

Shelby County Master Gardener

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



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President's comments--By Jim McCracken --

Rains in early July were very spotty in nature. I hope that your garden has been under the correct cloud to get that much-needed moisture at this time of year. Vegetables are maturing; the rains will increase both the amount and quality of your harvest.

Vegetables produce differently based on what you are growing. Basil, kale, cilantro, asparagus, lettuce, spinach, cucumbers, squash, zucchini, and green beans all should be harvested young and often. These crops will produce more if you pick them throughout the growing season. Other crops such as corn, potatoes, cabbage, garlic, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, onions, and melons will give a single crop that for the most part is ready at one time.

The most popular backyard vegetable, the tomato is harvested somewhat differently. Determinate varieties are picked in a short span of a couple weeks. Indeterminate tomatoes will be harvested over several weeks and keep producing until the plant dies with the first frost. Pick your tomatoes a few days before they are fully ripened, usually a light red color. Allow them to finish ripening indoors. Fewer tomatoes will split, birds won't destroy the crop, and less insect problems will result. Happy Gardening!


Son is Producing Podcasts

I have mentioned our son Dan several different times in my articles during the last couple of years. He grows tropical fruit in the Orlando area. Dan now is producing a series of podcasts on YouTube describing the fruits he is growing. These podcasts can be found under the name of "**Homegrown Food Forest.**" His main purpose is to



educate and encourage the public on what fruits could be grown successfully.

Granddaughter Enjoys Picking Onions

Sawyer McCracken enjoys time with PaPa in the garden. This past weekend she begged to pick a few onions. The crop is nearly ready but the tops are not yet dropping over so the onions potentially could still grow larger. My wife, Elaine, warned her the smell could get on her hands and clothes, like a true gardener she never hesitated. 



July Membership Meeting
Wednesday, July 19, 2023 @ 2 p.m.
Extension Office & on Zoom

Coordinator's comments

By Doug Benson

Fair time is almost here, which also means that summer is about half over. I hope you have been having a successful and enjoyable summer. I was slow in getting my garden started. I just now have cucumbers, zucchinis, beans, and peas germinating. I planted three different pepper plants, and they are growing slowly. On the other hand, Jim started a hybrid tomato (either Super Sauce® or Big Mama® - we're not sure which) for me, and it is now almost five feet tall with several fruits developing. I pinched off one of the suckers and am trying to get it to root.

As fair season approaches, we are readying our displays. I'm replacing some of the pictures on our display board with either updated pictures or better-quality ones. I'll also be making copies of various fact

sheets to make available to visitors. As we decided at the June meeting, we will not be doing a formal nature craft for the kids. Rather, we will just have some pictures and crayons/marker/colored pencils available for the kids to use if they want. Our day to supervise the Community Foundation building, the octagonal yellow building, is Tuesday, July 25. As that is “Senior Day, all our members who are 60 or older get in free. If you have not reached that milestone, check with me about getting a day-pass to help with supervision. There are still a few openings to help; sign up on HOC. Thanks to all who have already signed up. I have also received confirmation that we will have display space at the Auglaize County Fair, and our Mercer County members are working on plans for their event.

As of this writing, we are still awaiting information about the GAP, Good Agricultural Practices, training that may be required for those helping in community gardens. Pam Bennett and Jen Andon are working on some accommodations for MGVs. Initially, everyone who worked in a community garden was going to be required to attend a one-hour webinar, and those who touched the produce during the harvest would be required to complete a self-paced, three-hour online course – all to be done by July 15. This is an OSU requirement with the goal of keeping the food chain safe. I completed the three-hour course, and it is a lot of common-sense information. If you want to take it for continuing education, let me know so I can give you the passcode to waive the \$50 course fee.

The hotline continues to be sporadic, with most questions dealing with insect identification and control recommendations. We’ve seen everything from 1/8-inch-long grain beetles to a 2-inch-long Dobsonfly. Many of our interns are getting experience by studying problems from their own properties. We still have openings for hotline help throughout August and September. Sign up in HOC by clicking on the link in the calendar.

Our July meeting will be this coming Wednesday, July 19, at 2:00 at the office. I plan to Zoom it as well for those who can’t make the trip. One of the topics will be plans for renovating the Memorial Garden. Ann Heeley prepared a lengthy list of potential changes, including suggested new plants. Please try to arrive at the building about 1:45 to look at the changes Ann is suggesting. The county commissioners have indicated a willingness to help us financially, but we must have a detailed plan with estimated costs. I think right now we

are looking at a two-step project – cleaning and removing unneeded plants in the coming months, and then putting in new plants in fall or next spring. I’m sure Ann will have additional explanations.

Speaking of the Memorial Garden, thanks to Ann, Suzann Lonsbury, and Missy Francis for spending time weeding, pruning, and deadheading. Thanks also to Pam Wagner for spending a couple hours cleaning up the Plant-by-Numbers beds. We can now see the plants. Thanks, too, to Cheryl Michael for working on the garden at the fairgrounds. Like your home gardens, all these gardens need constant care to keep them looking presentable. Any time you can stop by for a few minutes will help.

I will continue to update you on upcoming events through emails, so be on the lookout. I try to prefix my postings with “SCMGV” in the subject line. Let me know anytime you have questions about events or need help using HOC. I hope to see most of you at the meeting. Until then, keep gardening! 🌱



A deer family under an apple tree in Doug’s yard



Volunteer sunflowers in Doug’s driveway from winter-feeding seeds to birds

STARTING EUCALYPTUS FROM SEED – PART 3, July 2023

By Jill Dickman

In late May, I transplanted 18 seedlings that were started from seed this past winter into a raised outdoor bed. The seedlings were maybe 3 or 4 inches tall and appeared to be healthy. I mulched with straw and watered as needed. After a few weeks, I thought all was lost – I could find no apparent survivors! However, I continued to water occasionally and hope for the best. Eventually, I found four survivors – and as you can see, they are incredibly small and appear not to have grown at all. I will continue to monitor and will attempt to overwinter them. Maybe in 2024 I will be able to harvest.

Harvesting is done when the upper leaves are ‘formed’ and have a leathery or paper feel. Plants can go for several weeks between cuttings. If a first year plant gives approximately two dozen stems, a second year plant will give as many as 50 stems.

Interestingly, eucalyptus seeds are wild-gathered in Australia, which is why the wildfires of 2019 were so devastating to the crop. Because the seeds are wild-gathered, ‘rouge seedlings’ are often gathered – usually a different variety of eucalyptus.

In the last article, I mentioned a YouTube video from The Gardeners Workshop featuring Dave Dowling. Dave Dowling is a long-time eucalyptus grower and provides product for wholesalers, nurseries, and flower shops. Dave recommends the variety called ‘Silver Drop’, which has not been available due to the wildfires. When it becomes available, hopefully in August of 2023, he recommends ordering it immediately. In early 2023, I ordered ‘Silver Dollar’ and ‘Lemon Bush’ – the two varieties that were available in the Johnny’s Selected Seed catalog this past winter. Dave recommends Silver Drop over the Silver Dollar variety because, as the name implies, Silver Drop has smaller leaves and can be used in smaller bouquets. Silver Dollar is great for bathrooms because of its strong scent. Dave recommends wearing gloves when stripping Silver Dollar stems because the sap will stick to your hands for days! Apparently, Silver Drop doesn’t exhibit the sap issue. Sadly, Dave doesn’t recommend ‘Lemon Bush’ as he claims it cannot be hydrated after cutting. He acknowledged that it has a great lemony aroma as its name implies.

Several other varieties include ‘Baby Blue’ which is similar to Silver Dollar but with much smaller leaves; ‘Willow’ which has long skinny leaves that ‘dangle’; ‘Parvula Gum’ which has very small, deep green leaves; and Polyanthema (Polly Ann) which also has green leaves that dangle and is often used in garlands. 🌿



Silver Dollar



Lemon Bush

Blueberry cobbler

By Ann Heeley

My blueberries were some of the plants that made the move from the south end of Sidney to the north side. All seven plants survived the move, the winter, and the deer in their containers. Two weeks ago, I began harvesting berries from the smallest of the blueberry plants, 'Jelly Bean', a patio plant, only 2 feet tall. But I've already picked 2 quarts of large, juicy blueberries from this dwarf, and there are lots more waiting to ripen. Another dwarf cultivar, 'Pink Icing', is about 4 feet tall with light, bluish-green leaves and berries that grow like clusters of grapes. Both are self-pollinating, unlike my other, standard blueberries that need at least 2 different varieties to produce fruit. Right now, I'm picking berries from all seven plants.

What I can't use or give away, I freeze. Blueberry Cobbler and Blueberry Crisp are two of my family's favorites. Since I just made another cobbler and haven't put the recipe away yet, here it is:

1 cup self-rising flour*
1 cup sugar
1 cup milk (not skim)
½ cup (1 stick) butter
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 cups fresh blueberries
¼ cup sugar for sprinkling on top

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter or spray a 9" x 9" baking dish. In a medium bowl, whisk flour and sugar together. Whisk in milk. Whisk in melted butter and vanilla. Spread mixture in the baking dish. Top with blueberries. Sprinkle with ¼ cup sugar. Bake 45-55 minutes until crust on outside edges is golden and a toothpick comes out clean. Cool slightly. Serve with ice cream, whipped cream, or just plain.

*Substitute for self-rising flour: 1 cup regular flour + 1 ½ tsp. baking powder + ¼ tsp. fine salt; whisk together thoroughly. 🌿



Jelly Bean



Pink Icing



Blueberry Cobbler

Ornamental Oregano

By Ann Heeley

Don't try cooking with this plant. It's mildly toxic. But if you're a lazy or forgetful gardener and you have a hot, dry, sunny place where just about everything burns out quickly, here's a winner for you. There are several cultivars of ornamental oregano that I'm familiar with, 'Kent Beauty'



the most commonly found. Papery pink, pale green, and cream-colored bracts that look like hops trail down from the center with tiny pink flowers in the center of the bracts--an ideal candidate for a sloped rock garden, hanging basket, or stone retaining wall. It smells good, too, except to deer and rabbits.

Give ornamental oregano full or partial sun, a little water, and good drainage in slightly alkaline soil until established. This zone 4 or 5 perennial will start "blooming" in late spring and will continue until a moderately hard frost. The one thing that will surely kill it is wet feet, so don't plant it near neighbors that require regular moisture or shade. Keep it away from garlic and onions, and don't over-fertilize it either. Compost or a balanced fertilizer in the spring is all that's needed.

'Kent Beauty' will spread slowly up to about 12 inches, but is never invasive. Information on various websites say that it will grow up to 10" in height, but mine never exceeded 3" since it draped over a stonewall and loved the warmth of the wall. Stems can be pinched to encourage a bushier plant.

Ornamental oregano is easy to propagate. Simply lift up the whole plant in the spring before it starts to put on new growth. Slice the root ball into sections, making sure that each section has healthy roots.

Replant the sections in well-drained soil and keep watered if it doesn't rain. Alternatively, clip off 4-5" stems in late spring, strip off the bottom leaves and root in a glass of water. Change the water every few days until new roots are at least an inch long. Stem cuttings can also be dipped in rooting hormone and started in moist vermiculite or moist potting mix. I prefer the water method since I often forget to keep the vermiculite moist. Either way, it takes 3-4 weeks for roots to develop enough for transplanting.

After a few frosts, the bracts turn light brown, become crinkled, and drop off the stems. I always left the stems and dried leaves/bracts in place over the winter to provide some protection. Then in the spring, I cut the old stems back to generate new growth. Sometimes, the old stems rooted in the ground where a leaf node touched the soil. Great! New plant!

Some good container or companion plants for ornamental oregano include moss roses, sea holly, lavender, creeping thyme, dwarf grasses, vinca flowers (*Catharanthus roseus*), and Agastache. Ornamental oregano cannot survive the winter in a container. Plant it in the ground, or bring the container indoors. An unheated, windowless garage is just fine. Water it once or twice during the winter so it doesn't completely dry out, and bring it back out in the spring then watch it take off again as one of the easiest plants you'll ever love. 🌱

Memorial Garden Renovation Plan Reminder

By Ann Heeley

At our June Master Gardener meeting, I distributed ideas for a Memorial Garden renovation. It included removing some plants and adding others in addition to a little housekeeping. I asked that members provide feedback on the suggestions, especially on specific plants and shrubs. This renovation does not have a 3-month deadline; in fact, it's likely that it may take us 2 years or so until the process is complete. However, the County Commissioners are asking for a plan with a budget estimate, so it is important that we outline our needs and costs in a timely fashion. The funding allocated can make a difference in what plants we purchase. It's also likely that any initial purchases will wait until fall rather than test the limits of young plants in scorching heat. And remember that we can call on the Shelby County Sheriff's Department for assistance with the labor involved.

Please take another look at the suggestions I made at our last meeting and send me an email with your thoughts. If you have additional ideas for plant selections, plant removal, etc. that were not on the handout, we need to include them, draw up a final plan, and present it to the Commissioners as soon as possible. They want to help us financially. Let's not delay their generosity. 🌱
annheeley@gmail.com

WATCH OUT FOR THESE PESTS!

By Ann Heeley

With the crazy, hot weather we've been experiencing, no one would blame you if it took all of your energy to just keep your plants alive. But in your spare minutes, it pays to keep an eye out for garden pests that can quickly destroy all of your hard work. (First a disclaimer. I'm a big fan of Neem oil. When in doubt, or when IPM methods are too slow, I reach for my spray bottle.) Here are a few pests to watch out for:



Japanese Beetles – They're out in full force now, mating, chewing, and skeletonizing their favorite leaves and flowers—which includes about 400 species of annuals, perennials, shrubs, turf grass, and trees. Although there are no 100% fool-proof treatments, applying grub control (like Grub-Ex) to your lawn in early-May to mid-June will reduce their numbers. Make sure to water it in well. Many universities are recommending that lawns NOT be watered from July to mid-August when Japanese Beetles are laying their eggs and need moisture to stay viable. Neem oil or products containing pyrethrin sprayed directly on the insects or on leaves/buds in the evening when no bees or butterflies are out will also help. Other essential oils mixed with water and a few drops of soap may also repel Japanese Beetles. The best ones to try include peppermint oil, juniper oil, and wintergreen. Deer, rabbits, squirrels, and racoons

hate the smell of these oils, too. (Thankfully, using these oils will not affect the appearance or taste of fruits or vegetables. And of course, hand-picking and dropping the nasty insects in a container of soapy water will drown them. Do this in the early morning or early evening when they're slower to fly away. Researchers from Penn State found that the smell of dead beetles in the soapy water repels live beetles, so keep the dead ones near the plants you want to protect...until it smells so bad, it repels you, too. Traps and milky spore are ineffective and not worth the effort. I've been experimenting with smearing Vicks Vapo-Rub on some of the outer leaves of my blueberry plants. So far, it has kept away the deer and rabbits, but it hasn't deterred the Japanese beetles. They just congregate on another leaf. Neem to the rescue.



Box Tree Moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) – As Doug wrote in an email to our members, this insect is a relatively new threat to boxwoods and is being monitored closely by the Ohio Department of Agriculture with help from residential gardeners—like us! Box tree moth caterpillars are green and yellow with white, yellow, and black stripes and black spots. Adult Box tree moths have brown and white color forms and are nocturnal. Those trapped in Ohio have white, slightly iridescent wings, with an irregular and thick brown border. A second adult color form is completely brown with a small white comma-shaped streak on the forewings. Males and females can show both colorations. Signs of feeding on boxwoods include chewed, cut, or missing leaves, yellowing or brown leaves, white webbing, and green-black excrement on or around the plant. If you spot Box tree larvae, moths, or damage that you suspect is caused by this invader, ODA is asking that you email PlantPest@agri.ohio.gov. Effective methods for dealing with this dangerous pest are largely restricted to licensed agricultural/commercial users. Insecticides containing spinosad and cyfluthrin are two controls that are available to residential gardeners. Bt kurstaki (Btk) can be used when caterpillars are actively feeding, but it is not effective on eggs or pupa in cocoons. Hand-picking is a second-to-last-resort and is usually not very effective. The last resort is removing the entire infested boxwood plus any nearby boxwoods and destroying/burning them.





Two-spotted Spider Mite and Red Spider Mite (both listed as *Tetranychus urticae*) – These tiny pests love hot, dry weather, and if you don't check your plants on a regular basis, mites become very difficult to control. Each female mite can lay up to 100 eggs which hatch and grow into adults within a week or two. Mating is not required, and many generations of these mites can wreak havoc on a wide variety of annuals, perennials, trees, and shrubs. Spider mites spin a sort of web underneath leaves and needles where their eggs are laid, and when they mature and suck up chlorophyll, the leaves take on a speckled look. Soon the leaves dry up and fall off. Young leaves may look distorted before



becoming speckled. A severe infestation can kill plants and even trees, especially those that are weakened by disease or weather conditions. Adult spider mites overwinter in dead plant material, soil, and tree bark. **Predatory mites are the good guys**, and they are slightly larger than either the two-spotted or red spider mites. Ladybugs and lacewings also feed on spider mites. While insecticidal



soap and horticultural oil (like Neem) are effective controls, a gentle blast of water to dislodge the web and mites can disrupt their life cycle. A relatively new OMRI-listed product called Nuke Em by Flying Skull Plant Products uses citric acid to kill eggs, larvae, and adults without leaving a residue and without affecting the flavor of fruits and vegetables. It also claims to be effective against white flies, aphids, and other soft-bodied leaf eaters. Nuke Em can be used on any food crop and ornamental plant, both indoors and outdoors. Plus it helps control powdery mildew. I haven't tried it yet, so I can't provide an anecdotal review. But it has been researched and recommended by Colorado State University, Washington State University, University of Wisconsin, Morehead State University, and the University of California.



Phytoseiid predator mite eating red spider mite

Western predatory mite (*Galendromus occidentalis*) (Phytoseiidae) with egg (oval) and spider mite egg
Photo by: D.G. James



Aphids – Those tiny (1/16 to 1/8 inch), soft-bodied insects that enjoy a block party on young plant shoots? They can be found on just about any plant and in any zone. There are over 1,350 species of aphids, and different species have very specific food preferences. They also come in a variety of colors: green, black, red, yellow, brown, and gray. Aphids rarely kill a plant, but they can distort leaves, stunt growth, and secrete sticky honeydew that often leads to sooty mold. Some aphids carry dangerous viruses, like cucumber mosaic virus, for which there are no treatments or controls. The easiest method of control is to use a high-pressure water spray directly on the bugs. The second is to use latex gloves and squish them on the plant in an upward motion. Ladybugs, lacewings, parasitic wasps, and syrphid fly larvae all love to dine on aphids, so avoid chemical controls if possible. If not possible, try Neem oil, pyrethrins, or insecticidal soap,

all of which minimize harm to beneficial insects.



White Flies (Aleyrodidae) – Many years ago, during weeks of sustained drought and heat, I couldn't control the white flies on my tomato plants. Every time I picked a tomato, a cloud of those tiny, white munchers would rise up from the plant and float back down when I moved my hand. The tomatoes continued to ripen until the leaves succumbed to the onslaught. There are over 1,500 different species of white fly, and like aphids, they have different food preferences. Like aphids, white flies are tiny, soft-bodied insects, not true flies, that quickly populate their favorite plants. Thank goodness they do not overwinter except in greenhouses—which I



suspect is how I brought home white flies in the first place. White flies like to hang out underneath leaves, especially young leaves, both to feed and breed. Heavy infestations will weaken the entire plant. The leaves will wilt, turn yellow, fail to carry out photosynthesis, and drop off. Plants that are overwhelmed with white flies should be destroyed since white flies can act as vectors for pathogens that will spread to nearby plants. Control methods include spraying the undersides of leaves with water or insecticidal soap. White flies are persistent, so both of these methods rely on repetition. Yellow sticky traps can attract and reduce population levels, but they're mostly for monitoring. Vaseline smeared on yellow index cards is just as effective and not as expensive. Neem oil can also be used, of course. The biggest bang for your buck, however, is to attract the natural enemies of white flies, like ladybugs. It's important to take action while population levels are low since white flies reproduce at an alarming rate.

There are many more pests to watch out for including Emerald Ash Borer, Squash Bug, Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Cucumber Beetle, Flea Beetle...and the list goes on. If you have been successful in eradicating garden pests while doing no harm to the beneficials or predators, please share your methods in the next newsletter! 🍃

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