

Gardening Matters



Yates County Master Gardener Newsletter

Spring 2021, Issue 1



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Executive Director's Note

The hint of spring is in the air. We see the perennials of spring welcoming us: daffodils, crocuses, snow bells, forsythia, and tulips. We see the grass starting to green up, buds on trees—and a lot of spring-cleaning work ahead! But we have to take the sunshine with the rain, the good and the challenging. I used to dread spring cleaning, in my youth-filled days. There were *always* other activities and social gatherings I preferred to attend before yard work!

But that was life before 2019. Now-- as we still need to social distance, wear face coverings and use hand sanitizer, I see yard and garden spring-cleaning as opportunities to get outside, enjoy the fresh air, and hear the birds that have returned. I get to look at the snowplow, shovel, bags of rock salt, and chuckle to myself, thinking that they can stay there and get dusty for a few months!! I also get to revisit and clean up all my gardening tools, fencing, decorations, and yard art for the season.



Photo Credit: Maggie Mahr

Spring is a great time for garden mapping. Think about what grew well, and what did not, and why. Where is a better location for my greens/cucumbers? Should I try eggplant again, or stick to the tried and true [acorn squash, zucchini]? Did I plant enough flowers and vegetables that bloom, to attract pollinators? Walk around your garden area—**look, listen and learn**. See what else is around: shade or direct sun? Listen to gauge the amount of wind, and other wildlife movements in the area: is your garden in the middle of a wildlife highway or off the path of the pollinators? If you have tried a plant in the same space for a few years, and it has not survived/thrived, what have you learned?

This issue of *Gardening Matters* provides lots of information on pollinators, vegetable gardening tips, and other related topics. Our Yates County Master Gardeners also share some *favorite spring blooms* they look forward to seeing every year. We hope this issue provides you with the spring spark of energy that the season encourages. Gardening is always a wonderful adventure, if we take the time to look, listen and learn.

Welcome Spring and Happy Garden Dreams!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arlene A. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Executive Director & Master Gardener

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County

***As of April 19th, 2021, the Yates County Office Building is open to the general public from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. However, as part of the effort to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, appointments are preferred and some departments and services will be subject to continued limitations as described on their website (yatescounty.org)**

Should you need to reach any of our staff members, visit <http://yates.cce.cornell.edu/staff>. You can also send us a message via our Facebook page, or call the office at 315-536-5123 to make an appointment.

Garden Chat:

Catching up w/ the Yates County Master Gardeners!



What plant are you most happy to see in the spring?

Jan B.

For me, it's the trillium. A hidden gem in the garden with a beautiful array of colors.



Susan B.

Hellebores. Evergreen, hardy, and blossoms before anything else in the garden. And, some varieties have their blossoms last for months.



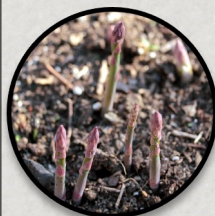
Dixon

Dandelions. They are a really important food source for pollinators, and they remind me that while I may be procrastinating about getting out into my garden, they sure aren't.



Marian W.

My favorite spring plant is asparagus. Those green and purple shoots poking up through the earth is a sure sign that another season of garden bounty is about to start. My mouth just waters thinking about all the many ways to prepare asparagus!



Karen W.

Daffodils for me- I love the bright colors and large blossoms. I also just have to send out a picture to you all of this beautiful, rugged and persistent pansy that remained in bloom all winter. It has perked up more in the spring but I have so enjoyed its persistence this winter!



Celeste L.

Crocuses, snowbells and daffodils! Lilacs...their perfume is the smell of spring!!



Garden Chat:

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Arlene W.



- * **Snowbells-** they are the first to poke through some snow. This lets me know that the worst of winter is over and that spring will be coming in a few weeks. Better than a ground hog!
- * **Forsythia:** this is a bush that blooms with a tiny vibrant yellow flowers. It glows like the sun in June and is always a surprise when the buds break open—literally overnight!
- * **Daffodils-** a classic that says spring!!



Barb S.

- * **Daffodils...**for their bright colors after the winter bleakness.
- * **Lily of the Valley...**for their sweet smell and they remind me of my grandma.
- * **Crocus...**for their color and strength as they push forwards although the air is still quite cold.

Michelle B.



- * **Redbuds:** Blooms in a profusion of rosy-pink flowers in April
- * **Magnolia:** In March, the early-blooming star magnolias begin to flower, covering the trees with a multitude of white blossoms. In April and into May, the ivory, yellow, pink, and rich purple flowers of the later-blooming magnolias emerge.



Have a gardening question?
Contact us at 315-536-5123, or stop
by the CCE-Yates County office
and fill out one of our Master
Gardener questionnaires!

What to do in the Spring

May

- * Prune back lilacs, forsythia, witch hazel, viburnums and other shrubs that prune on old wood shortly after they finish blooming. This will allow them to put on enough new growth over the summer that you won't be sacrificing next year's flowers.
- * Divide perennials as needed.
- * Hold off planting out your tender vegetable garden vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and beans until after Memorial Day. Yes, we rarely get a frost past mid-May but it's happened before and all of these plants will be happier with nighttime temperatures in the 50s.
- * Now is the time to begin weeding regularly. This should be a quick, weekly task if you start in May while the weeds are still small.



Weeding while your weeds are still small will save a world of time.



*Pictured: Sensational Lilacs
Photo Credit: Narith5 (Flickr)*

June

- * Fertilize container gardens as needed- pots are more prone to nutritional issues as they have a limited amount of substrate to draw from.
- * Water gardens as needed- deeper, less frequent watering will give better results than light sprinkles.
- * Fertilize spring blooming bulbs to maximize growth before they go dormant until next spring. Even though it can look awkward, leave the foliage uncut and unbraided until they naturally go dormant.



Photo Credit: University of Georgia Extension

Soil pH Testing Services



Are you starting a new bed or troubleshooting and older one? Spring is a good time to do a soil test. CCE Yates offers free garden pH testing through the Master Gardener program.

Contact us at (315) 536-5123 or Master Gardener Coordinator Cheryl Flynn at cj348@cornell.edu for more information.



Summer containers usually need supplemental fertilizer to give you a full season of bloom

When can I clean up my garden...and still protect beneficial insects?

Amara Dunn (NY Integrated Pest Management)



Don't clean up your garden too early this spring! Pollinators and natural enemies of pests need to stay cozy a bit longer.

The days are getting longer and (sometimes) warmer, trees are beginning to leaf out, spring bulbs are blooming, and lots of people are anxious to clean up their gardens. But you may have heard that cleaning up your garden too early is bad for pollinators and other beneficial insects like natural enemies of pests. Is this true? How long do you need to wait?

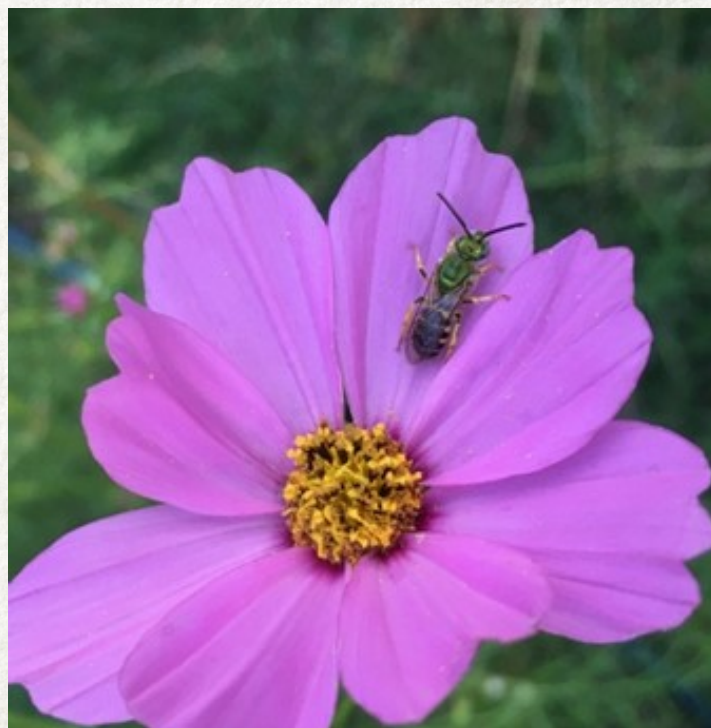
What's the concern with early garden clean-up?

There are two aspects of garden clean-up that pose a risk to beneficial insects in your garden: cutting out dead stems and clearing away leaves or other debris on the ground. Some species of wild bees nest in dead stems, so cutting down and disposing of these stems before the bees emerge for the spring is problematic. Dead leaves and other plant debris on the ground provide shelter for natural enemies like lady beetles, fireflies, and ground beetles. Pristinely-raked garden beds remove this shelter. You can read more about the benefits of messiness in this *ThinkIPM* blog post*.

When should I clean up my garden?

First, please don't clean your garden up in the fall. With the exception of removing and disposing of diseased or insect-infested plants (especially annuals), let your garden rest in the fall.

Ok, so you've waited until spring. But when? It's complicated. You are trying to protect a diverse group of wild bee species, who are nesting in diverse settings (including both the ground and dead plant stems), in addition to many different species of beetles, spiders, and other arthropod natural enemies of pests. It should come as no surprise that all of these different arthropods emerge from their winter homes at different times. For example, around here (NY) bumble bees, carpenter bees, mason bees, and mining bees emerge earlier (early April) than sweat bees (May). Even within two species of mason bee, researchers found that the temperature during the winter, the sex of the bees, and their size all significantly impacted when they would emerge in the spring (varying by up to 40 days). Winter temperatures also impact when alfalfa leaf-cutting bees and other bees emerge.



Sweat bees nest in the ground, and emerge a bit later in the spring than some other bee species.

*<https://bit.ly/3gwIkuE>

When can I clean up my garden...and still protect beneficial insects?

Amara Dunn (NY Integrated Pest Management)

So what should I do?

First, don't let the complexity of the situation paralyze you. Can you leave just a part of your garden "messy" year round, while you clean up the flower bed right next to the street? Do it. Don't let the perfect become the enemy of the good. You might also consider making or purchasing a sign that lets your neighbors know why you are keeping your garden a bit untidy. It could spark some interesting conversations, and maybe you'll start a new trend!

Second – and related to the first suggestion – remember that diversity is a strength. No single way of gardening is good for all beneficial insects. For example, mulch provides shelter for beetles (many of which are predators), but ground nesting bees need bare ground. Different parts of your yard or garden can support different beneficial insects.

Third, the Xerces Society offers some guidelines for timing garden clean-up by watching the weather and what's happening to other plants around you. However, this advice is specifically for protecting bees, and doesn't address the needs of natural enemies of pests.

- * In the northeast, don't start garden clean-up until your taxes are submitted. But realize that even waiting until mid to late April is still too early for some bee species.
- * The cool season grasses we usually have growing in our lawns generally require the soil to be about 50° F in order to start growing. Wait to clean up your gardens until you need to mow your lawn regularly. But always remember to mow high.
- * Wait until apple and pear trees finish blooming. In the northeast U.S., apricots, peaches, plums, and cherries will bloom early (when many ground-nesting bees are emerging), but apples and pears won't finish blooming until mid-May.
- * To be extra safe, wait until you are ready to plant tomatoes (when night temperatures are consistently above 50° F). At least in my part of NY, this may not be until late May.

Fourth, if you feel like you absolutely can't wait to do some garden clean-up, change how you dispose of the debris you remove. Cut back last-year's dead stems and pile them loosely in a corner of your yard (rather than bagging them and taking or sending them to a compost facility). Insects that have yet to emerge from the stems can still do so. Once you're well into summer, feel free to compost this debris. But remember that your landscaping choices can also create spaces for ticks to hang out.

I did clean up some garden beds in my front yard a bit on the early side this spring. But, I piled the stems I cut in a back corner of my backyard.



Happy gardening!

About the Author



Amara Dunn is a Biocontrol Specialist with the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program. Her area of work includes supporting the effective use of biological control across NY by identifying and filling knowledge gaps, and helping stakeholders implement biocontrol solutions to pest problems as part of an integrated management strategy.

To learn more about her ongoing projects and how to use biocontrol effectively, e-mail her at arc55@cornell.edu, or you can read her blog online at <http://bit.ly/biocontrolbytes>

Asclepias– Or How I learned to Love Milkweed

Pat Chadwick (Piedmont Master Gardeners, Virginia Cooperative Extension)



Note from CCE Yates editors: *Although this article is from Virginia, the native species discussed are also New York natives.*

While I have strong feelings, pro or con, about most plants, I feel ambivalent about a few. *Asclepias* (pronounced ah SKLEE pee us) is one of those, but my attitude toward it has gradually evolved. As a child growing up on a farm, I knew this plant by its common name — milkweed. A large, coarse-looking weed, it had little to offer in the way of charm. It grew aggressively throughout several of the farm's pasture fields, but the cows and horses avoided it. I learned early on that if you break the leaves or stems of this plant, a sticky, white sap oozes out and irritates your skin. The cows and horses, clearly smarter than I was, knew that and left these plants alone. Once the plant bloomed and set seed, my attitude toward it mellowed a bit. On the one hand, the spherical clusters of oddly shaped small flowers were interesting to examine. On the other hand, the flowers were a dull and decidedly unappealing shade of anemic pink. The monarch butterflies flitting around this plant didn't seem to mind the color, though. I guessed, perhaps accurately, that they were attracted to the pleasant scent of the flowers.

In my childlike mind, the only reason milkweed needed to exist was because of its seedpods. When they matured, they split open, revealing perfectly aligned rows of brown seeds with long, fluffy white hairs attached to them. As a bored kid with an insatiable curiosity about nature, those seedpods provided me with endless hours of amusement.

Fast forward to adulthood, when I eventually learned about the relationship between milkweed and the life cycle of the monarch butterfly. What an epiphany to discover that the same homely weed about which I felt ambivalent as a child is critical to this beautiful creature's very existence, specifically at the larval stage. Looking at milkweed in a whole new light, I set out to learn more about it. I discovered, for example, that:

- * It is named after the Greek god of medicine, Asklepios. I can only surmise that this must be a pretty important plant to be given such an auspicious name.
- * Legend has it that this plant has been used throughout history to treat a variety of medical conditions, including pleurisy, arthritis, gall stones, stomach ailments, and even warts.
- * The sticky white sap is mildly poisonous and its bitter taste warns away most animals and insects that attempt to eat it. Monarch butterfly larvae seem not to be bothered by either the bitter taste or the toxin. In fact, by feeding on the leaves, they accumulate enough of the toxin in their bodies to make themselves distasteful to predators.
- * During World War II, the buoyant milkweed floss was used as a substitute for kapok in life jackets.

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Asclepias– Or How I learned to Love Milkweed

Pat Chadwick (Piedmont Master Gardeners, Virginia Cooperative Extension)

With my new-found knowledge about milkweed, I eventually decided it was time to adjust my attitude about it. With some (OK, a lot of) reluctance, I added a couple of species to my ornamental garden a few years ago. I dreaded the idea of incorporating bright orange or other “hot” colors in my garden, which consists predominately of “cool” colors. Also, there’s something counterintuitive about installing an ornamental plant that is meant to be eaten. But, you know what? Despite my apprehension, this species has finally grown on me. Perhaps it took a few monarch butterflies to help me see the light. Ambivalent no longer, I now find myself hovering anxiously over it in the spring time, waiting for it to break dormancy. As for the seedpods, I haven’t quite outgrown the desire to play with them, but I’m working on it.

Whether you call it *Asclepias* or milkweed, the genus consists of more than 100 species of evergreen or deciduous, clump-forming or spreading perennials. *Flora of Virginia* lists 15 members of the genus that are native to this state. Of those 15 species, *A. tuberosa* and *A. incarnata* tend to be the most commonly grown in the ornamental garden. Those and a few other selected species are described below:



Pictured: *Asclepias syriaca*

A. syriaca (Common Milkweed). This is the species that flourished with wild abandon on the farm where I grew up. It is commonly found throughout much of the eastern United States, particularly along roadsides and in meadows and pastures. It typically grows about 4 to 5 feet tall and, as mentioned earlier, sports clusters of dull, some might say unappealing, pale pink flowers from late June through July.

What this plant lacks in color, it makes up for with a distinctive musky scent that butterflies adore. This is not a particularly attractive plant, which is why it’s not ordinarily found growing in orderly, cultivated gardens. Also, it can aggressively spread by underground rhizomes.



Pictured: *Asclepias tuberosa*
(Hello Yellow)

A. tuberosa (Butterfly Weed). This smaller, more refined species grows from 1-1/2 to 3 feet tall and has narrow leaves and clusters of bright orange flowers. If you’ve ever seen this one growing in the wild, the color fairly jumps out at you (in an attractive way). Of all the native species, this one appears to be the easiest to find in garden centers and plant catalogs. A couple of cultivars are available in addition to the orange species:

- * **“Gay Butterflies”**— This 2 to 3-foot tall plant bears red, orange or yellow flowers.
- * **“Hello Yellow”** - This 2 to 2-1/2 foot tall plant bears bright yellow flowers. I planted this cultivar a couple of years ago but found the yellow color just a little too vibrant for my tastes. So I moved it to another spot in the garden where it will blend in better with its neighbors.



Pictured: *Asclepias incarnata* (Swamp Milkweed)

A. incarnata (Swamp Milkweed). This thick-stemmed species grows about 3 to 4 feet tall. The clusters of pink flowers are more colorful than those of its *A. syriaca* cousin. The flowers have a mild vanilla scent that butterflies go wild over. This species grows in ditches, swamps, and other moisture-retaining soil. *A. incarnata* cultivars include:

- * **“Ice Ballet”** – Slightly smaller than the species at 32 to 40 in. in height, it bears white flowers.
- * **“Cinderella”** — Growing to about 3 feet tall, it has soft pink flowers that open from deep pink buds. This cultivar can tolerate a dry site.
- * **“Soulmate”**— Growing to about 3 feet tall, it has rosy-purple flowers. Like ‘Cinderella’, this cultivar can also tolerate a dry site.

Asclepias– Or How I learned to Love Milkweed

Pat Chadwick (Piedmont Master Gardeners, Virginia Cooperative Extension)



Pictured: *A. purpurascens* (Purple Milkweed)

A. purpurascens (Purple Milkweed). This 2 to 3-foot tall species gets its name from the reddish-purple rib on the leaves. Unfortunately, it is not as commonly available as *A. tuberosa* or *A. incarnata*. As reported by Allan Armitage in his *Herbaceous Perennial Plants*, this is one of the most attractive members of the genus. The thick clusters of fragrant flowers start out as dusky pink buds and open to an eye-catching deep rose to reddish-purple color. Although similar in form to its relative *A. syriaca*, this species is a gentle spreader in the garden.



Pictured: *A. variagata*

Asclepias variagata (White Milkweed)

This species grows from 1 to 4 feet tall with densely arranged clusters of white blossoms having a faint touch of purple at the base of each individual flower.

A. verticillata (Whorled Milkweed). This 1 to 3-foot tall species has narrow, whorled leaves and small creamy white flowers along the length of the stems. One of the most widely distributed of all *Asclepias* species in the U.S., this selection is one of the few clone-forming species. Although unlikely to be found in cultivated or grazed landscapes, it does colonize in ditches and along roadsides and is a common late season host plant for monarch larvae.

In addition to the native species, the following tropical non-natives also support monarch butterfly populations. Although technically perennials, they are not hardy in Zone 7 and must be grown as annuals.



Pictured: *Asclepias verticillata*

HOW TO USE ASCLEPIAS IN THE LANDSCAPE

To provide a source of nectar for adult monarchs and leaves for the larvae, try planting several species of *Asclepias*, preferably ones that are native to this area. Don't limit yourself to just one or two plants. Plant as many as you can reasonably fit into your garden.

* Butterfly garden – Incorporate with other nectar-rich plants to attract butterflies and other pollinators. A few companion plants that come to mind include Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*), cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), coneflower (*Echinacea*), Mexican sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia*), bergamot (Monarda), goldenrod (*Solidago*), ironweed (Vernonia), and various asters.

- * Meadow or wildflower gardens — This is a particularly suitable application for the larger, coarse-leaved varieties, such as *A. syriaca*. Be sure to include other species that bloom later in the season in order to provide a source of food throughout the growing season.
- * Mixed border – Include in a mixed perennial and annual border. Some varieties, as already noted, have strong colors. They work best in a border with other “hot” colors, including such plants as tickseed (*Coreopsis*), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*), yarrow (*Achillea*) and blazing star (*Liatris*).
- * Decorations – The seedpods can be used in very interesting ways in dried arrangements. The inner shell of *A. syriaca*, for example, has a faint silvery sheen that looks particularly attractive when combined with other dried plant materials in holiday wreaths.

Making Milkweed Garden-Ready

Caroline Boutard-Hunt (CCE-Yates County Ag Educator/Master Gardener)

I love all the ecosystem services milkweed provides in a garden. There is an endless parade of insects visiting the flowers and my children partake in happy hunts daily to count the number of monarch caterpillars they find. In addition, I've discovered that milkweed flowers have a wonderful, musky fragrance that I have grown to appreciate as much as I do the first whiff of lilacs in the spring. Small patches of milkweed can be extremely important for supporting the next generation of monarch butterflies along with a myriad of other insects that rely exclusively on milkweed. However, I can't deny it, I find them to be awkward looking plants. They start off in the spring with beautiful apple green leaves and stems, but by about mid-summer, they are towering over and flopping on my other garden inhabitants. The lower stems lose their leaves, giving them a bare, gawky look. In 2020, as I was working from home, I decided to see what I could do to move beyond tolerating milkweed in the garden to make it a valued garden inhabitant.

Experiment 1: Trimming the tops

My major dislike with milkweed has always been its lanky, bare stems. I had learned from my grandfather to trim the tips of taller plants to make them bushier. I wondered if I could try the same approach to encourage the milkweed to form lower shoots and keep the plants shorter. When the plants were about a foot and a half tall, I snipped the top whorl of leaves on about half of the plants. The rest of the plants I left to grow normally for comparison. The clipped plants rapidly developed secondary shoots and leaves further down the stem. By mid-summer these shoots were taller than the original clipped portion, giving the plant a nice bushy appearance. The clipped plants only grew to about 3 feet tall in total compared to the significantly taller unclipped plants. Bloom time for the clipped plants was about a week later than for the unclipped plants. The real difference was seen when we did have a rainstorm. The shorter, bushier plants did lean a little but quickly recovered while the unclipped plants leaned on their neighbors for the rest of the season.

Verdict: I think this experiment was a success and my plan is to continue to trim the tops of my common milkweed to keep the height in check. Next year I will experiment with also trimming the tops of some of the side shoots to see if I can further encourage a smaller, bushier plant without sacrificing blooms.



Pictured: Clipped and unclipped milkweed in the author's garden



Note: the clipped milkweed quickly grew side-shoots

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Making Milkweed Garden-Ready

Caroline Boutard-Hunt (CCE-Yates County Ag Educator/Master Gardener)

Experiment 2: Try a different variety



Pictured: "Ice Ballet" and common milkweed in the author's garden



Photo Credit: American Meadows

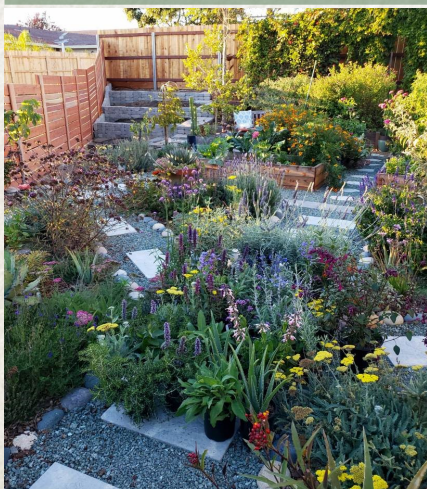
Although I did want to keep milkweed in my garden, I also wondered if there was another milkweed that would be a better fit in a perennial border. I came across *Asclepias incarnata*, commonly called swamp milkweed. This seemed like a much better fit tucked in among my roses and Agastache. The leaves were smaller and narrow and the plant was naturally shorter and more refined. The flowers are a dusky pink which just didn't quite appeal to me but luckily I found "Ice Ballet", a pure white cultivar. Generally, we recommend growing the wild types of pollinator species. Cultivars of natives, commonly called "nativars" can be very attractive but they have been bred to what people are looking for as opposed to pollinators. Some are less attractive to pollinators or less nutritious, negating their purported benefits to other native species. 'Ice Ballet' is an exception. Researchers have found that monarchs are still attracted to this cultivar and caterpillars grow equally well feeding on the plant. I planted 3 tiny plants last spring which rapidly grew into lovely clumps a little over 2 feet tall and wide. The plants were covered in beautiful white umbels and we found many more monarch caterpillars on 'ice ballet' than on the common milkweed plant. Even better; because of its many narrow leaves, evidence of feeding by the caterpillars was nearly invisible. The white flowers added fresh contrast to a garden dominated pinks, peaches and purples. In the fall the plants formed lovely miniature pods which were highly ornamental.

Verdict: "Ice ballet" is my new favorite garden workhorse. I'll be planting a lot more of it this year!

Experiments for 2021

I am still working on ways to make common milkweed a more appreciated member of my garden. This year I'll be trying some alternate trimming techniques along with using peony hoops as supports to avoid the dreaded flop. I will report back this fall on my success and failures. Please share with me if you try trimming your own milkweed this year! Until then I'll be enjoying the wonderful display of pollinators in my garden and hope you'll be doing the same.

Turn Your Yard Into A Pollinator Paradise



With just a few simple steps you will be able to go outside into your yard and find it abuzz -literally- with activity. Your garden will come to life while native bees, wasps, butterflies, flies (not the common housefly), moths and hummingbirds hover over a plentiful banquet of pollen and nectar - A pollinator paradise.

Turning your yard or garden into a pollinator-friendly environment isn't difficult. You can establish an important conservation habitat with just a small strip of plants in your backyard or garden. Even one pot of flowering plants on your back porch can provide vital habitat.

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Turn Your Yard Into A Pollinator Paradise

Building a pollinator friendly landscape ensures that pollinators will have healthy food, a place to nest and livable conditions.

Here are five simple tips to get you started.

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME:

If you plant pollinator friendly plants they will come - it's that simple.

CREATE AN ALL SEASON BUFFET

When you begin planting, the key is to plant a diversity of plants that flower at different times of year. Choose a variety of plants that will keep your garden in bloom from early spring through late fall to ensure that the feast continues all season long. The list below is not exhaustive by any means but offers a few suggestions of pollinator friendly plants that are easy to grow and are native to our region.

Spring: *Achillea millefolium* (Common Yarrow), *Asimina triloba* (Pawpaw), *Aquilegia canadensis* (Eastern Red Columbine)

Summer: *Campsis radicans* (Trumpet Vine), *Cornus florida* (Flowering Dogwood), *Hibiscus moscheutos* (Marshmallow Hibiscus)

Fall: *Asclepias tuberosa* (Orange Milkweed), *Rudbeckia hirta* (Black-eyed Susan), *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* (New England Aster)

LEAVE SOME SOIL BARE:

Although you might think that bare ground has very low value as wildlife habitat, in fact it is vital to many bees. About 70% of our native bees nest in the ground. They dig little burrows that are used for rearing their young. Leaving a bare spot of soil near or in your pollinator can help to provide most of the bee's life needs. Many native bee species do not travel very far. Bumblebees and honeybees can cover longer distances - up to two miles - most species only travel a few hundred feet or less.

THINK BEYOND THE BEES:

The honey bee or bumble bee are easy to love, but they represent only two on a large list of pollinating insects. There are some 416 native bee species in New York State— a veritable pollinating army. Add to that pollinating wasps, butterflies, moths, birds, beetles, small mammals and bats you have a veritable pollinating army. Somewhere between 75% and 95% of all flowering plants on the earth need help with pollination, so they need pollinators. Pollinators provide pollination services to over 180,000 different plant species and more than 1200 crops. It is said that 1 out of every three bites of food you eat is there because of pollinators.

TRY TO AVOID PESTICIDE USE:

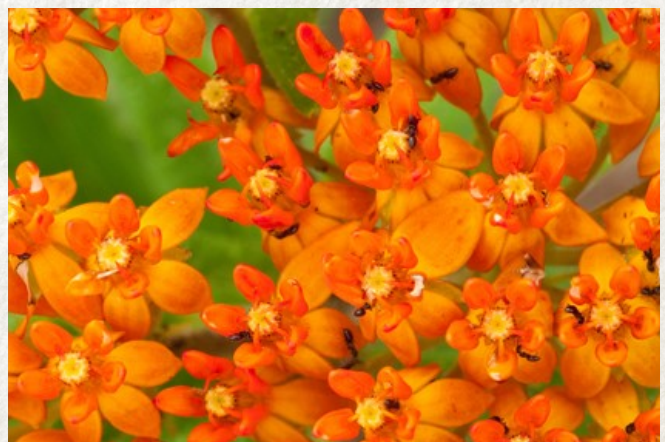
Pesticides are commonly used to kill invertebrate pests, diseases, and weeds. However, many pesticides - including insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides - harm pollinators and other beneficial insects. Their effects include removing important pollen sources, causing subtle yet concerning effects on reproduction, navigation and memory in pollinators. Exposure to pesticides can also compound the effects of other stressors on pollinator populations, such as loss of habitat and exposure to pathogens and diseases.



Pictured: *Achillea millefolium*
Photo Credit: Stephanie Brundage



Pictured: *Campsis radicans*
Photo Credit: Stefan Bloodworth



Pictured: *Asclepias tuberosa*
Photo Credit: Bruce Leander

Top Tips for Successful Vegetable Gardening

Diana Alfuth, Pierce Co. (UW-Extension Horticulture Educator)

Vegetable gardening has always been popular, and in recent years even more people have become interested in growing some of their own food. There is tremendous satisfaction in eating home-grown produce, started from seed and nurtured along until harvested and prepared for the table. Successful vegetable gardening can significantly supplement the family food budget. It also brings peace of mind in knowing how the food was grown, and getting children involved can teach them valuable lessons about science, nature, and good nutrition.

Vegetable gardening can be a source of enjoyment and exercise, and there are some things you can do to make the experience better by preventing problems and reducing maintenance. Below is a “Top 5” list of ways to increase your chances of successfully stocking your kitchen with home-grown vegetables.

Number 5:

Don't bite off more than you can chew! Be realistic about how large of a garden you have the time and ability to maintain. Nothing is more frustrating than planting a big garden, only to watch it grow up with weeds or have produce over-ripe because you don't have the time to harvest it all. A small garden can produce an amazing amount of food. If you have only a small space available and want to maximize the amount of produce per square foot, grow heavy producers such as lettuce, cabbage, carrots, bush cucumbers, bush squash, tomatoes and green beans. Other good choices are onions, beets, spinach, broccoli and cauliflower. Stay away from the heavy space users, such as sweet corn, vining squash, pumpkins and even potatoes.



A 4x8 raised bed can be a very manageable garden size

Number 4:

Think vertical. The more you get your vegetables off the ground, the less problems you'll have with disease or damage from slugs, field mice and other wildlife. Stake tomatoes early in the season and continue to tie new shoots up so they don't bend over and touch the ground. This helps reduce humidity around the lower foliage which results in less fungal diseases such as those that cause tomato blight. It also keeps the tomato fruits from touching the soil which often causes them to rot or be otherwise damaged. Set up vertical or angled trellises for anything that vines, such as pole beans, cucumbers, squash, or peas. Not only does this take up less space in the garden and protect the produce, but it makes harvesting much easier.



Use trellis, string, fencing, or other materials as a support to get your garden to grow upwards!

Number 3:

Make watering simple. Overhead watering not only wastes a lot of water through evaporation and watering of paths and other unused spaces in the garden, but by getting leaves and vegetables wet, it encourages diseases. Instead, set up soaker hoses, T-tape systems or drip irrigation to water the soil in the root zones of your plants. Laying a soaker hose alongside a row of beans or cucumbers early in the season means that when your garden needs water, all you have to do is attach a hose to the end of the soaker hose and turn on the faucet. No pulling hoses or moving sprinklers within your garden, and the water from the soaker hose goes right where it's needed—to the roots of your vegetable plants.



Drip tape or soaker hoses can make watering super easy.

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Number 2:

Cover your plants. It's disheartening to see your precious young vegetable plants being chewed on by insects who have come in for a meal or to raise their families! Floating row covers are a gardener's best friend. Made of a very lightweight, see-through fabric, floating row covers are placed loosely over your plants and anchored on all sides. Rain and sunlight can get through to the plants, but insects can't! Roll back the cover occasionally to weed or inspect plants. This is the best, organic way to keep your broccoli, cabbage or cauliflower from being infested with little green caterpillars, which are the larva of the white and yellow butterflies you commonly see flying around. It also can protect plants against flea beetles, potato beetles, squash bugs, tomato hornworms, and other common pests. Row covers can even protect crops like lettuce and carrot tops from feeding by rabbits. Just remember that if it's a plant that needs pollination, such as squash or pumpkins, you'll need to remove the cover once blooming starts so that the bees can have access and do their jobs.



It is perfectly okay to shout TA-DA! Every time you lift the floating row cover

Number 1:

Mulch, mulch, mulch. Once the garden is planted, most of the maintenance comes in the form of weeding. A nice deep layer of mulch can prevent weeds from sprouting in the first place. Use organic mulch such as grass clippings, pine needles, straw, or last year's chopped leaves between rows or around hills of vine crops. Layer it 3-4 inches deep to be sure to smother weed seeds in the soil and keep them from sprouting. Newspaper makes a great mulch as well. Place a layer of 7-8 sheets around plants, then cover with some grass clippings or other organic mulch to keep the paper from drying out and blowing away. By the end of the year, the decomposing paper can be worked into the soil to break down and add organic matter. Black plastic can also help control weeds, but must be removed at the end of the season. Anything you can do to prevent weeds from sprouting in the first place means you'll have that many less to pull in the heat of summer! Another benefit to the mulch is that it reduces soil drying resulting in less irrigating.



Proper mulching can conserve moisture, reduce weeds and diseases, and add valuable organic matter to the soil.

Setting up trellises, laying soaker hoses, mulching and covering plants with row covers takes a little extra effort early in the season, but it's time well spent, and it should result in a healthier, more productive garden.

Article sourced from:- <https://mastergardener.extension.wisc.edu/2015/05/26/experts-tip-successful-vegetable-gardening-tips/>

Planning For a Dry Year

Although we can't predict what weather 2021 will hold, so far the year has started off abnormally dry. Combined with a dry 2021, it may make sense to plan and plant for drier conditions. Below are some great tips from the University of Massachusetts Extension Greenhouse Crops and Floriculture Program on how to have a great garden in a dry year, lightly edited for length.

To read the full article, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3veGjrs>

Tips for successful gardening during a dry season

- * Choose the right plant for the right place. Different plants prefer sunny, part-shade, moist or dry conditions. Many annual and perennial plants on the market are considered low- water use plants (see list below). Group together plants with similar light and water requirements and place them in areas that match these requirements. High water-use plants can be placed in low-lying drainage areas, near downspouts, or if shade tolerant, in the shade of other plants and low water-use plants in dry and sunny areas.
- * Incorporate organic matter such as leaf mold, well-rotted manure or compost at a rate of about 25% of soil volume into the top 8-10 inches of the garden area. This improves moisture retention and soil structure.
- * Avoid growing in raised beds. Plants in raised beds tend to dry out more quickly.
- * If plants can't be planted right away, keep them in a shady area and out of the wind. Plant on cloudy days or in the early evening if possible to avoid stressing plants.
- * Water early in the morning for maximum benefit and most efficient water use.
- * Before transplanting, water plants in their existing containers. Immediately after planting, water flower and vegetable transplants from cell packs thoroughly with 1-1/2 quarts of water and larger annuals and perennials with 3 quarts. Annuals and perennials will need about 2 weeks of consistent moisture to develop a good root system and become established. Most plants will be able to tolerate dry spells once established with a healthy root system. Even drought-tolerant plants need regular water until they are established.
- * Apply water slowly to avoid runoff and water thoroughly. Water must penetrate deeply to establish healthy roots. Avoid frequent light sprinkling.
- * Once established, most garden plants need about 1" of rain or supplemental water every 5-7 days. Applying that inch of water in one deep watering (to a depth of 4"-6") will encourage deeper rooting, which leads to stronger, healthier plants. Shallow, frequent watering, on the other hand, will lead to shallow root systems and high water loss through evaporation. Shallow watering, such as light frequent sprinkling, can result in wasting water while not meeting the needs of your plants.
- * How much water is an inch of water? One square foot (12"x12") is 144 square inches. 1 sq ft x 1 inch deep = 144 cubic inches. One gallon = 231 cubic inches. Dividing 231 by 144 = 0.62 gallons (rounded). So a plant growing in about 1 square foot of soil needs a little more than half a gallon of water a week to equal 1 inch.
- * 2-3 inch layer of mulch applied when soil is moist will conserve soil moisture and reduce weeds.

Planning For a Dry Year

Special Tips for Container Gardening

- * Containers must be big enough to give roots room to grow. Consider the plant's mature size, when choosing container size. Avoid growing vigorous plants in small containers, which will become pot-bound and hold little moisture.
- * If using unglazed clay pots, line the pot with plastic to hold moisture. Unglazed clay dries fastest and requires more frequent watering.
- * Fill containers with pre-moistened potting media deep enough so new plants, root ball intact, can be set at the same depth they grew in the original containers. Fill in around each plant with additional media. Be sure all roots are covered and plants are anchored securely. The soil surface should be ½ inch below the rim of the pot to collect water.

Drought Tolerant Annuals

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Ageratum	<i>ageratum houstonianum</i>	Angelonia	<i>Angelonia angustifolia</i>
Blanket flower	<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Calendula	<i>Calendula officianalis</i>
California poppy	<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	Cockscomb	<i>Celosia cristata</i>
Coleus	<i>Coleus</i>	Cosmos	<i>C. bipinnatus</i> , <i>C. sulphureus</i>
Creeping zinnia	<i>Zinnia linearis</i>	Dusty miller	<i>Senecio cineraria</i>
Flowering tobacco	<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Gazania	<i>Gazania splendens</i>	Geranium	<i>Pelargonium x hortorum</i>
Globe amaranth	<i>Gomphrena globosa</i>	Strawflower	<i>Helichrysum bracteatum</i>
Madagascar periwinkle	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	Marigold	<i>T. erecta</i> , <i>T. patula</i>
Melampodium	<i>Melampodium pauciflorum</i>	Moss rose	<i>Portulaca grandiflora</i>
Ornamental kale	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>	Ornamental pepper	<i>Capsicum annuum</i>
Pansy	<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>	Petunia	<i>Petunia x hybrida</i>
Salvia	<i>S. splendens</i> , <i>S. facinorosa</i>	Spider flower	<i>Cleome hassleriana</i>
Statice	<i>Limonium</i>	Sweet alyssum	<i>Lobularia maritima</i>
Verbena	<i>Verbena</i> spp. and hybrids	Wax begonia	<i>Begonia semperflorens-cultorum</i>
Zinnia	<i>Z. elegans</i> , <i>Z. angustifolia</i>		



Photo Credit: Ball Horticultural Company



Photo Credit: Proven Winners

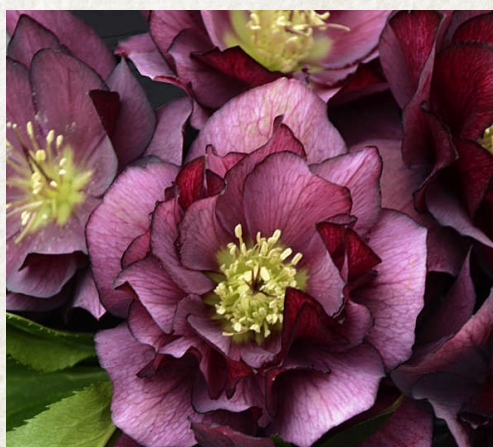
Planning For a Dry Year

Drought Tolerant Perennials

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Achillea	<i>Achillea millefolium</i> , <i>A. Coronation Gold</i> , <i>A. Moonshine</i>	Ajuga	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>
Artemisia	<i>Artemisia</i>	Aster	<i>Aster spp.</i>
Asclepias	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Baby's breath	<i>Gypsophila paniculata</i>
Baptisia	<i>Baptisia australis</i>	Beebalm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Butterfly weed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
Candytuft, Ever-green	<i>Iberis sempervirens</i>	Chrysanthemum, Mum	<i>Chrysanthemum x morifolium</i>
Columbine	<i>Aquilegia spp.</i>	Coneflower, Purple	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>
Coralbells	<i>Heuchera americana</i>	Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i> , <i>C. verticillata</i> , <i>C. tinctoria</i>
Echinops	<i>Echinops ritro</i>	Daylily	<i>Heemerocallis spp.</i>
Gaillardia	<i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i>	Gaura	<i>Gaura lindheimeri</i>
Gazania	<i>Gazania</i>	Gerbera daisy	<i>Gerbera jamesonii</i>
Goldenrod	<i>Solidago spp. and hybrids</i>	Hardy ice plant	<i>Delosperma cooperi</i>
Helleborus, Lenten rose	<i>Helleborus orientalis</i>	Hosta, Plantain lily	<i>Hosta spp.</i>
Iris	<i>Iris spp.</i>	Lamb's ears	<i>Stachys byzantina</i>
Lavandula	<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Liatris	<i>Liatris spicata</i>
Lily of the Nile	<i>Agapanthus</i>	Mexican sunflower	<i>Tithonia rotunifolia</i>
Nepeta	<i>Nepeta faassenni</i>	Papaver	<i>Papaver orientale</i>
Peony	<i>Paeonia lactiflora</i>	Perovskia	<i>Perovskia</i>
Phlox, thrift	<i>Phlox paniculata</i> , <i>P. divaricata</i> , <i>P. subulata</i>	Red hot poker	<i>Kniphofia uvaria</i>
Salvia	<i>Salvia farinacea</i> , <i>S. spp.</i>	Sedum	<i>Sedum spectabile</i>
Shasta Daisy	<i>Chrysanthemum x superbum</i>	Stokes' aster	<i>Stokesia laevis</i>
Verbascum	<i>Mullein</i>	Verbena	<i>Verbena spp.</i>
Veronica	<i>Veronica spicata</i>	Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>



Pictured: Artemisia



Pictured: Lenten Rose

Upcoming Events & Opportunities

Master Gardener Volunteer Training - Starts in August!

Have you been interested in becoming a Master Gardener but haven't been able to fit in the weekly training commitment? CCE Yates, along with CCE Ontario, CCE Wayne, CCE Seneca and CCE Livingston will be holding our first ever online training in 2021. The training starts in August and will provide you with the educational background to be able to become an effective member of the Master Gardener team. The bulk of the training will occur online with occasional weekend in-person hands-on activities.

Please contact Cheryl Flynn at cj348@cornell.edu or Caroline Boutard-Hunt at (315)536-5123 for more information on the Master Gardener program and the upcoming training.

Gardening Matters Day

When: May 8th, 10am-12pm, registration opens at 9:30am

Where: Abandon Brewery, Outside Pavilion, 2994 Merritt Hill Rd., Penn Yan NY

Cost: Sliding scale, pay as you can 0-\$20

Join the Master Gardeners for a fun and informational morning of talks on a variety of subjects from drip irrigation in ornamental gardens to how to make your own "grow bags". Participants will receive free seeds and will have early access to the Yates County Master Gardener Plant Sale. Attendance is limited and all applicable Covid-19 precautions will be taken.

Master Gardener of Yates County Plant Sale!

When: May 8th, 12:30 pm

Where: Abandon Brewery, Outside Pavilion, 2994 Merritt Hill Rd., Penn Yan NY

Come and purchase a variety of beautiful native plants that are adapted for a wide variety of garden conditions. All the varieties were chosen to be garden additions, native to our region and highly attractive to pollinators. For more information or to receive a plant list, please contact Caroline Boutard-Hunt at (315) 536-5123 or email at cb239@cornell.edu

The Yates County Master Gardeners Present:

Gardening Matters Day!

Saturday, May 8th, 2021
9:30 AM-12:00 PM
Abandon Brewery (Outside Pavilion)
2994 Merritt Hill Rd.
Penn Yan, NY 14527

Followed by:
The Master Gardener Plant Sale!



Topics Include:

- * Container Vegetable Gardening
- * Growing for Pollinators and Wildlife
- * How to Install Drip Irrigation in an ornamental garden
- * Discussion Panel with a chance to ask your gardening questions!

Event Information:

- * Event will be held in the outside pavilion with social distancing protocols in place (Face coverings are **REQUIRED**)
- * Fee: Pay what you can sliding scale (\$0-\$25 per person)
- * Pre-registration is required! (event is limited to **20 attendees**)
- * All attendees will receive a free "Garden in a Bag" collection of vegetable, herb, and flower seeds
- * Plant sale will take place following event.

For more information or to RSVP, please call the CCE-Yates County office at (315) 536-5123 or e-mail Caroline.Boutard-Hunt@cornell.edu

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"Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities"

The Earth and I: Compost Workshop with Barbara Cummings (Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardener)

When: May 22nd, 10:00 am

Where: Finger Lakes Museum Campus, 3369 Guyanoga Rd., Branchport NY 14418

Composting is a wonderful way to enhance your soil, save your food scraps from going in the landfill and make a difference for the environment. But where do you start? Barbara Cummings, Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardener, will present information on composting, its benefits, and how to have your own composting at home. Come for the presentation and walk away with things you need to get started on composting! There are two ticket options for this event:

- * Attend the lecture in person and walk away with materials to begin composting at home.
- * Attend the lecture virtually. No physical materials will be provided.

For more information or to register, please contact the Finger Lakes Museum (315) 595-2200 or e-mail Debbie Lyon at dlyon@fingerlakesmuseum.org.

About Us

The Master Gardener Program is a national program of trained volunteers who work in partnership with their county Cooperative Extension Office to share information throughout the community.

Master Gardeners are neighbors teaching neighbors about landscapes, vegetables, fruits, herbs, houseplants, beneficial and harmful insects, plant diseases, integrated pest management, wildlife management, soils, birds, composting, water conservation, and much much more.

Master Gardeners are considered researchers rather than experts. They participate in 40 hours of training provided by experienced staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension to gain a basic understanding of horticulture and available horticultural information and online resources. Course topics include plant nutrition, soils, vegetable, fruit culture, trees, shrubs, lawns, diseases and insects that affect plants, pruning and more.

You don't need to be an expert to join, if you enjoy gardening as a hobby, this may be perfect for you.

To become a Master Gardener, all you need to do is attend a 10-week training offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension.

For more information, please call us at 315-536-5123!



Cornell Cooperative Extension Yates County

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