If you watch MidSommer Murders for the scenery and think Monty Don is a horticultural god, you probably dream of visiting the great gardens of England, too. But air travel is costly and they drive on the wrong side of the road over there, so an easier alternative is in Washington, Connecticut, where you will find the beautiful gardens of Hollister House.
George Schoellkopf started the garden in 1979, after buying the home, which dates back to 1760. After visiting English gardens, including Sissinghurst Castle, George was determined to create some of their magic in Connecticut. To that end, he set about building walls, paths, and steps and growing hedges to give the site “garden rooms.” The sloping terrain also adds to the surprises you find as you move through the garden, discovering new views at every turn. While there is a great deal of symmetry, many of the plantings are loose and naturalistic. It is this play between formal and informal that creates the garden’s interest and drama. But while Hollister is certainly inspired by English gardens, the plants grown there are chosen to thrive in New England, which has hotter summers, colder winters, and less rainfall. It also isn’t a Colonial-era farmhouse garden, which would have been much more utilitarian. Hollister is a unique creation, a personal achievement, and one of the loveliest places you can visit. American gardeners can be grateful that George has generously opened his garden to us, and has made plans to preserve it into the future. Maybe we don’t have to get on an airplane after all.

For more information on visiting Hollister House, see:  https://hollisterhousegarden.org/

Text and photos by David Chinery
What to do in JULY!

* Deadhead flowers to keep and extend bloom.
* Water during dry periods; avoid wetting leaves to discourage leaf disease. Aim to water in early morning.
* Sharpen lawn mower blades; dull blades can damage grass and mow to a minimum of 3 inches to encourage development of a deep root system.
* Have a garden party!
* Order bulbs for fall planting.
* Change the water in your birdbath frequently.
* Take photos of your garden.
* There is still time to plant beans, cucumbers, summer squash, beets, radishes, lettuce, and peas.

* Many annuals and perennials (such as snapdragons, lupine, dianthus, and delphinium) may flower again after a severe cutting back.
* Weed and mulch your garden with organic materials such as a 4 to 5 layers of newspaper, herbicide free grass clippings, and chopped leaves to hold moisture.
* Harvest garlic when half of the lower leaves are yellow or dry and allow to dry for 2 to 3 weeks.
* Check out garden centers for bargain perennials.
* Pick Japanese beetles off your plants (Drop them in a bucket of soapy water.)
* Clean hummingbird feeders filled with nectar solution regularly to ward off mold and bacteria.

* Mound soil up around the base of your potato plants. Gather and eat a few "new" potatoes from each hill when plants begin to flower.
* Weed and fertilize rhubarb and asparagus beds. A mulch of compost or rotted cow manure works well as fertilizer. Water deeply to develop crowns for next year.
* Stake tall-growing flowering plants such as delphinium, hollyhocks, and lupine. Stake tomatoes as necessary.
It came out of the pond. A slimy, slippery, ravenous creature that avoided capture at all costs. It was…. a bullfrog. Not any old bullfrog. Certainly not Jeremiah from that 70’s song. It was the mother of all bullfrogs (with apologies to President Bush 1) that ate anything in sight and, despite its humongous size, was remarkably fast on the getaway.

Here’s the back story……..

Mary Ellen is a Rensselaer County Master Gardener with a beautiful fish pond tucked into her well-maintained garden in Brunswick. The fish in her pond are spoiled rotten. They are 6 years old now and spend every winter in their “Florida” home in Mary Ellen’s basement.

This spring when Mary Ellen returned them to the pond, she noticed a population of tadpoles already in residence there. No big deal. Maybe the fish would eat some.

In case you don’t know this, once tadpoles start to develop legs, they can be cannibals if they can’t find other meat sources. Soon, there were fewer and fewer tadpoles until only one remained….it was pretty big (and well fed) and soon Mother Nature did what Mother Nature does and the tadpole became a frog…. ribbtt.

The frog grew…ribbtt.
And grew…. RIBBTT.
And grew……RIBBTT.

Until it became a monster bullfrog…. JUGGARUM. Mary Ellen was okay with it and didn’t want to hurt it until her fish started disappearing…. juggarum. But the final straw came when she saw a pair of bird feet protruding from its gigantic maw of a mouth….juggarum. The bullfrog must go.
Mary Ellen searched the web but all she could find were recipes for cooking them. That wasn’t her problem.

So, Mary Ellen posed her dilemma to her fellow Master Gardeners at a recent business meeting. The suggestions didn’t help much:

- An air gun blast to the eye (from first-hand experience)
- A net….at night and with patience
- Drain the pond

Well, Root Concerns is an educational publication, not a true crimes publication. To get serious for a moment….

The American Bullfrog, *Lithobatos catesbaianus* (formerly *Rana catesbaianus*), is the most wide-ranging North American frog. It inhabits freshwater marshes, ponds and lakes from Nova Scotia throughout the continental U.S. into Mexico. It’s the largest of all frogs at about 3.5 to 6 inches, and can weigh up to 1.5 pounds. Bullfrogs typically sit quietly until prey passes nearby. Then it lunges with powerful back legs (up to 15 times its body length!) to capture its meal in its gaping mouth. The frog eats anything that fits: insects, fish, mice, birds and snakes typically. These amphibians live to be about 7 to 9 years of age, and to survive cold winter months they bury themselves deep in mud and wait for spring.

Now here’s the end story….

Mary Ellen discovered that a piece of deer netting anchored securely around the pond perimeter proved an effective barrier between the fish and the frog (perhaps the frog thinks it’s a deer…it’s sure big enough!). What an elegant solution! It also demonstrates that mantra of all Master Gardener Volunteers…. Integrated Pest Management. For those of you who are not Master Gardener volunteers, IPM is a philosophy of gardening in which the least harmful/toxic method of solving a pest problem is employed.

So, Mary Ellen demonstrates the best principals of IPM, the fish are surviving, and the frog…. well…. juggarum!
Spongy Moth is the new common name for *Lymantria dispar* (formerly known as Gypsy Moth). The name change was made by the Entomological Society of America because the word “gypsy” is an ethnic slur for the Romani people and the former common name equated people with insects. The name was attached to the insect because the moth color supposedly reminded entomologists of Romani skin color.

The current name is derived from the common name used in France and Quebec, “spongieuse”, and refers to the moth’s sponge-like egg masses.

Spongy Moth caterpillars arrived in our backyard in the summer of 2022. Our group of River Birch trees were most affected with minor damage to a couple crabapple trees. This was the first occurrence here but significant defoliation has occurred in years past a few miles east in Hancock, Massachusetts.

The river birch defoliation was minor mostly in the upper reaches of the 40-foot trees. Healthy trees and shrubs are likely to survive if defoliated. High caterpillar numbers are also a nuisance if you like to sit in the shade under the infested trees. In addition, caterpillar hairs cause skin rashes and other reactions in some people. Birds will consume young caterpillars but are not interested in older caterpillars with the prickly hairs.

**Text by Master Gardener Richard Demick**
Spongy moths were brought to the United States over 100 years ago for research as a possible source for silk production. They were not a good source, escaped the laboratories and have been plagued forests and landscapes ever since. The spongy moth is a classic example of invasive species introduction to a new environment. Their preferred plants are oak, willow, apple, crabapple, white birch, witch hazel, mountain ash, basswood, linden, pine and spruce.

In July and August, female moths lay dark brown masses of 100 to 600 eggs protected by a spongy light-colored covering. The egg masses are usually on tree trunks but can also be found on buildings, signs, trailers, and other outdoor surfaces. The following spring ¼ inch hatchling caterpillars move out to feed on leaves. They often produce silken threads that catch in the wind and send them on to other trees. At about seven weeks the larvae are fully grown at about 2 inches long.

In June and early July, the caterpillars pupate underneath bark. They emerge from pupation as brown colored male or white females. The females do not fly but attract males by pheromones. One method of indirect control of spongy moth that I tried late summer 2022 was the use of pheromone in spongy moth traps. The traps were very effective in catching male moths and interfering with reproduction.

The traps are plastic containers hung from branches about 4-6 feet above ground. They are filled with a cup of water and a few drops of dish soap. A lure containing the pheromone is suspended in the top half of the trap. Holes in the side allow male moth entry but no exit and they expire in the treated water. We caught them by the dozens hopefully helping to reduce the 2023 population.
Look Who’s Coming To Dinner!

This black swallowtail caterpillar is a welcome visitor to the Herb Garden at the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, located at The Robert C. Parker School, 4259 Route 43 in North Greenbush. It was found among the garden rue stalks and will stay at the caterpillar stage for 3 to 4 weeks. The caterpillar then will create a chrysalis (pupa) and metamorphosize into an adult butterfly after 9-18 days, depending on the weather. The warmer the weather, the shorter the metamorphic period. Other common host plants for this caterpillar include curly parsley, carrot tops, golden Alexander, bronze smokey fennel, dill, celery, asparagus, and Queen Anne’s Lace.

As our black swallowtail caterpillar grows, it will become more colorful. While the black swallowtail caterpillar looks similar to the monarch caterpillar, there are differences. Black swallowtails have their stripe pattern includes dots of yellow, or sometimes orange. Monarchs never have dots, only stripes.

Monarch caterpillars have thin stripes of black, yellow and white. Monarch caterpillars’ body type is consistent in its breadth, while swallowtail caterpillars are thicker in general, and mass into a “hooded” shape at the head. Plus, monarchs only eat milk weed so they would never grace the rue with its presence!

Once our caterpillar becomes a butterfly, it will be happiest on butterfly bush, phlox, zinnias, purple coneflowers, and milkweeds. The black swallowtail caterpillar is native to eastern North America so maybe you will find a caterpillar or butterfly in your garden too. But if not, you are a welcome visitor to the demonstration garden at the Parker School too!
Who Was Wyman?

Dig a wild plant from the woods and you’ll get what Mother Nature created, but things are different when buying from a garden center. Two autumns ago I replaced a privet hedge with a potpourri of flowering shrubs, one of them a lilac named ‘Donald Wyman.’ The tag was large and flashy, but contained nothing useful about who this Donald is or where he came from. Perhaps most gardeners don’t care, but I like to know a little about who I’m inviting into my garden. And just like real-world planting, the more you dig, the more you discover.

First I learned that DW is a hybrid, a cross between the nodding lilac and the late lilac. This marriage was first attempted by Isabella Preston, an English-born Canadian plant breeder working at Ottawa’s Central Experimental Farm from 1920 to 1946. Isabella and her sister struck out for North America at an early age, after the death of their parents. She first supported herself by picking fruit, but soon became interested in horticulture, and obtained a mix of academic and self-learning. Her study of plant breeding was a pioneering act for a woman, and she became an ace at producing beautiful new hybrid lilies, crabapples, roses, irises and columbines, as well as lilacs. Her cross of the nodding and late lilacs produced cold-hardy offspring with drooping flowers which appear later than the standard common lilacs. Their form is upright arching and no suckers are produced. They are known as the Preston Hybrids and the scientific name *Syringa x prestoniae* should have been printed on my plant’s tag. But although Isabella made the first cross and introduced scads of lilacs from this coupling, she’s only DW’s grandmother in spirit.

The human parent here is another lilac-lover, Frank Skinner. Born in Scotland in 1882 and brought to tiny Dropmore, Manitoba as a young lad, this farm boy was frustrated that many ornamental plants lacked the chutzpah to survive the tough Canadian winters. Without formal training, he began searching for and breeding cold-hardy ornamentals, eventually introducing a whopping 144 improved varieties to commerce. He read extensively, corresponded internationally without the benefit of the internet, and established the Manitoba Hardy Plant Nursery. Amongst his creations are apples, pears, elms, lilies and of course lilacs. I can’t learn for certain how many lilacs Skinner parented, but I did find that he named and released ‘Donald Wyman’ in 1944.

So who was Wyman? A Philadelphian by birth, Donald earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Pennsylvania State College, then a Ph.D. from Cornell. He landed the job of horticulturist at Boston’s Arnold Arboretum in 1935, but due to the Great Depression wasn’t paid for six months. During a lengthy career, the good doctor re-organized the arboretum, authored hundreds of articles and seven books, and studied and evaluated thousands of ornamental plants. His personable style and ability to popularize technical subjects brought knowledge to the gardening masses. Skinner must have greatly admired Wyman to name a lilac for him, which in horticulture is the highest gesture.
"Stone Garden Troughs” **Tuesday, June 27 from 7 to 8 PM.** Stone sinks and troughs make great containers for alpine plants, succulents and other small treasures. This program will demonstrate how you can create easy-to-make "hypertufa" or faux stone troughs at home using commonly found materials. Presenter David Chinery is the horticulture educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County.

"Weed Management Basics” **Wednesday, July 12 from 7 to 8 PM.** Weeds are one of the gardener’s biggest challenges and there are several strategies to keep them at bay. We’ll look at various options, including both organic and non-organic herbicides, for weeds in garden beds as well as in lawns. Presented by David Chinery, CCE of Rensselaer County Educator.

"Enjoying Your Summer Vegetables” **Tuesday, July 25 from 7 to 8 PM.** Back by popular demand! Are you looking for new and easy recipes for using all your tasty vegetables? Master Gardener Nancy Scott will discuss and prepare two delicious vegetable based dishes. Both are easily adapted to whatever you have growing in the garden or what you can buy at the Farmers Market.

"Late Summer Is For Lawns” **Wednesday, August 2 from 7 to 8 PM.** Mid-August to mid-September is the best time to tackle lawn weed management, overseeding, fertilizing, and renovation. Bring samples of problems, such as weeds and insects, and we’ll discuss options to improve your lawn for the future. Hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension Educator David Chinery.

"Using Herbs Throughout The Seasons” **Wednesday, August 9 from 7 to 8 PM.** Join the Demonstration Garden Herb Garden Team for a discussion of the wonderful world of herbs. Learn about cultivation, preservation, and uses of these valuable plants. Tour the herb garden where you can see them as living specimens (not ground up in a jar). Enjoy sampling products made from herbs... products you can make yourself.

"Considering A Meadow Garden?” **Wednesday, August 16 from 6:30 to 7:00 PM (note earlier start time).** Rensselaer County Master Gardeners Marie Hankle-Wieboldt and Bob Wieboldt are leaders in starting a new meadow garden at the Demonstration Garden. They’ll talk about creating a meadow as a lawn alternative, site preparation, plant selection and maintenance, with a tour of new meadow.

"Discovering The Myriad Uses For Common Herbs & Vegetables” **Wednesday, August 23 from 6:30 to 7:30 PM (note earlier start time).** Did you know that your garden is more powerful than your medicine cabinet? You will be amazed how your garden can keep you out of the doctor’s office with simple remedies! Learn how to thwart everyday maladies and discomfort with common plants and vegetables. Get introduced to uncommon plants and their applications. You will never look at a cucumber the same again! Taught by CCE of Rensselaer County Master Gardeners.

*Limited seating provided; bring your own lawn chair.*

For more information, call Cornell Cooperative Extension’s Horticulture Program at (518) 272-4210 or e-mail dhc3@cornell.edu Directions: From Interstate(1-90) Exit 8; east onto Rte 43; pass through Rte 4 intersection toward West Sand Lake; (approximately 2.1 miles); Left at Robert C. Parker School.

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“Our vegetable garden is coming along well, with radishes and beans up, and we are less worried about revolution than we used to be.”

*E. B. White (1899-1985)*

**Gardening Questions?**

**Call The Master Gardeners!**

In Albany County: Call (518) 765-3514 weekdays from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM and ask to speak to a Master Gardener. You can also email your questions by visiting their website at [www.ccealbany.com](http://www.ccealbany.com)

In Schenectady County: Call (518) 372-1622 weekdays from 9:00 AM to Noon, follow the prompt to speak to a Master Gardener and press #1. You can also email your questions by visiting their website at [http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/schenectady/](http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/schenectady/)

In Rensselaer County: Call (518) 272-4210 weekdays from 9:00 AM to Noon and ask to speak to a Master Gardener. You can also email your questions to Dhc3@cornell.edu

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