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A publication of the Warren County Master Gardener Program

Come Grow With Us 2010



Rick Mikula (the “Butterfly Guy”) has accepted our invitation to be keynote speaker for Come Grow With Us. Rick has been delighting audiences for more

than twenty years with his enthusiasm for *Lepidoptera*. In addition to live presentations, Rick has written several books and articles about butterflies and has won the Quill and Trowel award for excellence in communication.

You can check out his websites at:
<http://holeinhand.com/rmprofil.htm> and
<http://butterflyrick.com/>.

Next Meeting . . .



October 8, 2009
6:30 p.m. at the Extension Office.

Farmers’ Market



The last farmers’ market is October 24, 2009. This is a great place to buy fresh, local produce and homemade jellies, salsas, and biscotti. Stop by before the season ends.

Take Credit For Your Work!

Remember to log your volunteer and education hours. This information is important for continued support of the Master Gardener Program. You can submit your hours on paper, or you can use the online system at <http://go.cas.psu.edu/mg/>. Each year, you need 20 hours of volunteer time and 10 hours of education in order to remain a Master Gardener in good standing.

Helping Hands Needed

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.

The autumn clean-up of the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden will be Saturday, October 24. Volunteers will meet at the Garden (Betts Park) at 9:00 a.m. Bring gloves, shovels, bags for weeds, and any other handy implements.



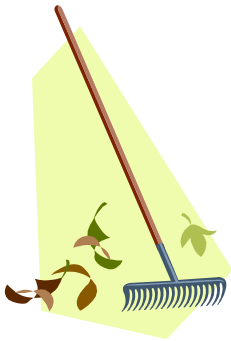
Local Education Events

Composting. Jeff Carlstrom is presenting a composting seminar on October 17, 2009 (Saturday). It will be held at the Jefferson Defrees Center from 9:15 - 10:30 a.m. The cost is \$5 and you receive a composting bin.

Mini.edu Following the seminar, Diamond Geiger and Josie Gerardi will offer 2 mini classes: “Putting Your Garden to Bed” and “Spring Garden Planning”. These mini classes begin at 10:30 a.m.

Call the Cooperative Extension to register.

Putting the Garden to Bed by Christine Jarzab



We are nearing the end of a disappointing growing season. Many of us were frustrated by the cool, wet conditions. A late frost stung our fruits and nuts. We watched in horror as our tomatoes succumbed to late blight. Our plants etiolated under the cloudy conditions. The weeds proliferated because it was too wet to go out and pull them. We may be tempted to throw our hands up in despair . . .but don't be too hasty. By properly putting our gardens to rest this year, we will have the opportunity to for a better, healthier garden next year.

Here are some tips for putting your garden to rest.

1. **Remove the dead and decaying plant material**, such as stems and leaves, and dispose of them in your compost pile. This will prevent the fungi on these decaying materials from wintering over and reappearing next year.
2. **Remove the dead leaves from your garden.** Not only are they unsightly, but after a few snowfalls, these dead leaves can create a dense mat through which water and air cannot circulate.
3. **Take soil samples** and send them to Penn State's Soil Fertility Testing Program. Although your plants may have been small and sorry-looking this year, they still used nutrients and you may need to replace those nutrients before next year's planting. Consider green manure or other soil amendments.
4. **Raise the blades on your lawn mower.** Allowing your grass to be a little taller will provide some extra protection for your grass during the winter. Consider aerating your lawn or adding organic materials.
5. **Destroy your blighted plants.** Do not compost your tomatoes and potatoes if they were infected with late blight. You have several options: Bury them at least 2 feet underground. Bag them and send to the landfill. Burn them.
6. **Plant bulbs** so you can enjoy their beauty in the springtime.
7. **Dig up your plants that can't survive the winter**, such as dahlias and gladiolus.



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Horticulture Word of the Month by: Dan Sorensen

Urushiol- (oo-ROO-shee-ol) Sounding like an evil character or place from The Lord of The Rings, urushiol can be evil to many gardeners and those who have been intimately introduced to it will avoid it at all costs. It is the oil found in the sap of poison ivy and related plants that causes an allergic reaction in human skin cells resulting in redness, watery blisters, swelling, and unbearable itching. Everyone is born with a resistance to the reaction, but with repeated exposures, most people eventually will suffer from the reaction. Other plants contain urushiol besides the commonly known poison ivy, poison sumac, and poison oak. These include mango, pistachio, cashew, smoke bush (*Cotinus*), ginkgo, and lacquer trees. There is no cure for the allergic reaction; only treatment for the symptoms and a patient, itchy wait for the body to cure itself. The oil can be transferred to foreign objects such as shoes, pets, gloves, and tools and can infect or reinfect the hapless victim from there. Beware of home remedies that claim to reinstate immunity. One person I know very well once read that eating one poison ivy leaf a day for two weeks in the Spring beginning when the tiny leaves first emerge from the bud will impart immunity. I can assure you that this does not work! The only successful approach I have discovered is strict avoidance. Learn to recognize poison ivy and its relatives in all their diverse forms. Also learn about the other offensive urushiol bearing plants and what their dangers are. Eradicate any plants growing on your property, but do not burn them. Inhaling smoke containing urushiol can produce a severe reaction in the lungs which may require emergency medical care or hospitalization. Replant with something less objectionable, such as kudzu, or purple loosestrife, or crabgrass.

For more information about living with urushiol see <http://www.cdsoutdoor.com/docs/P-IVY.pdf>

Rain Barrel Mosquito Control by Dan Sorensen

Do you have a rain barrel? Are you thinking of getting a rain barrel, but are worried that it will be a mosquito breeder? With the concerns about mosquito-transmitted diseases like West Nile Virus or malaria, gardeners with rain barrels need to make an effort to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in them.

You can buy products containing a strain of *Bacillus thuringiensis* that will kill the mosquito larvae. But a simpler, much less expensive, and equally effective solution to the problem is simply to pour a small amount of vegetable oil into the rain barrel. Just a few drops to a teaspoonful are enough to cover the water's surface and disrupt the ability of the mosquito larvae to breathe, thereby killing them. The oil will not harm any plants you water from the barrel. If the barrel overflows, reapply the oil, or simply add more oil every couple of weeks during the mosquito breeding season.





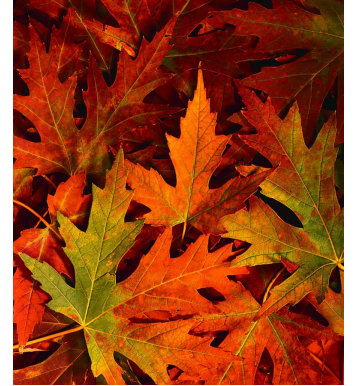
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Fabulous Fall Foliage a Possibility

Despite the disappointing summer growing season, this could be a fabulous year for fall foliage, says Marc Abrams of Penn State University. According to Professor Abrams, our recent warm, sunny days and crisp, cool nights are ideal circumstances for spectacular color changes.



The Chemistry of Color. The cooler temperatures signal deciduous trees to stop producing chlorophyll. As chlorophyll production ceases, the existing chlorophyll breaks down into simpler compounds that are stored for winter food. The degradation of chlorophyll allows other pigments – xanthophylls, carotenes, tannins, and anthocyanins - to become visible. The innumerable combinations of moisture and temperature assure that each autumn display is unique in intensity and color.

Tannins, found in oaks, produce a brown color that are not necessarily spectacular when viewed alone, but produce a beautiful background canvas for the oranges, yellows, and reds. The scarlets, pinks, and purples arise from anthocyanins. Anthocyanin is an interesting compound. It occurs in solution in the cell sap and is formed from excess soluble sugars that accumulate during the cool autumn temperatures. If the cell sap is acid, the anthocyanin in solution will be red, whereas alkaline cell sap produces a purplish hue.

Trees of Especial Interest. Trees with exceptional displays of yellow include aspen, beech, honeylocust, poplar, birch, and ginkgo. Radiant reds are best displayed in sumac, scarlet oak, sassafras, black gum, and certain maples.

Resources:

This could be an awesome year for fall foliage, expert says, 09/24/2009, available on PSU's website at <http://live.psu.edu/story/41784/rss69>.

Autumn Changes in Deciduous Trees, by Jeffrey O. Dawson, available at: http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/forestry/publications/pdf/urban_community_forestry/UIUC_Fall_Color.pdf

10-10-10 is now available on the Internet.-Go to <http://www.phantomlake.net/10-10-10/> to access back issues of this newsletter. They are available as Adobe Acrobat PDF files, like the file delivered to those who receive the newsletter by email.

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A Neglected Native Vegetable You Can Grow

The discovery of America over 500 years ago introduced many exotic new foods to the Europeans including such staples as tomatoes, potatoes, corn, peanuts, and chocolate. But there are many more excellent edible plants that have been largely ignored in commerce which were once recognized for their value by America's original inhabitants and the European settlers. The potato bean (*Apios americana*) is one such plant. It is native and common to all of North America east of the Rocky Mountains from the icy shores of Hudson Bay to the tropical Florida Everglades. Archaeological records and eyewitness accounts indicate that virtually every native American tribe used the potato bean as a food crop, eating both the root and the seeds. The pilgrims consumed large quantities of potato beans to avoid starvation during their first vicious New England winters.

The plant is a four to eight foot long vine with opposite pinnate leaves and spearhead-shaped leaflets. Clusters of dark maroon to pink pea-like blossoms arise from many leaf axils, but they often produce less than an abundance of pods containing small angular edible seeds. The root is long and wiry with round potato-like swellings along its length ranging from golf ball to pea size. The tubers are delicious and nutritious, with a dry, nutty, earthy flavor, every bit an equal to the potato. Groundnut tubers are high in starch and protein; in fact, on a dry weight basis, groundnut tubers have three times the protein of potatoes. Tubers take from one to three years to achieve maximum size, but they can be harvested any time of the year.

An adventurous gardener can easily grow potato beans in the garden providing only minimal support for the vines with small sticks or bamboo stakes. They have few if any pests, though rabbits seem to relish their taste when grown in the garden.

Potato beans are common in Warren County. I have found them growing exuberantly in the Conewango and Allegheny river valleys in low shrubby areas in the flood plains in both the Akeley and Tidioute areas, so it is reasonable to assume they can be found in many places along both rivers.

An easy and delicious way to prepare the tubers to eat is to simply boil them until they are soft and serve hot with butter. They can also be cut in slices and fried .—Dan Sorensen

***Apios americana* is also known by these common names:**

Rosary Root. Indian Potato. Ground Nut. Earth Nut. Groundnut. Wild Potato. Wild Sweet Potato. American Potato Bean. Ground Bean. Hohniss. Dakota Peas. Sea Vines. Pea Vines. Pomme de Terre. Patates en Chapelet.

