



Dutchess Dirt

A gardening newsletter from:



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THROUGH THE HEDGEROW: THE GARDEN AS A WORK IN PROGRESS

By Sue Grumet, Master Gardener Volunteer

Reality television is saturated with “extreme makeovers” of one type or another. The typical scenario usually involves a family being whisked off to a vacation spot while an entire army (literally!) of designers and contractors descend upon their home. The results are always dramatic and jaw dropping: walls are removed, skylights installed, luxury finishes applied, all rendering the house almost unrecognizable to the occupants when they return home (which is usually a good thing). And of course, as garden enthusiasts, we have all seen the landscape makeover shows too, the ones where an entire backyard is transformed in a weekend. Where there was once chain link fence, rubble, and choking weeds, there now stands a forest of mature trees, shrubs, the requisite koi pond and an enclosed pergola complete with kitchen and bar. While these shows make for interesting entertainment, (I always shed a few tears at the “reveal”) I have often thought that so much is lost with all this instant gratification. Gardens, like children, are best enjoyed as “works in progress”. There is nothing more satisfying than watching a tree grow from a small sapling into a beautiful and towering specimen. And nowhere is this process of evolution more evident than in the gardens of Millbrook resident Bindy Kaye and her family.

Bindy moved into her circa 1830 home in the early 1970's, ready for the challenge of making this “wreck-down house” (as her children called it then) into the beautiful gem that it is today. The family started their renovations with the house itself, which had been used as a dormitory for the caretakers of a nearby estate and was in dire need of renovation. Once the hard work of getting the house in order was complete, Bindy then turned her attention to what was going on outside in the landscape. Needless to say, there was not much to work with. The gravel driveway leading to the home ran right up



to the front door and was certainly not the welcoming entry that Bindy had in mind. But like most of us faced with such a daunting challenge, where do you begin? Bindy had the foresight to enroll in a landscaping course given by The Cary Institute, which at that time was affiliated with the New York Botanical Garden. It was at one of these lectures that she met horticulturist Robert Hebb, and for a small consulting fee, he helped her map out the beginnings of her entry garden. Hebb was an early proponent of low maintenance perennials, and he suggested to the Kayes that they start their garden by planting a peony hedge leading up to the entrance. Today, this hedge is truly magnificent, and was in full bloom when I visited in June. Bindy uses very early, early, mid, and late season peonies, so that the blooming period of these beautiful flowers goes on for a very long time. She is now a seasoned collector of these lovely and hard-working plants, and has revamped this area several times with new and exciting varieties as well as the older classics.



Past the peony borders, raised beds were erected and today house many lovely and unusual specimens that Bindy has curated over the years. It is apparent that this garden always has something in bloom, and the varieties and sheer numbers of plants are truly staggering. This is an accomplishment that can only be achieved over a long period of time, through the constant editing that gardeners go through to winnow out the truly extraordinary plants that work (no weekend makeovers here!).

Having finished the gardens at the front of house, the next order of business for Bindy to address was the problem of the house being open and exposed to all the noise and traffic of the roadway. The sugar maple trees that lined the perimeter of the property offered little in the way of protection, and the salt used on the roads in the winter was taking a toll on them. Again,

Bindy found inspiration through education! While touring the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, she noticed these wonderful berms that went through Prospect Park, a device used to shield the garden viewer from unsightly distractions. Why not build a similar gently sloping berm in front of her road, filling it in with shrubs, trees, and perennials? Today this berm is lush with mature and beautiful specimens, and except for the very occasional loud truck, you would never even know that a roadway existed behind this green wall. Privacy indeed!

Past the berm, Bindy has installed a brand new “playhouse” in her backyard area, to be used by her granddaughters who will be visiting from Shanghai this summer. The effect of this lovely little house is made all the more magical by the presence of large swaths of *Petasites japonicas*, or giant butterbur, which gives this area the aura of a set from the Land of Oz. You could even imagine dinosaurs poking their heads out of these giant leaves, which serve as a lovely “skirt” for Bindy’s large collection of magnolia trees.



Giant locusts, probably planted when the home was built, serve as sentinels at the back of the house, and as I learned from Bindy, serve a very practical purpose as well as an aesthetic one. Due to their extremely long taproots, locust trees were planted next to houses in the nineteenth century to serve as giant “lightning rods”, since the force of a lightning strike would be carried deep into the ground by the taproot instead of onto the adjoining house – a garden feature that is smart as well as beautiful! There is also a lovely fountain here which was designed by an artist friend of Bindy’s, and whose splashing water shields the terrace from the occasional sounds of the roadway noise below.

Like all great gardens, there are surprises and delights to be found throughout this property. There is the transitional hypertufa area which houses Bindy’s collection of unusual succulents and leads one into the terraced gardens. Along the meadow side of the property are lovely open board fences which corral the family’s black and red angus cows, who will occasionally make an appearance (probably to feast their eyes on the delicious landscaping). Throughout it all, one gets the sense that this is a garden that has slowly and lovingly evolved over time, and will continue to do so. For after all, we as gardeners are just as much a “work in progress” as our gardens!

Happy Summer...



It's Not Your Imagination!

By Mary Nisley, Master Gardener Volunteer

I thoroughly enjoyed our long cool spring this year. Rarely did it get too hot to garden in the full sun. However, some of our favorite warm weather vegetables would like it warmer.

For the last month it's been my impression that my vegetable gardens are not doing as well as usual. Many vegetable plants are growing slowly and seem much smaller than last year. Yesterday I took dozens of photos and compared them to pictures taken last year at the same time. The difference is startling. Squash, tomato and pepper plants are about half the size of last year's plants. My corn is at least a foot shorter.



What's happening? I'm growing the same varieties, planted around the same time, and I'm gardening the same way.

The difference is the weather. This spring was much cooler than the warm springs we've experienced since 2000. According to temperature records from the Dutchess County Airport the high in March was 59° and in April 75°. We finally got a few warm days in May, but overall the month remained cool with frost on 5/14. Consistent warmth did not arrive until late June. June was as warm as we've come to expect, but quite rainy.

The airport weather station recorded measurable precipitation half the days of June and many areas of the county have experienced even more rain. Our plants are crying for sunshine. Spring 2013 felt a lot like spring back in the 1980s. I found historical data back to 2009 and discovered May 2009 was the last time the month was this cool.

So I tell myself to be patient. Even cool summers produce good harvests. Meanwhile we continue to enjoy salads of romaine and spinach. Last year both had bolted by now.

What problems can be expected with cool rainy weather? Fungal diseases such as Septoria and Early Blight are likely to attack tomatoes. If you notice any spotted or yellowed foliage remove it immediately and discard in the trash. This year I've sprayed the tomatoes twice with a copper fungicide. The fungicides available to home gardeners are preventatives so they must be used before the infection occurs. I'm trying to protect the foliage as it grows because it is difficult to get good spray coverage of a big tomato plant. I also planted the tomatoes through red plastic to prevent soil from splashing onto the leaves - many fungi overwinter as spores in the soil.

Late blight is a possibility again this year. The web site <http://usablight.org/> has full information on recognizing and dealing with late blight. They also have a map tracking LB – thus far the closest occurrence is in mid-New Jersey – too close for comfort. Count yourself lucky if you were able to purchase a LB resistant tomato at the MG plant sale. Protect that plant from septoria and early blight, and you should have tomatoes until frost.

A “Least Wanted” - Black Swallow-wort

By Joyce Tomaselli, Interim Community Horticulture Educator

A few months ago I wrote about invasive vines and the discovery of Kudzu in Poughkeepsie. This week a colleague brought in another invasive vine which we identified as Black Swallow-wort.

Cynanchum louisiae (Black Swallow-wort) and *C. Rossicum* (Pale Swallow-wort) were introduced from Europe and Eurasia in the 1850s, most likely for ornamental purposes. Naturalized populations were first collected in New York in 1897. They are a long-lived perennial, twining, herbaceous vine, three to six feet high. The flowers are self-pollinating and produce polyembryonic seeds equipped with a downy parachute that aids in wind dispersal (like milk-weed seeds). Plants also have rhizomes that spread widely. Known also as “dog-strangling vines”, they are adapted to a variety of habitats, choke out other native vegetation, are extremely toxic to livestock, and difficult to control.

Yikes!



Black swallow-wort has dark green leaves three to four inches long and with purple flowers with five pointed petals. Pale swallow-wort is a bit smaller with reddish flowers. They are related to milkweed, and sometimes fool monarch butterflies into laying eggs; they are toxic to the larvae.

The fruits are slender tapered pods, often paired, two to three inches long that turn from green to light brown as they mature.

Swallow-worts have been observed in nearly every county of New York, with a distinct epicenter in Jefferson County (the eastern shore of Lake Ontario.) Swallow-worts are found in gardens and fields, along fencerows, roadways, grassy slopes, wooded edges and stream banks. They are not new to Dutchess County. In fact vines are growing here at the Farm & Home Center in Millbrook, which have been part of a Cornell genetic study for the past few years. When the vines form extensive patches, however, they crowd out native plants and the species living in them such as insects and birds.

If you see this vine on your property what should you do?

As with all invasives, recognizing and removing plants before they are well established is the best approach. Be observant. If you find some Black swallow-wort, look for more and strive to remove them all.

If the instance is small, you can mechanically remove the pods before they open. Hand pulling roots is labor intensive and rarely successful since the stem base is brittle. Digging the plants out requires that the complete root crown be removed. Plants with seeds should be burned or bagged and disposed. Do not compost them.

Mowing is most effective in mid-July when there are small, immature seed pods on the plants. Cutting the plants down too soon, while they are blooming, will allow the plants to recover and still produce a viable seed crop. Mowing, even several times a year, may not eradicate swallow-wort but can prevent a seed crop.

Herbicides should only be used (if at all) when the plants are actively growing, after flowering has begun, or there will be too little exposed leaf surface to deliver a killing dose to the roots. Repeated applications are usually necessary. Avoid the temptation to spray when you first see the plants in May. They'll just come back again. Swallow-wort control may take a few years to be successful.

For more information visit the Plant Conservation Alliance's Alien Plant Working Group Least Wanted at <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/cylo1.htm> and other sites listed below.

Cornell Cooperative Extension has been serving Dutchess County for 100 years.

We are looking for historical photos, memorabilia, and personal stories to help us celebrate our Centennial!

If you have something to share, please contact Sean Carroll at 677-8223 Ext 147 or smc427@cornell.edu.

These items will be exhibited as part of our Centennial celebration at the Dutchess County Fair, Open House and Chicken BBQ (Sept 20th) and the Annual Meeting (Oct. 23rd).

WEBSITES TO VISIT

- <http://www.invasiveplants.net/> Cornell University Invasive Plants Program
- <http://nyisri.org/> New York Invasive Species Research Institute
- <http://www.nyis.info/> New York invasive species information
- <http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/factsheets/ecogardening/ipmrose.html> IPM of roses
- http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/cucurbits_pm.htm Powdery Mildew of Cucurbits
- <http://nysipm.cornell.edu/factsheets/treefruit/diseases/car/car.asp> Cedar Apple Rust
- <http://ccedutchess.org/agriculture-horticulture/commercial-horticulture/farmers-markets-in-dutchess-county.php> Listing of 2013 Farmers' Markets
- http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/reports/ann_rpt/ar98/tom.asp practical IPM for Tomatoes
- <http://www.wssa.net> Weed Science Society of America
- <http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/spottedwing/> Spotted Wing Drosophila (affects small fruit crops)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out <http://www.hvgardencalendar.com> for more events

July 13, Mid-Hudson Children's Museum, Garden Series: Fairy Houses 9:30am-11:30am. 75 N. Water St. Poughkeepsie. CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteers will encourage children to see gardens as magical places to enjoy and explore nature. Using "found materials" such as sticks, twigs, grass and rocks, museum visitors will build fairy houses in nooks and crannies outside, around the museum. This final session of the children's gardening series is made possible with support from the Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union. All activities and materials are included with museum admission of \$7.50. For more information visit www.mhcm.org

July 13, Garden Club of Amenia, Hidden Gardens of Amenia Tour 10 – 4pm, rain or shine. Tickets \$20 at the Town Hall Parking lot, 4988 Rte 22, Amenia the day of the event. No pets please. All proceeds from the tour go back to the residents of the town in the form of plant giveaways and public plantings in all 5 hamlets of Amenia

July 13, 2013, Hudson Valley Iris and Daylily Society daylily exhibit, 1-5pm, Poughkeepsie Galleria center court, free. Featuring beautiful daylilies from members' gardens, many of which will be included in the annual sale at the Poughkeepsie Galleria on August 24 - 25.

July 21, Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association Interpretive Tours, 1-4pm, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site on Route 9 in Hyde Park. Tours of the formal gardens (weather permitting) by volunteers discussing the history of the gardens and the mission of the Vanderbilt Garden Association to rehabilitate and maintain the plants, shrubs, trees, and statuary in the gardens as they were in the 1930's just prior to Mr. Vanderbilt's death. Discussion of current projects: renovation of the "Cherry Walk and replanting of the rose garden terraces. The 1875 Toolhouse building will also be open with Vanderbilt-era photographs. Free to the public. Visitors should park in the Visitor Center parking lot, and walk down the gravel path from the Mansion to the gardens. For further information, e-mail info@vanderbiltgarden.org or visit <http://www.vanderbiltgarden.org> or call 845-229-6432. Tours will also be held August 18, September 15 and October 20.

**Need Soil pH Testing?
Need Lawn or Plant Diagnosis?
Have any gardening questions?**

The **Horticulture Hotline**, (845) 677-5067 is **now open** for the season. Samples for identification or diagnosis can be submitted all year long. Visit our [Horticulture Diagnostic Lab website](#) for reliable resources and information on our services.

PLANT ID QUIZ



Symplocarpus foetidus (Eastern Skunk Cabbage) utilizes thermogenesis to grow and flower in the snow and a foul odor to attract pollinators. Its leaves contain calcium oxalate crystals, which create a burning sensation when eaten by large predators. Very clever.



Most gardeners recognize this undesirable plant by its leaves. Do you recognize the flowers?

Websites mentioned in Dutchess Dirt are provided as a courtesy to our readers. Mention of these websites does not imply endorsement by Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension or by the author.

HELP SPREAD THE DIRT! Please forward a copy to anyone you think might be interested. To be added or removed from our e-mail list, or submit upcoming gardening events, contact Nancy Halas at nh26@cornell.edu, www.ccedutchess.org.



*Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County provides equal program and employment opportunities.
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