

Shelby County Master Gardener

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



Volume 27, Issue 7—August 2022

President's comments—Garden Update

By Jim McCracken

It's becoming more and more difficult to come up with topics for the newsletter, so I am going with what is happening in my personal garden.

Hot and dry is the new normal this year for Anna, Ohio. The area recently missed some real good opportunities for some much-needed precipitation. My garden did get a nice rain on August 8 late in the evening and overnight. Irrigation has been required to keep the plants alive and heading towards a successful harvest.

- Corn – two of the three plantings of incredible corn have been picked and frozen, ears a little short this year
- Tomatoes – roma varieties are ahead of slicing type, both should come on strong in another week – blossom end rot is NOT an issue but some fungus problems are present
- Cucumbers – made 8 jars of sweet pickles – issues with abnormalities on the skin of the fruit
- Potatoes – digging spuds as I need them – most potatoes have been good size, although some are exposed to light and have turned green (never eat those spuds) – potato bugs are now winning the war so the vines are damaged
- Peppers (jalapeno/bell) – plants have produced well, nice size and color
- Squash - butternut/acorn – both look healthy and a setting small green squash
- Sweet potatoes – planted at the end of May, but it is a long season crop that won't be dug until at least mid-September
- Green Beans – produced well for first picking, dry weather reduced production after that
- Garlic – dug earlier in summer – bulbs were hung and have been dried – largest bulbs will be used to plant next year's garlic crop in October
- Onions – were all pulled in July – the area is now home to a second crop of cucumbers and butternut squash
- Red Raspberries – picking is required daily, we have been watering heavily otherwise berries are small and easily break apart
- Zucchini – have produced well, lost a couple of plants to bugs

- Pumpkins – both carving and cooking varieties have set fruit, vines are looking pretty good considering the hot, dry conditions
- Brussel Sprouts – after two failed attempts, this year's crop just may be successful – plants had a net for the cabbage moth over them for nearly three months – plants have set small heads near the bottom of the plant – vegetable should be ready to harvest in September – see photos



- Tomatillos – my first year growing them, plants are loaded – ready to pick when outer husk breaks open exposing a green tomato looking fruit – see photos



I like to extend the growing season with a fall planting of cabbage (green/red), cauliflower, broccoli, beets, green beans, and cilantro. 🌱

August Meeting
Wednesday, July 17, 2022 @ 6 p.m.
The People's Garden at Agape in Sidney
Directions on page 5 in newsletter

Volunteer Coordinator's comments

By Doug Benson

As I write this, I'm really looking forward to next few days of cooler weather. Enough with the 90s! I'm almost embarrassed to report that I have failed to follow my MGV training in growing tomatoes this year. My plants, while producing quite a bit of fruit, are suffering from Septoria leaf spot, which is defoliating them. Why did this happen? Because I committed numerous gardening mistakes: 1. I planted the tomatoes in the same location



for the third straight year. 2. I did not use resistant varieties. 3. I planted them too close together. 4. Early in the season, I watered with a hose (overhead spraying). 5. I didn't use a fungicide. 6. I didn't control the weeds. The accompanying photo shows the result. At least I haven't had hornworms – yet! Wait until next year and do it correctly!

Two fairs are over – Shelby and Auglaize. Thanks to all who helped with the craft activity at the Shelby County Fair. Under Teresa's leadership about 15-20 kids painted rocks. While the turnout wasn't great, the kids who did take part seemed to enjoy the activity. We had very few entries for the soil test door prize, with the winner being Mick Althausser, from the Anna area. Only one person indicated an interest in learning more about the MGV program. The day after the Shelby County Fair, Alan Pratt and I set up the display at the Auglaize County Fair. Thanks to Alan for monitoring that display. Alan reports that not many



entered the drawing there either, but three did indicate interest in the MGV program, and I'm in the process of

contacting them. The door prize winner was Luanna Scott. The Mercer County Fair is August 12-18. Our MGVs will be setting up a display and then hosting "Hoof It," a kids' activity on the 16th. Then they are going to hurry to Sidney to provide the refreshments for our meeting. I hope all goes well for them.

Recruitment for our training class is going slowly. At this time, we have only two applications – one from Celina and one from New Bremen. If you know of someone who would be interested, have him or her get

in touch with us. We have moved the application deadline to August 22 to allow time for those who might respond to our Mercer County Fair exhibit.

We still need some help with the Memorial Garden. Many of the flowers need to be deadheaded, and weeds are always a challenge. Feel free to stop by anytime and clean up even just a small portion of the garden. Ann and I will be working to prepare a spot for the azalea bush Sonni Bernardi is donating in Bob's memory. Planting will probably be next spring, as very few garden centers have azaleas in stock at the time. In the meantime, our challenge will be to amend the soil to lower the pH to a suitable level for azaleas.

The Hotline continues to function. Matt and I have been taking care of most of the calls. Thanks to those who have come in to help, but there are still opportunities for any of you to stop in and help on Mondays and Thursdays from 10:00 until 1:00 through the end of September. I'll try to get an updated schedule posted on the county website – shelby.osu.edu. I also encourage you to check BYGL.osu.edu on a regular basis to see what is happening around Ohio. There have been some interesting posts this summer.

Our final library seminar is coming up this coming Thursday, August 18, at 6:30. Steve Stone, owner of Nature's Green Nursery in Fort Recovery, will be showing us how to successfully divide perennials. He made a similar presentation in Celina last fall, and it was excellent. Steve has been in business since 1994 and has a wealth of knowledge and experience in landscape horticulture. I think you will find his program very interesting and practical. You might encourage a neighbor or friend to come along. Let's make Steve's trip worthwhile. Incidentally, several years ago Steve helped us with some of the plantings in our Memorial Garden.

Janet Nelson gave an excellent presentation on preserving and cooking with herbs at Mercer County Extension's Lawn and Garden Talk last month in Celina. Their next program will be at 6:00, Wednesday, August 31. Marne Titchenell, OSU wildlife program specialist, is going to speak about dealing with wildlife in the garden and landscape. I have heard her speak, and she is excellent. There is no charge, but they do ask for pre-registration so they have ample handouts. Call 419-583-2179 or email ellis.301@osu.edu.

Remember, our August 17 meeting will be at 6:00 at The People's Garden at Agape in Sidney. An air-conditioned building is available if needed. Conelia asks that you bring your own lawn chair. I'll provide directions in a separate article. I hope to see many of you at the meeting. As there is no Internet connection at the garden, we will probably not be able to Zoom the meeting. Sorry! 🍀

Flowers You can Eat!

By Janet Nelson



Edible flowers can add amazing color, diversity and a delicate flavor to meals. There are countless ways to use edible blooms in culinary applications. They can be used fresh or dried, whole or

as a condiment, infused in a dessert or drink, raw, cooked, and even pickled.

Edible blooms are probably already established in your garden. Many of the herbs have edible blooms. However, not all flowers or even all parts of the edible flowers are safe to eat. Let's talk about safety.

- It is important to correctly identify each flower and choose only the edible ones.
- Choose flowers that are organically grown. On the other hand, from locations where no herbicides or pesticides have been sprayed. Avoid flowers from nurseries and florists because it is likely they have been treated with nonconsumable chemicals. Growing your own edible flowers from seed is often the safest option.
- When preparing most flowers (exceptions: squash, violets, and nasturtiums) for food or beverage, use only the petals for best flavor.

Flowers are best when eaten a few hours after picking. Blossoms must be thoroughly washed and set aside to dry. In most cases, remove the sepals, as well as the pistils and stamens. Blossoms can be refrigerated in a storage bag for a short time.

This is the time of summer when fresh breaded and fried squash flower are a staple in our family. However, you can add many more flowers to your family's cuisine. The University of Minnesota extension provides a detailed list of edible blooms and uses. <https://extension.umn.edu/flowers/edible-flowers>.

Here is a list of a few ornamental flower blossoms:

- Bachelor Buttons
- Calendula
- Daylily
- Hibiscus
- Lilac
- Nasturtium
- Dianthus
- Rose
- Squash
- Tulip

Herbs also provide many flavorful blossoms including:

- Basil
- Bee Balm
- Borage
- Chives
- Lavender
- Mints
- Sage
- Garlic scapes
- Rosemary
- Oregano

Are you asking, "But what do I do with them"? A quick internet search gives you many ideas.

The large blooms of squash become a side dish and can be battered and fried, or stuffed with cheese and fried. Often the smaller flower

blossoms are added fresh to salads, blocks of cheese, pastries, herb butters, décor for cupcakes or cheesecake and jellies or jams.



Remember, that you can include edible blossoms in beverages too, such as in cocktails, infused water, ice cubes, and teas.

May I provide two suggestions? First is to experiment cooking with the flowers/herbs that you grow. This helps you determine the flavors, and textures that suite your palate. Second is to plan next year's garden with a few ornamental or herb plants that can suite several needs, including your dinner plate. "Bon Appetit." 🌿

You CAN Take It with You

By Ann Heeley

Last month, I wrote about the plants I was going to avoid when Craig and I landscape our soon-to-be home. This month, I'm going to fantasize about the plants we hope to incorporate...as soon as we get rid of the uglies that currently share the property with weeds and poison ivy. Right now, there are only two plants blooming: a lonely hosta and a marigold, still in its 3" nursery pot.

In addition to the many container plants we'll take with us when we move (mandevilla, passion flower, tropical hibiscus, caladium, gas plant, blueberries, begonias, calla lilies, bay laurel), there are a few I plan to dig up. Don't tell anyone, but I have three gorgeous crape myrtles that aren't yet too large to spirit away without being noticed. Two have deep burgundy foliage with pale pink flowers; the other is a dwarf with lime green foliage and hot pink flowers. They've been thriving on the south side of our current home with virtually no help from me.



I'll also need to get some daffodils/narcissus. I love the miniature varieties like 'Tete-a-Tete', with bright yellow flowers, and 'Sun Disc' with cream, pansy-like outer petals and yellow centers. These dwarf varieties have a longer bloom time, sport several blooms per bulb, and when it rains or is very windy, they don't blow over.



We have the perfect spot for a River Birch at our new location. It's a dip in the back yard where the water is slower to drain after it rains. The River Birch tolerates both wet feet and drought, and adapts to virtually any type of soil except high alkaline. The exfoliating bark makes it look good even in winter, and it is the most borer-resistant type of birch known. We have a River Birch in our back yard right now, but it's much too large to transplant. The City of Sidney's Tree Board has included the River Birch on its 2022 sale list, so it's on our "to-buy" list.



An over-sized oak leaf hydrangea is bullying three dwarf hydrangeas now in our back yard. Every time I water them, they give me a look that says, "Take us with you." I think I'll give them what they want.



Vista petunias will have to wait until next spring. Vista hybrids like 'Bubblegum' and 'Jazzberry' are the queens and kings of the petunia world. They bloom like crazy all summer, they don't need to be deadheaded, they don't get leggy, and they don't require a lot of care. My kind of plant.



What's easier than a 'Purple Sensation' (Allium hollandicum) allium? How about 'Gladiator' or 'Millennium' or 'Globemaster' or 'Star of Persia' (Allium christophii)? They're so easy to grow, and most multiply year after year without becoming invasive or aggressive. Since all of them are members of the onion family, deer, rabbits, and squirrels leave them alone, but pollinators love them! Once the flowers have dried out, they continue standing tall for several weeks. I like to spray-paint mine blue after they've faded. One of my favorites is Allium schubertii (no common name). It grows only about 15" high, but its bloom is often 15" wide, making it look like fireworks at ground level. Unfortunately, this cultivar is not long lived, and I've only had it come back 2 years in a row before it dies out.



I wish I could take 'My Monet' weigelas (Weigela Florida) with me. These sun-loving, drought-resistant shrubs have variegated foliage and thousands of pink flowers every year. They bloom in late spring, and again with a lighter bloom about 6 weeks later. Removing them would leave large, very noticeable craters in our current landscape, so we'll have to purchase young ones and start all over again.



And of course, I'm taking seeds, tubers, and bulbs that I've stored. I don't have a clue as to whether or not they'll germinate/grow. I forgot to date most of them, but there must be some oldies-but-still-goodies in the collection. And the garden plan I've laid out in excruciating detail? Perhaps there's someone out there who could use it, because I know it'll never make the final cut. 🌱

Directions to The People's Gardens—Membership Meeting on 8/17/22

From I-75: Take Exit 92 (Rt. 47) toward downtown Sidney. Once you pass the hospital you will be on Court Street. Follow Court St. past the courthouse (do not turn) and down the hill. You will come to a traffic light at Miami Ave. Continue straight ahead and just past the Goodwill store on the right is the bridge over the Miami River. IMMEDIATELY AT THE END OF THE BRIDGE turn right into the drive beside the Agape Distribution Center – DO NOT go to the traffic light at Brooklyn Ave. The People's Garden is at the end of the parking area.

From SR-29: Get on I-75 and follow the above directions or follow 29 into downtown (there is a zigzag in the residential area). As you get into the business district, get in the left lane. 29 turns left onto Court St. just past the courthouse. Follow Court St. past the courthouse (do not turn) and down the hill. You will come to a traffic light at Miami Ave. Continue straight ahead and just past the Goodwill store on the right is the bridge over the Miami River. IMMEDIATELY AT THE END OF THE BRIDGE turn right into the drive beside the Agape Distribution Center – DO NOT go to the traffic light at Brooklyn Ave. The People's Garden is at the end of the parking area. 🍀

*(Do not use the address for Agape Distribution Center in your GPS,
as it will take you to the front of the building on Brooklyn Ave, where there is no access to the garden.)*