting at the Findlay Hancock Library Thursday, June 13. We will be in Meeting Room #2 downstairs. Brown Bag at 6 pm and short meeting to follow at 7. We should be done no later than 8 pm. We will skip refreshments this month - we can go to Dietsch's for ice cream after the meeting.

Since I was in Atlanta for the plant exchange, I wasn't able to share some of the bounty in my garden. Here's a list of what I have available. I purposely used the scientific names as a teachable moment!

Stokesia laevis (various colors)

Aguilegia vulgaris 'Woodside gold'

Tradescantia ssp. (various colors)

Viola labradorica

Lamium galeobdolon (yellow flower)

Tricyrtis ssp. (Purple speckled fall flowers)

Asclepias incarnata (pink)

Hypericum calycinum

If you'd like to have starts of any of these plants, let me know. You will have to come and dig them!!! Bring your own containers since I've recycled most of mine.

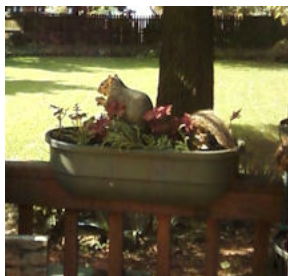
There will be a diagnostic workshop Wednesday, July 27. It will be an all day event with great OSU speakers. I will send everyone a flyer as soon as I get it done.

See you Thursday,

Nancy

Caught in the Act!

When I returned from Georgia, I noticed that many of my coleus starts had been "topped." I suspected an animal was the culprit. I sure didn't think that a squirrel would be the perpetrator. The remaining starts have been relocated thus sparing them any further damage.



June Workstation Schedule

June 6: Cheryl Miller, Bill Jones
June 13: Lauri Inkrott, Ruth Furiate
June 20: Jim Barnhill
June 27: **VOLUNTEER NEEDED**

Notice — Reminder

While you are working the Hotline on Mondays, please **water the front area** (plants/flowers) of the extension office if needed. If you can't do this for any reason, let Cathy Grossman know so that she can make arrangements to take care of the watering.

I did not apply a preemergent herbicide to the lawn this past spring to control crabgrass. I see it coming up along the edges of the driveway now. Is there a way to control it now?

Post-emergent herbicides are available that will kill crabgrass after it germinates and begins to grow. This herbicide application should be made as soon as young crabgrass is seen in the lawn. In Ohio, this usually between late-May and mid-June. Generally, multiple applications of herbicides will be required. Commercial lawn care companies have superior products to control young crabgrass, and you may want to contract with a company for this part of your lawn care.

Source: Plantfacts

MGV DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

At the moment (early May), this isn't pretty, but soon these plots will be filled with color. Although work has been slow in starting due to the rainy weather, activities in the MGV demonstration garden have begun. Feel free to help in the garden (Fridays at 9:00) and stop by anytime to see what's growing.



Hopefully by the end of this week (June 10), the annual bed will be filled with pink, orange, purple, lilac, and red specimens.



Planting Melons in the Home Garden

Though they take up considerable space and require a long growing season, many home gardeners can't resist planting a few watermelons and muskmelons.

Melons are relatively easy to grow. Their basic requirements are full sun and a fertile, well-drained soil. Heavy, poorly drained soils can often be improved by incorporating organic matter, such as compost or well-rotted manure, into the soil.

Watermelon and muskmelon are warm-season crops. Plant melons after the danger of frost is past and soil temperatures have warmed to 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Melons can be planted in mid-May.

Muskmelon and watermelon are normally planted in hills. Plant 4 or 5 seeds per hill at a depth of 1 inch. Later, remove all but 2 or 3 healthy, well-spaced plants per hill when seedlings have 1 or 2 true leaves.

For an earlier crop, melon transplants can be started indoors. Start seeds indoors 3 to 4 weeks before the anticipated outdoor planting date. Plantable containers, such as peat pots, work best as both plant and container are transplanted directly into the garden, resulting in little damage to the transplant's root system. Sow 3 or 4 seeds per container, later remove all but 2 seedlings. Transplant outdoors when plants have 1 or 2 true leaves. Harden the plants outdoors for a few days prior to planting to lessen transplant stress. Initially place the transplants in a shady, protected location and then gradually expose them to longer periods of direct sun.

Hills of muskmelon should be spaced 3 to 5 feet apart with 5 to 7 feet between rows. Watermelon hills and rows should be spaced 6 to 8 feet apart. If garden space is limited, bush-type varieties of muskmelon and watermelon are available.

Home gardeners can promote early melon production by using black plastic mulch. Black plastic promotes spring growth by warming the soil. The plastic mulch also helps to conserve soil moisture and control weeds. Lay the black plastic over moist soil on a calm day. Anchor the edges of the plastic mulch by making furrows 2 or 3 inches deep, placing the edges in the furrows, then covering with soil. To plant, cut holes in the plastic with a sharp knife or bulb planter. The holes should be in the center of the plastic film and just large enough to plant the seeds or transplants.

Suggested muskmelon varieties include 'Earlisweet' (early maturing, 2 to 3 lb. fruit), 'Eclipse' (round 6 to 8 lb. fruit), 'Athena' (oval 4 to 6 lb. fruit), 'Aphrodite' (oval 6 to 9 lb. fruit), 'Superstar' (oval 6 to 8 lb. fruit), 'Ambrosia' (round 4 to 5 lb. fruit), 'Hale's Best' (oval 4 to 5 lb. fruit, heirloom), 'Earlidew' (honeydew type, pale green flesh), and 'Passport' (hybrid melon, green flesh).

Excellent watermelon varieties include 'Crimson Sweet' (red-fleshed, seeded, blocky round fruit, 20 to 30 lb.), 'Royal Sweet' (red-fleshed, seeded, blocky oval fruit, 20 to 25 lb.), 'Sangria' (red-fleshed, seeded, blocky oval fruit, 20 to 26 lb.), 'Crunchy Red' (red-fleshed, seedless, round to oval fruit, 15 to 18 lb.), 'Gypsy' (red-fleshed, seedless, round fruit, 13 to 17 lb.), 'Millionaire' (red-fleshed, seedless, oblong fruit, 13 to 20 lb.), 'Sweet Beauty' (red-fleshed, seeded, oblong icebox-size fruit, 5 to 7 lb.), 'Yellow Baby' (yellow-fleshed, seeded, round fruit, 9 to 12 lb.), and 'Amarillo' (yellow-fleshed, seedless, round fruit, 12 to 14 lb.).

A seeded variety (pollenizer) must be planted with seedless watermelon varieties for proper pollination. Pollinator seeds are often included in seedless watermelon seed packets.

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

How should annual flower beds be fertilized?

OSU Extension recommends applying a pre-plant fertilizer at soil preparation time. Then, fertilizer is applied at six week intervals through the growing season to keep annuals blooming well. If you planted your annuals in mid-to late-May, fertilize again about July 1 with one pound of granular fertilizer with an analysis of 5-10-5 or 5-10-10. Apply this over 100 square feet of bed area. Repeat this application six weeks later, about mid-August, with another pound of fertilizer per 100 square feet. As you scatter the fertilizer, make sure that any granules that land on the foliage or flowers are washed off with a stream of water, which otherwise can burn the foliage or flower petals.

Source: Plantfacts

Flowers on my tomatoes and peppers are dropping off without setting any fruit. Why is this happening, and what can I do to stop it?

Both tomato and pepper are affected by temperatures; they will abort blossoms if it gets too hot. On tomato, blossom drop occurs when day time temperatures are above 90 degrees Fahrenheit and night time temperatures are above 76 degrees. Peppers grow best when day time temperatures are between 70-80 degrees and 60-70 degrees at night. In 90 degree heat or above, blossoms will drop. Fruit that set at temperatures above 80 degrees may be undersized and poorly shaped due to heat injury to the flowers.

Source: Plantfacts, OSU Edu

What care does Mandevilla require?

There are several species of *Mandevilla* that have become popular as a vining container plant in the past few years. They bloom over a long season, and in southern climates are grown on arbors, pergolas, pillars, and other supports. In containers, they are often trained up wire frameworks. *Mandevilla* is native to Mexico and South America, where it grows over undergrowth in very humid conditions. However, the plant is not hardy in Ohio, and temperatures should not fall below 60 degrees F at any time for these plants. *Mandevilla* requires bright light or semi-shade. They grow best in warm, humid conditions, and air circulation around the plant is important. Keep the soil moderately moist, and fertilize about every other week during the bloom period. After bloom ceases in late summer, reduce watering and rest the plant inside until the following spring; keep humidity high during this period. If the plant is rootbound, repot in the spring, and prune it back. It can be taken back outside about mid-May and remain there for the summer.

Source: Plantfacts

What is the best way to eliminate suckers from the base of a tree?

There are several trees that form suckers around their base from buds on the crown or roots. Trees that are grafted, such as crabapples, are notorious for developing suckers that arise from the rootstock, and in this species, suckers can be an annual maintenance problem. Over time as trees age, this conglomeration of suckering tissue can increase in size and become unattractive in the ornamental bed. Most suckers that develop from the rootstock are weak structurally and drain energy from the parent plant and should not be allowed to develop. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to eliminate suckers. The best solution is to keep them pruned out, which can become a maintenance headache for the gardener. Make clean cuts at the base of the sucker to remove it completely, and do a complete clean up in the dormant season. Do not apply any herbicides to suckers, which can injure the tree.

Source: Plantfacts

MGV PLANT EXCHANGE

29 Master Gardener Volunteers braved the threatening weather (pouring rain) to exchange many plants and to enjoy some tasty ice cream.

Special thanks to Dalton Jones, grandson of Bill Jones, for being our photographer during our plant exchange. Will we see photography in his future???

Many thanks to Lyn Maa and Patty Woodard for providing the ice cream and fixins.

Thank you Bill Jones for hosting the plant exchange. Your hospitality was appreciated and your "paradise" was enjoyed by all!



MGV Plant Exchange



Ant Mounds Abound

Among the usual plethora of early spring phone calls and messages this year have been several inquiring about large ant mounds in prairies, pastures, fields and roadsides. The ant mounds are not that unusual, though some callers have reported "hundreds" of mounds per acre and some startlingly-large mounds 2 feet high and up to 6 feet in diameter have been reported. The strangeness is in the number of calls and messages received, which has been more than the past few years put together.

I don't make anything special of this observation. Maybe there are more ant mounds this year, or maybe people who couldn't be in the fields planting because of the lousy weather were just spending more time looking. Several callers reported "discovering" the ant mounds after the existing vegetative debris was burned.

There are dozens of species of ants that nest in the soil of lawns, pastures, prairies and fields. Most are ecologically beneficial and do not require control. However, given lots of time, little disturbance, good soil and cooperative weather, ants may bring enough soil from their expanding, underground colony to construct a small hill in the lawn or a truly impressive mound in the prairie. The soil-nesting ants are not biting or stinging pests (though some will bite in defense if handled carelessly). The fire ants of the southern U.S., well known for their aggressive behavior and painful stings, are not present.

When anthills in the lawn appear above the grass tops the mound can be raked or "washed" flat as needed (use a forceful stream of water from the garden hose to disperse the soil on a regular basis). If necessary, you can spot treat anthills in the lawn with an insecticide such as permethrin, cyfluthrin or esfenvalerate. Rake the anthill flat and sprinkle granules onto the soil surface or drench the mound area with diluted solution. Read and carefully follow instructions on the insecticide label.

Ant mounds in the prairie can be ignored if possible. In pastures and fields, tillage can be used to disperse the soil. For larger mounds a front end loader can be used to flatten the mounds ahead of tillage. Insecticides for ant control in pastures and prairies are not recommended.

Source: Donald Lewis, Department of Entomology
Iowa State University, 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