Balanced Fertilizer N - P - K

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Come Grow With Us 2010

The Master Gardeners will be conducting *Come Grow With Us* on April 24, 2010. This program will be very similar in format to the last one. Thanks to all of the hard work from the previous Come Grow With Us committee, we have a great model to follow.

Our first priority is to find speakers. If you have suggestions for topics or speakers, contact Diamond Geiger or Celia Knapp. We would like to have speakers lined up by the end of October so we can begin advertising and designing the program's schedule of events.

Next Meeting . . .

September 10, 2009
6:30 p.m. at the
Extension Office.

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. If you would like to post information about an upcoming event or if you have written an article, please contact Dan Sorensen or Christine Jarzab.

New Face in Town

Warren County Master Gardeners have a FaceBook account! This is a great, centralized place to post information that may be of interest to other Master Gardeners. You can also share articles or photos.

To access, go to www.facebook.com and search for "Penn State Master Gardeners – Warren County".

Local Resources on the Web

Check out www.warrenag.org, a website maintained by our sister organization, the Conservation District. This site is dedicated to agricultural and horticultural information pertinent to the Warren County area.

This site includes information about the Farmers' Market, the locations of U-Pick farms, resources for farmers, and much more. You can also find a page about the Warren County Master Gardener program.

Gardeners often learn by "trowel and error".

We'll try to make learning painless with this newsletter.

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Sustainable Pollination by: Christine Jarzab

Interest in pollinators and their crucial role in our nation's food supply has been gaining ground, due in large part to the attention given to colony collapse disorder. While honey bees play an important agricultural role in this nation, we cannot dismiss the contribution of our native bees, moths, butterflies, bats, and other insects.

Penn State University and the Department of Agriculture are exploring methods to safeguard the health of our native pollinators. This movement is often referred to as "sustainable pollination". One project underway is the **Pennsylvania Native Bee Study**. Earlier this spring, Penn State University trained Master Gardeners to monitor community pollinator gardens. These citizen scientists are patiently counting our *Bombus impatiens* (Common Eastern Bumblebee) and laboriously numbering our *Habropoda laboriosa* (Southeastern Blueberry Bee) in an effort to determine the types and sizes or our native pollinator populations and the foods they eat.

To learn more information, visit http://www.rps.psu.edu/pennsylvania/nativebees/. Penn State has posted an interesting article and short slide show regarding the sustainable pollination movement. The slide show is worth watching just to see some stunning photographs of native pollinators.

If you are interested in pollinator identification, you might want to check out the *Native Bee Benefits* pamphlet published in May 2009 by Bryn Mawr College and Rutgers University. You can view this publication at http://entomology.ucdavis.edu/news/nativebeepamphlet.pdf. This is an excellent pictorial guide for identifying Pennsylvania pollinators.

Horticulture Word of the Month by: Dan Sorensen

Xenogamy- (zeen-AW-gamy) Most English words beginning with "X" are derived from Greek, and this one is no exception. The word literally means "strange or foreign marriage" and in botany can be replaced with the word "cross-pollination".

Many plants, especially herbaceous ones, have no restrictions on how they are pollinated and what pollen they can accept. They can as easily fertilize themselves as they can accept pollen from other unrelated plants. But other plants can only accept pollen from genetically different plants in order to produce fruit and seeds. These plants are said to be **xenogamous**. This condition is common among fruits and nuts, such as apples and walnuts and is the reason nursery catalogs often state in plant descriptions that another variety is required to produce fruit. In such cases it is not sufficient to plant another individual of the same variety as the two are genetically the same and will not successfully pollinate each other. This does not affect the plant's ability to flower, so unless the fruit is desired, a xenogamous plant will survive and grow quite happily in isolation from others of its kind. It just will not reproduce.

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Getting to know . . . Asclepias syriaca

By: Christine Jarzab

Family: Apocynaceae (Dogbane), Subfamily: Asclepiadaceae (Milkweed)

Asclepias syriaca is a perennial, growing two to five feet tall, that can be identified by its opposite, broadly ovate leaves, hairy stems, and pinkish-purplish florets that resemble loose broccoli. Its most notable attribute is its distinctive pods that yield a feathery, white plumage in the autumn.

A. syriaca, also known as the Common Milkweed, plays an uncommon role in the Monarch butterfly lifecycle and also has a history of medicinal and patriotic value. The plant's glycosides are absorbed by the monarch butterfly, making it harmful to many predators. In addition to the Monarch butterfly, *A. syriaca* also attracts other Lepidoptera, such as swallowtails, painted ladies, fritillaries, and red admirals, so it is an excellent choice for a butterfly garden.

The gylcosides that aid the Monarch butterfly are both harmful and helpful to humans. *A. syriaca* has a long history as a folk remedy. Native American populations used the plant to treat ringworm, bee stings, constipation, chest discomfort, and much more. Modern medicine no longer recommends milkweed, as it is toxic to humans when ingested in sufficient quantity. Symptoms of milkweed poisoning include bloating, the inability to stand or walk, fever, rapid and weak pulse, difficulty breathing, dilated pupils, spasms, and even coma. *See,* USDA Plant Guide at http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/cs_assy.pdf.

In addition to its historical medicinal value, the Common Milkweed was an important wartime commodity. According to an article by Gerald Klingaman of the University of Arkansas, milkweed floss was used during World War II as stuffing for life preservers. The hollow, wax-coated flexible fiber is six times lighter than wool. A pound and a half of milkweed floss could keep a 150-pound sailor afloat for 10 hours. Although its production decline markedly after the War, milkweed floss continues to be used to stuff pillows, as an alternative to goose down. Mr. Klingaman's entire article can be found at http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/plantoftheweek/articles/Milkweed.htm.

Asclepias and its subfamily, Asclepiadaceae, honor the ancient Greek physician Asclepiades. Asclepiades is often referred to as the Greek god of medicine, although he is alleged to have had a human life between 124 B.C. until 40 B.C. He is noted for practicing the Corpuscular theory of medicine, in which disease results from an irregular or inharmonious motion of the body's corpuscles. Asclepiades recommended bathing, dieting, exercise, and massage as treatment for many of the body's ailments.

One final tidbit about *Asclepias*. You may have noted that *Asclepiadaceae* is a subfamily of *Apocynaceae.* Some research revealed that *Asclepiadaceae* was split from the *Apocynaceae* family in 1810, but following DNA studies and other observations, the AGP II (Angiosperm Phylogeny Group) has merged it back into the *Apocynaceae* family.

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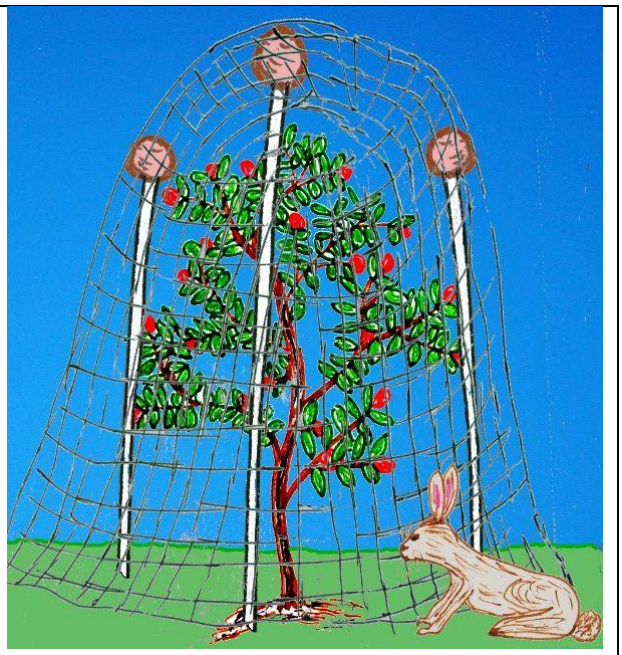
Easily Net Your Plants

By: Dan Sorensen



Gardeners frequently need to cover plants with netting to protect plants from marauding birds, ravenous rabbits, destructive deer, and other perils. This can be effective, but sometimes the mechanics of covering the plant, especially if it is large, can be difficult. Branches, leaves and fruit will snag and break the plant or tear the netting. The process will be much easier if you cut at least three pieces of one-half inch PVC tubing to about 18 inches longer than the plant is high. Cut one end at an angle to allow it to penetrate the ground more easily. Hammer or push the tubing solidly into the ground at equidistant points around the plant. Take as many tennis balls as you have pieces of tubing; cut a one and a half inch slot in each ball. Squeeze the balls to open the slot and slip one over the top end of each piece of tubing. Now you can slide the netting over the tennis balls and cover or uncover the plant easily without damaging the plant or the netting.