



President's comments

By Nancy Russell

Stan Hywet House, Akron, Ohio

Until it was no longer published, I would buy an Ohio calendar every year. The calendar featured many prominent historical places to visit as well as beautiful scenes and locations throughout out state. As always, I looked for calendar pictures that highlighted my home county of Washington, with Marietta as the county seat. Having many stops of historical significance pertaining to the opening of the Northwest Territory in 1787, I marveled at the places I had visited and the ones yet to see when I visited my siblings. I, however, digress here from the focus of this month's letter, another place to visit in our beautiful state.

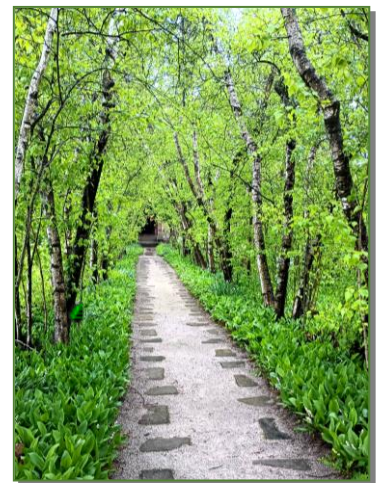
It was always the month of April or even May the Ohio calendar would feature Stan Hywet House (Old English loosely translated to mean, "stone quarry") in Akron, home of Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company co-founder F.A. Seiberling. Pictured with the house were extensive gardens full of blooming tulips. Waves upon waves of red, yellow, white tulips, you name the color, they were there in the gardens designed by Warren Manning and Ellen Biddle Shipman, landscape architects. The website stated peak weeks for the tulips were the last week of April and the first week of May. So armed with that information we decided to visit Stan Hywet House, the house and the grounds the last week of April.



It was a rainy day when we visited Stan Hywet House on April 28. I had purchased online tickets for a tour of the house using a guide, which I highly recommend, so I will start there. Charles Schneider of the Cleveland firm

of George B. Post & Sons was the architect who worked with Mrs. Gertrude Seiberling to create a house in the Tudor Revival style. Being classically trained as a soprano, Mrs. Seiberling had a special room designed, called the Music Room, to hold small concerts featuring renown singers of varying voice types. This 2,700 square room contained a Steinway piano, stage, room for seating, and an organ with a full range of pipes. Our guide played an organ piece for us and the acoustics were amazing. Mrs. Seiberling also had a small music room upstairs for practicing on another Steinway piano. This room was probably my favorite part of the house and to this day music programs called "Music Tuesdays" are still offered to the public. The rest of the house was just as impressive and continued the legacy of the Seiberlings' goal to share their home with everyone. It is often a location for weddings.

Unfortunately, there were no waves of tulips, which is what brought me in the first place to the historical site. Like here in Shelby County, Summit County had experienced usually warm weather. The tulips had reached peak bloom earlier in April and the other vegetation had been affected by two killing frosts. It was very sad to see the hyacinths laying on the ground by the sidewalks. Not all, however, was in vain looking at the gardens. There was a walkway called the Birch Tree Ailee leading to the Tea Houses and overlooking the lagoons (former stone quarries). Lily of the Valley was blooming, fragrant from the rains, lining the walkway. The Great Garden was just starting to show life. I got over not seeing the tulips.



There is so much more I could share, but don't want to spoil it for you. It is a destination I could visit in all four seasons because the grounds are so extensive and feature plants that come into their own throughout the different seasons. Therefore, everyone, I hope you have a garden somewhere that you want to visit and make plans to go. 🌱

Coordinator's comments

By Doug Benson

I don't know about you, but I'm getting tired of this crazy weather. I wish it would either get warm and stay that way or stay cool. I also wish the wind would quit blowing so much. So far, I have done very little in the way of planned gardening. I'm still cleaning out some of the planting beds from last fall, and I haven't planted a single thing. But there's still time. What I have or have had are quite a few flowers. As for desirable flowers, the daffodils, hyacinths and crocuses have come and gone. Now I just have to mow around the tops until they die back. My low-growing primroses are just about faded away, but the clematis are just about ready to bloom. On Mother's Day, I looked out the window and saw that my first orange oriental poppy had opened. As might be expected with the warm weather we had last month, that's about a week or two earlier than when it normally blooms.

On the wild side, like everyone else I had my early crop of dandelions which bloomed and now have gone to seed leaving nothing but the stems standing as silent sentinels. One thing I don't look forward to is the ground ivy (AKA creeping Charlie) that is just now starting to bloom. Because of the presence of pollinators, I will have to forego treating the creeping Charlie until later by which time it will have spread even further. So much for my gardening efforts!

Our Memorial Garden is becoming very colorful, with shades of purple being dominant. I suspect the



garden is benefiting a little bit from the strange weather. The warm days and nights have resulted in earlier blooming, while

(Gnome is home from wintering at the Freisthlers)

the cool days and nights are prolonging the blooms. Let's see what happens when we experience several days in the mid-high 80s next week. The garden looked pretty "ratty" a month ago, but some concentrated effort by a number of members on the one workday got the cleanup started. Now those who signed up for weekly responsibility are making

even more progress. Thank you to Jill and Lynda, as well as Janet and Mary for continuing the clean-up the past two weeks. We have numerous openings throughout the rest of the summer, so if you can give a week sign up on Hands on Connect. We still need to schedule a whole-group workday for lots of help mulching. I'll be keeping an eye on the weather forecasts.

After having to cancel our first library program because of the threat of bad weather, our April program went well. Conelia did a nice job talking about growing vegetables in containers, and Theresa did a great job filling in for Ann to talk about working with containers for flowers. It was great to see a packed house for the program. The small room in the basement wasn't ideal, but the ladies made it work. Coming up later this month Rylee Kay will be discussing the safe use of various pesticides in the garden. I encourage you to attend and bring a friend or a neighbor to learn more about this important topic.

Based on discussions during our April meeting, Rylee Kay and I thought it might be advisable to change the name "hotline" to "helpline" to more accurately let the public know what we do. Now in its second week the people who signed up have some projects to work on. A few of the questions came in while the volunteers were here, but most of them are ones that had come to Rylee Kay, earlier or on off days, and she's held them so the volunteers can get some experience finding answers and communicating with clients. As with the Memorial Garden maintenance schedule, we have many vacancies for the Helpline, and you can sign up by going to Hands on Connect and picking those dates that you could make available. If you're working the Helpline, you will need to have Judie obtain a guest account so that you can log on to the computer in the office. If you had one of those accounts last year, Judie had to renew them so you probably will have to go in and put in a new password.

Earlier this week I received some good news. What many of us have long looked forward to is that Mercer County plans to initiate their own Master Gardener chapter with the first training class beginning this fall. Ryan McMichael, their ANR educator, has had enough serious inquiries and requests for training that they're going to give it a go. He's already had conversations with Pam Bennett and Jen Andon about how to proceed. Our

current members from Mercer County will have some options open to them about whether to be a part of their new program, to remain with us, or some combination of the two. While I would hate to lose Janet, Mary and Marily, they have the experience and knowledge to be very helpful in getting the new program started. The choice will be theirs, and I will stand by whatever that may be. This development is good for the Master Gardener program overall, but it does provide more incentive for us to recruit new members in Shelby County.

I'll end the way I usually do by reminding you to get your hours reported in Hands on Connect and to sign up to help with the Helpline in the garden clean up or some other project. I know from experience how challenging some of the physical labor in maintaining a garden can be, but if each of us does a little it can go a long way. **Remember that our May 20th meeting starts at 2:00 in the big meeting room at the Extension office**, and we will try to have Zoom available for those who can't make it in. Remember as well that the May meeting is the time for our plant exchange, so if you have extras plants, seeds or other gardening-related materials to trade or get rid of, bring them in. And even if you don't have something to bring in you still may take things that are brought-in you don't have to trade. Enjoy the heat and see you Wednesday! 🌱

(Photos of the MG Memorial Garden were taken by Doug on Wednesday, May 13.)



REMINDER!

The 2026 adult/teen summer reading theme is “Dig Into a Good Story.” Sidney Librarian Rebecca Wood reached out to our chapter for donated gardening items, 20-30 in number. These items would be used as prizes for the Plant Bingo event planned for Saturday, June 8 at the library. Examples include trowels, nippers, totes, and hand rakes to name a few. It was decided to grant the request with each member personally donating an item(s). A box will be made available for collection at the May meeting. If you are unable to attend, you may drop off your donation at the office and I’ll collect it. Just let me know.



In addition, our May meeting is our Annual Swap. Members may bring plants, tools, books, and other related gardening items for trading among members.

Thanks, everyone! Nancy

Attracting Orioles to your yard

By Karen Seger



Unlike many birds, Orioles do not eat seeds. Orioles are nothing like finches and sparrows. Orioles like fruit, nectar, and insects.

Orioles spend half the year, like September to March, overwintering in

Central and South America. While they are down there, they eat a variety of fruits, insects, flowers and nectar.

Orioles are attracted to the color orange. I hang Orange, grapefruit or clementine halves in the feeder or on trees.

Another source of fruit is jelly. I buy inexpensive grape jelly. No artificial sugar though.



Once nesting begins, their diet switches to protein-based, as they need to feed a healthy generation of fledglings.

In addition to being much shyer, Orioles seem to hop from

treetop to treetop. Your feeders need to be in their line of sight.

Don't forget water. Orioles are especially attracted to moving water.

Above all, be consistent! 🌿

Elmwood Assisted Living

By Jill Dickman

On Tuesday, May 12th, six SCMGV members volunteered at the Elmwood Assisted Living facility in New Bremen. We planted hundreds (we didn't count the exact number) of wave petunias on the grounds of Elmwood over several hours. We understand the planting will be stunning in a month or so once the petunias have had a chance to grow and cover the flowerbeds. Pictured in below right photo from left to right: Missy Francis, Lynda Hadley, Jill Dickman, Karen Seger, Nick from Elmwood, Becky Francis and Marily Schweitzer.



Groovy Plants Ranch

By Jill Dickman

At our field trip to Groovy Plants Ranch in early April, I purchased a Trumpet Honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens* 'Major Wheeler'. It is a native honeysuckle with red flowers. It appears to like where I planted it, as it has grown noticeably in less than a month.

This past week, I was pleased (and maybe a little shocked) to find a bird nest already made in the honeysuckle. I took a photo of the mother bird sitting on the nest, and the Seek app by iNaturalist identified it as a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerine*). This is a sparrow native to the eastern United States, which migrates in the fall to overwinter in Mexico, and the southern United States. It has laid three beautiful blue eggs in the nest. Apparently, it is also a 'surrogate' or 'host bird' as a Cowbird also laid an egg in the nest.

Brown-headed Cowbirds are a native, protected species under the Migratory Bird Act of 1918. This means it is **ILLEGAL** to tamper with their eggs without a permit! Cowbirds do not build their own nests, which is thought to have evolved from a nomadic, bison-following lifestyle that prohibited traditional nesting.

A single female Cowbird can lay over 40 eggs per season in different nests of more than 200 species of birds, which classifies them as 'parasitic.' The female often pushes one or more of the host eggs out of the nest before she lays her own. Alternatively, she may eat the host egg or damage it and leave it in the nest. The host birds, which accept cowbird eggs, either do not recognize the new eggs in the nest or accept them as a defense against total nest destruction. (Some surrogate birds, like Yellow Warblers, can recognize and reject cowbird eggs, which leads to the cowbird destroying the nests in a 'mafia-like' tactic that leads to the surrogate accepting the intruder.) Cowbird eggs hatch quickly and fledge within 10 to 12 days. Cowbird chicks often remove the host's young or denies them food brought by the surrogate mother. Like it or not, this apparently is Mother Nature's way of ensuring a bird species lives on to the next generation. 🌱



Good Bug, Bad Bug

By: Rylee Kay Puthoff, ANR Educator

I thought today we could look at some insects in the garden. I have always liked the theme of good cop/bad cop, and I wanted to cover some insects that look similar, but play different roles within the garden. I wanted to start off with Lady Bugs (or Lady Beetles). There are many different species, and the most common ones we see are actually non-native. First, the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle. The MALB, because I am not typing that all out, is a non-native, invasive insect that was recognized in Ohio in the 1990s. I say recognized, because entomologists heard reports of this “Lady bug” invading households by the thousands. This was abnormal behavior for Ohio’s native Lady Beetles, so after investigation, this new species was recognized and listed as a concern.

The Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle only takes about a month to go from egg to adult, so there are many generations in one year. They are voracious eaters and are a great way to control aphids and other pest insects. On the downside, there are four major reasons we should keep an eye out for these pests. The first one I mentioned previously, but they can swarm indoors and be a mess to clean up. Vacuuming is an effective way to clean all of them up. Second, they do not always swarm inside. In extreme situations, they will swarm where humans gather, and nothing ruins a tailgate like finding a Lady beetle in your Coke. MALB can also cause damage to some fruit species, especially if it has already had damage from other insects. Other than some raspberries, they will only eat plants if there are no other options. The last issue that the impostors have is that they eat the food source of the native species. They also reproduce quickly, and their population booms and runs out the poor native ones.

This factsheet from OSU has good information and can offer additional pictures if you need. <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/ENT-44>



Convergent Lady Beetle, a species native to Ohio.



Multicolored Lady Beetle

Homemade Garden Fertilizer

By Missy Francis

I have read several articles and watched a couple of YouTube videos on making fertilizer from your weeds. The roots of weeds pull up substantial amounts of nutrients like nitrogen, magnesium and boron which are then concentrated in the fertilizer. Last week, I decided to try this and see if it works. While mine is still brewing, I can tell you “Weed tea” is supposed to create a potent, free, and organic nutrient source, especially for nitrogen and potassium hungry plants. Its benefits are to improve plant growth, particularly in leafy vegetables, recycle garden waste into beneficial micro-organisms and nutrients, improve soil health through fermentation process by creating beneficial bacteria, and its free and eco-friendly by providing a 100% natural no-cost alternative to commercial fertilizers.

It is actually quite simple to make the “weed tea.” First, gather weeds, including dandelions, clover, and chickweed. Deep rooted weeds contain more nutrients. Avoid using any weeds with developed seed heads to prevent spreading them to your garden.

Second, put the weeds in a bucket or any container with a lid. Fill with water to cover the weeds.

Third, loosely cover the container and place in a shady spot for 2-4 weeks. For faster fermentation you can put it in the sun. I weighted mine down to make sure the weeds stayed under water.

Fourth, manage to odor as it will be smelly, remove the lid and stir every couple of days. Keep the lid on loosely so as not to trap the gases.

The mixture will be ready to use in a couple of weeks. To use, mix one part ‘weed tea’ with ten parts water. Apply weekly to the base of plants. I plan to add more weeds to my “tea” mix to keep it going through out summer. Of course, the smell may make me change my mind as it does smell bad!



Gardens in an unexpected place

By Missy Francis

Last month I took a quick trip to Las Vegas to see the Wizard of Oz at the Sphere. While there, I took the opportunity to see the Conservatory & Botanical Garden at the Bellagio Hotel. The garden is indoors and spans 14,000 square feet with elaborate themed displays that are completely redesigned several times a year. The themes change with the seasons (spring, summer, fall/harvest, and winter/holiday) featuring a mix of living plants, flowers, and artistic sculptures. The “spring” theme was still on display, and I can tell you it was simply amazing. The thought and detail that goes into creating these gardens is hard to imagine. It is superior to this gardener’s ability. I enjoyed my stroll through the garden and looking at plants used in the various design schemes. Here are several pictures that I took to give you an idea of the space. 🌱



NEWS BITS

By Ann Heeley

Sometimes while looking for an interesting garden topic, I run across information that is totally new to me. (Surprising, but true.) With that in mind, I present three hitherto unknown (to me) bits and pieces of information that serve absolutely no one, unless you're a potential *Jeopardy!* contestant.

1. The Moringa tree (*Moringa oleifera*), also known as the Drumstick Tree, has long been known for its amazing nutritious benefits. It is a drought-tolerant plant with leaves, seeds, and flowers packed with protein, amino acids, antioxidants, and essential vitamins (A, B, C). It is widely used in third-world countries to combat malnutrition, boost the immune system, maintain healthy vision, and combat bacterial infections. Recently, scientists have discovered that the seeds from the Moringa tree can also be used to sterilize water while eliminating 98.5% of microplastics. (Source: Cleveland Clinic)



2. Synchrotron particle accelerators (essentially super-powered X-ray machines) have been used to create *Antscan*, a library of animated 3D images of thousands of ant species from all over the world. These scans can also capture the soft, internal tissues of ants. Scientists hope to further their understanding of biodiversity, climatic and environmental issues, evolution, and conservation by making these images available to students and researchers all over the world. Take a look at a small sample of these images:

<https://www.antscan.info/videos>

Other studies using similar technology from *The Advanced Photon Source* have focused on grasshoppers, butterflies, and bombardier beetles.

3. Are plants “intelligent”? That depends on your definition of “intelligence.” Since plants do not have a central nervous system, researchers at Cornell (Cornell.edu; 2024) have defined intelligence as “The ability to solve problems, based on the information that you get from the environment, toward a particular goal.” The results of their experiments on goldenrod showed that these plants sense a change in light from the leaves of nearby plants that are being eaten by beetles and react by growing faster and emitting a compound that repels beetles. When the beetles stop feeding, goldenrods stop producing the compound. Goldenrods can also sense the VOCs (carbon-based gases) that beetles emit and begin producing those defensive compounds. That fact, researchers suggest, shows that they can anticipate danger and react preemptively. So, are goldenrods intelligent? According to Cornell’s definition, perhaps the answer is *yes*. 🌿

Magnolia Plantation and Garden

By Janet Nelson

The website for the Magnolia Plantation and Garden caught my attention with the three words on their home page, *"history, horticulture and nature."* And the words proved to be true. This historic home, plantation, slave cabins and gardens allow learning and enjoyment around every corner.

History:

Located west of Charleston SC the land was purchased in 1679 and continues in the same family. The 1700 acre plantation grew Carolina Gold Rice. Four restored and preserved enslaved cabins continue to be viewed by visitors. The tour guide for us was a retired history teacher and explained the evolution of the cabins from early 1700s until post civil war.

The civil war was a turning point for this family home. Fire claimed the home with Sherman's March and was modestly rebuilt. (Future generations added to the small home and constructed it into the marvelous plantation that stands today.) Post civil war the house and gardens were opened to the public. A guided tour of the beautiful home is included in the visitor's admission.

Horticulture & Nature:

Azaleas and camellias are the highlight of the garden. They were among the first of their kind to be planted outside in South Carolina's subtropical climate. The massive live oaks draped in Spanish moss, are everywhere, as were the bald cypress trees. Gardens include The River Walk, The Magnolia Walk, Bamboo Garden, Azalea Garden, Sylvan Woods and the Picturesque Garden. We were fortunate enough to see gardenia, wisteria, azalea, daffodil and iris in bloom in late March.

Wildlife is in abundance on this plantation. Alligators, turtles beautiful herons, even otters are regularly viewed. The bald eagle is known to soar over the area. Birders love the swamp area for the rookery and diverse bird species. The plantation is also home for rescued, non-releasable animals.

The day at the Magnolia Plantation was just what it is said to be, an opportunity to learn history, and enjoy botanical beauty and wildlife in its native environment. A day well spent. 🌿



GARDENING WITH TECHNOLOGY

GARDENING WITH TECHNOLOGY

By Ann Heeley



As many of us have come to realize, online gardening information has often replaced that library of gardening books we once relied upon. With Google Lens, we can quickly identify plants, insects, and diseases...or at least get pointed in the right direction. Online gardening catalogues, guides, Facebook posts, and YouTube videos have proliferated with amazing speed and abundance. However, with Artificial Intelligence and an accelerated increase in scam artists, how do we differentiate between what is factual, well-researched information and what is pure, for-profit garbage? How can we be sure that the gorgeous flowers we order from the company's screen shot will be the actual flowers that we'll receive? And if we douse our tomatoes with Epsom salts according to an online gardener's recommendation, will we be

doing our tomatoes a favor?

One way to find out is to do multiple searches on the same topic using information from a variety of databases and sources. Using a traditional search engine as well as AI is OK. Keep in mind that AI generates results from thousands, sometimes millions, of data inputs. Results from scammers are included, but are usually vastly outnumbered by verifiable data. The key word here, however, is "usually".

Another way to differentiate between reliable and unreliable information is to search from only trusted sources, such as those from university/college websites or from reputable companies that stand behind their products. If an author is listed, check out the author's credentials, experience, and educational background. Sadly, government (.gov) may not be the best source of information, especially as it relates to the current use of pesticides and herbicides.

A third way is to ignore just about everything that appears on Facebook unless the post comes from a trusted source, and not an individual or group that is using "click bait" to entice you onto its site. Many YouTube videos are well done and useful, while others are no more than flashy info-mercials inviting you to try their latest and greatest fertilizer or bug zapper.

Plant growth and propagation, new hybrid introductions, improved pest controls, modernized tools, and just about every aspect of gardening is constantly changing. Our job as Master Gardener Volunteers is to investigate the advances and changes, ask pertinent questions, rely on the most current research, and share valid information with confidence. 🌱

THINK PINK

By Ann Heeley

All of the garden centers and nurseries are open. While it may be too late to add anything right now, there are hundreds of new plant introductions for 2026 to consider for later this fall or next spring. Try looking first at some of our local and/or family-owned garden centers: Blue Acre Gardens, Crossway Farms, Shelby Landscaping and Garden Center, Andy's Gardens, Amherst Greenhouse, Village Green Garden Center, Starr Greenhouses, and Chaney's Nursery. Walmart, Tractor Supply, Menards, Sidney FoodTown, and Kroger are available as well. If you're searching online, you'll likely see some familiar names, such as Proven Winners, Bonnie Plants, Bluestone Perennials, Burpee, White Flower Farm, and many others. Monrovia has some nice features on its website. You cannot purchase directly from the site, but if you plug in "Zone 6", it lists at least 3 nearby garden centers or nurseries where Monrovia's plants can be purchased.

If I listed all of the plants that were introduced in 2026, this article would fill the next 10 years of newsletters. So, I've narrowed it down to a fraction of a tiny fraction to focus on the color Pink. Pink is a great color choice for the garden and landscape since it can stand on its own or complement so many other colors. With that in mind, here are some of the pink plant varieties and hybrids that have just come out this year.



'Pretty N Pink' Caladium (*Caladium x hortulanum*) – grown for its foliage; thrives in the shade; green border with pink and white speckles in the middle and bright pink veins; dig up after first frost; start early indoors in the spring since it takes a long time to sprout; don't plant outdoors until temperatures stay above 60°



'Hollywood Flora' Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa sinensis*) – tropical, but can be overwintered indoors; maximum height x width = 4' x 5'; will stay smaller in a container; huge, 7" blooms last 2-4 days instead of only 1 like most hibiscuses; keep moist



'Autumn Kiss' Encore™ Azalea (*Rhododendron Roblezp*) – 3 to 4 feet tall and wide; repeat bloomer; ruffled, bicolor flowers



'Ka's Poppin Pink' Dahlia (*Dahlia* hybrid) – 2-1/2" pom-pom dahlia from the Bright Series; 4 feet tall with very strong stems; decorative mini



'Pink Mink' Clematis (*Clematis viticella*) – bushy climber; up to 10 feet tall and 6 feet wide; blooms on new wood from early to late summer; prune down to 12"-18" in late winter



'Sgt. Pepper' Dogwood (*Cornus alba*) – variegated leaves in pink, cream, and green look like tri-colored beech; shrub-type growth; 4'-6' tall and 6' to 8' wide; foliage changes to burgundy and hot pink in the fall



'Limonada Rosa' Lantana (*Lantana camara*) – annual; part of the Fiesta series; good in hanging baskets; blooms from spring to late summer; trim back to encourage bushy growth; attracts pollinators



'Let's Dance Loveable' Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) – very heavy bloomer; blooms on old and new wood; alkaline soil produces pink blooms; acid soil produces purple or blue blooms; 3-4 feet tall; part sun



'Pink Cloud' Supertunia Mini Vista (*Petunia hybrid*) – very dense blooms; no deadheading needed; drought tolerant; long bloom from spring to frost and sometimes later if protected



'Royale Pink Laguna' Lobelia (*Lobelia erinus*) – blooms spring to frost in part to full sun; attracts pollinators; good in containers or edge of garden area; 8"-12" tall and wide; does not like wet feet; no deadheading, but trim to encourage branching



'Yuki Cherry Blossom 2.0' Deutzia (*Deutzia hybrid*) – mini shrub 1' to 2' tall and wide; improved color and smaller size than version 1.0; blooms all spring and into early summer on old wood; attracts pollinators; foliage turns burgundy-purple in the fall; deer and rabbit resistant



'Fiesta Time' Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*) – biennial; 3' tall; flowers in the first year from seed; attracts pollinators; blooms midsummer



'Pink Improved Rock Candy' Beardtongue – (*Penstemon barbatus*) – 8"-10" tall; full sun; blooms spring to fall; drought tolerant; deadhead for more blooms; more colors available in the Rock Candy series

There are many more new pink introductions for 2026—too many to list—and the ones mentioned here are those I found interesting. But if pink isn't in your garden vocabulary, new for 2026 plants in virtually every color in the rainbow can be found. Enjoy the search! 🌱

ASIAN NEEDLE ANT

By Ann Heeley



It's as if Shelby County gardeners and landscapers didn't have enough to worry about with Asian Long-Horned Beetles, Spotted Lanternflies, Box Tree Moths, and Emerald Ash Tree Borers. We now have another pest that we may have to contend with: the Asian Needle Ant (*Brachyponera chinensis*). While this species was first discovered in 1932 in Georgia, it has recently caught the attention of entomologists, ecologists, physicians, and environmental groups.

The reasons?

First of all: This non-native insect, which had historically kept a low profile and was not commonly encountered, has experienced an intensely rapid population growth. It has now spread to over 22 states, including Ohio.

Second: It annihilates and replaces native ant populations, preferring to live and multiply in forests, backyards with wood piles, mulch, logs, and landscape timbers. It is difficult to detect them because they resemble other native ants, but they don't establish foraging trails like other ants. They're small, only about .2 inches in length and range in color from dark brown to black. They have reddish-orange legs, antennae, and stinger.

Third: It is a cause for serious alarm, this ant stings with a vengeance. People have described it as being hit by "liquid fire"; intense pain that can last on and off for hours or even days, "low blood pressure, swollen tongue or throat; nausea, vomiting or diarrhea; dizziness or fainting; weak or rapid pulse; and wheezing or difficulty breathing." (University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences). Symptoms that are more worrisome include anaphylaxis, a serious allergic reaction that must receive immediate treatment. Doctors recommend that those with known allergies to other insect bites carry an Epi-Pen.

Asian Needle Ants are most prevalent in hot-weather months, but they can overwinter even during Ohio's coldest temperatures to start appearing again in the spring. Unlike Fire Ants, Asian Needle Ants are not aggressive and may retreat, but they are highly defensive if stepped on or when their nests are disturbed. The best course of action if you accidentally encounter them is to backtrack...fast. Standard insecticides are not very effective. To get rid of them, experts recommend contacting a reputable pest control company that is licensed to use chemicals not available to typical homeowners and gardeners.

As of April, 2026, Asian Needle Ant colonies have been reported and verified in the Cincinnati area and southern Indiana. Let's hope their northward march goes no further. 🌱

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