

Garden Club of Madison Horticulture Bulletin September, 2020

Welcome to the First Edition of The Horticulture Committee's Quarterly Bulletin! We hope you'll find it helpful. We also hope to eventually store these bulletins on the GCM website. In the meantime, they'll be distributed by email in September, December, March and June.

Autumn Perennial Garden Planting & Maintenance

September:

- As weather cools, garden bed preparation and planting can begin again.
- Divide and transplant spring- and summer-flowering perennials, including peonies, poppies and bearded iris, so that plants can establish before winter. Be sure to keep new plants moist.
- Generally, no more fertilizer should be applied this season.
- Continue weeding and apply touch-up mulch if needed.

October:

- All divisions, planting and transplanting should be finished by October.
- Continue to keep new plants watered if the weather is dry. (Established gardens may need water too, so they can go into winter with sufficient moisture.)
- Some perennials may turn to mush at this time and can be pruned if desired. Otherwise, wait for several killing frosts, and prune in November.
- Beds can be prepared for spring planting throughout the month.
 - "If possible, begin preparing the soil in the fall before planting in the spring. Have the soil tested. The results will indicate what amendments need to be added during fall reparation and how much fertilizer needs to be added in the spring. Lime takes up to six months to adjust the soil pH, so it is applied early if possible...Adding organic matter may be necessary or helpful to improve the soil." —Text from the UConn Master Gardener program.

November:

- Topdressing with organic matter, if not done in the spring, can be done after autumn cleanup.
- Turn off all water and irrigation systems and drain all hoses.
- Clean and oil tools after all cleanup is complete.
- Clean all pots/ trays to be used for spring seedlings.
- Rake leaves to garden beds to mulch plants, or to an area to compost. As leaves rot, they enrich the soil, and provide habitat for beneficial insects (such as worms, fireflies, and caterpillar-stage moths). Caterpillars are a crucial food source for birds. Fireflies lay their eggs on leaves (leaves are essential for their survival, especially since firefly numbers are declining). Shred some leaves with your lawnmower to nourish your lawn.

- Make a brush pile for birds – a shelter from bad weather and predators (chickadees love this). Collect and layer fallen branches and pruned pieces from shrubs to create a brush pile in a corner of your yard—but not near your garden, as it may attract rodents, too. Don't pack too tightly; leave open pockets between layers.

November Pruning: (or not pruning 😊)

- Cut back perennials that are not needed over the winter, or that harbor insects and disease.
- Don't cut down seed heads, especially coneflowers, black-eyed Susans and native wildflowers – they provide food for birds during winter.
- Do not prune evergreens, mums, tender perennials, or anything with attractive winter interest.
- Leave some stems of plants up all winter so cavity-nesting bees (beneficial native pollinators) have a place to live.
- Leave a few areas of your garden bare to attract beneficial ground-nesting pollinators.

Sources: “The Well-Tended Perennial Garden; The Essential Guide to Planting + Pruning Techniques” by Tracy DiSabato-Aust. (We highly recommend this book!) Plus, Audubon Society, and committee members.

Lawn Planting & Maintenance Schedule

- The preferred time of year for seeding lawns in Connecticut is August 15-October 1, as the air temperature is cooler and the soil temperature is still warm. These two conditions favor root growth and development of cool-season turfgrass, which are the best for our Connecticut climate.
- The main cool season turfgrasses suitable for Connecticut lawns are Kentucky bluegrass, fine-leaved and tall fescues, and perennial ryegrass.

Source: UConn Master Gardener Program

Bulbs

Fall is the perfect time to plant bulbs. If you want a naturalized look, gently toss bulbs and then plant them where they fall to create a scattered or drift effect. Remember, most bulb and bulb-type plants need good drainage conditions (wet roots will easily rot). Support the club's “Daffodils Over Madison” initiative!



Horticulture 2019-2020 Challenge

For all of you who accepted the challenge to grow:

- Stupice and/or Yellow Pear tomatoes
- Purple Basil, Celery Seasoning or Thyme herbs
- Marigold companion plants

We would like to hear what your experience was—all the good, bad and the ugly. And, we would love to see any pictures! **PLEASE SEND FEEDBACK & PICTURES TO SUE KELLEY (ONLY) AT kelleys4@gmail.com.** The Horticulture Committee will gather your feedback and share our collective experience in a subsequent Horticulture Bulletin.



Purple Basil



Yellow Pear Tomatoes



Marigold

Horticulture 2020-2021 Challenge

Our Challenge to club members this year is growing garlic and/or gourds. Garlic is planted in November/December, while gourds are not planted until the spring. However, while garlic is typically harvested in July, it needs to dry for a couple of months before it is ready for use. This would be right around the time gourds are ready for harvest. So that said, we thought the September 2021 meeting's Horticulture show would include Classes for the Challenge results. We will work with Carolyn Bernard to see if we can use the gourds in a design workshop/arrangement. ** Detailed planting and harvesting instructions will be sent out separately.



Hot Topic: Jumping Worms

Connecticut gardeners are facing a growing threat from invasive earthworms – the ‘Jumping Worm’ (*Amyntas* spp. *Metaphire* spp.). These worms (1.5” – 8” long) damage the soil by consuming huge amounts of organic material (stripping it of its nutrients) and creating large microaggregates, which look like spent coffee grounds or hamburger on the soil’s surface.

Scientists have published several useful ‘Fact Sheets’ and articles with pictures. They include:

- Julia Rosen’s January 23, 2020 article in [The Atlantic](#) ‘Jumping Worms Are Taking Over North American Forests’
- Annise Dobson’s May 1, 2020 article in the [Connecticut Gardener](#)
- Jumping Worm Update, Cornell Cooperative Extension (www.ulser.cce.cornell.edu)
- The University of Wisconsin Arboretum (www.arboretum.wisc.edu/jumpingworm)
- University of Vermont (blog.uvm.edu/jgorres/amaynthas)

If you see Jumping Worms, report the sighting to your local Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station, 123 Huntington Street, New Haven, CT. Phone: 203-974-8500

There is no biological control at this time, so be careful about your purchases. Imported compost needs to be heated over 104 F degrees for three days. Buying bare-root plants will reduce the risk of bringing Jumping Worms, and you should check the plants you buy or transport. Knock off soil in a bucket to detect any worms, and discard the soil. Be wary when sharing or moving plants and equipment. Even if you don’t see worms, their eggs or cocoons may be present and are tough to spot. If you know or suspect you have these worms, do not share your plants.

Native Pollinator Plants

Pollinator plants are native plants that developed naturally in our own region. They produce nectar that attracts bees, honey bees, butterflies, moths and hummingbirds, which transfer pollen from flower to flower, fertilizing the plants to form fruit and seeds. Many native plants also provide birds with shelter, nesting sites and food, plus serve as larval hosts for butterflies. (Native plants are also beneficial because foreign plants might import diseases and bring insects that might damage local plants.)

Which native pollinator plants are most beneficial?

Top 10 Best Woody Plants in Ecosystem Gardening: (from an article in *Ecosystem Gardener*, August 14, 2020, based on a study by Doug Tallamy and Kimberley Shropshire.)

1. *Quercus* – Oaks (60 native varieties) support 543 species of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths).
2. *Prunus* – 456 species of butterflies and moths use Beach Plum, Cherry, Chokecherry, Peach, Plum, Sweet Cherry, Wild Plum, and Almond trees
3. *Salix* – 455 butterfly and moth species use Willows
4. *Betula* – 411 species of butterfly and moths use Birches
5. *Populus* – 367 species of butterflies and moths use Aspen, Cottonwood and Poplars
6. *Malus* – 308 butterfly and moth species use Crabapple and Apple trees
7. *Acer* – 297 species butterflies and moths use Maple and Boxelder
8. *Vaccinium* – 294 butterfly and moth species use Cranberry and Blueberry plants
9. *Alnus* – 255 species of butterflies and moths use Alder trees
10. *Carya* – 235 butterfly and moth species use Hickory, Pecan, Pignut and Bitternut

Top 10 Herbaceous Plants to Attract Wildlife to Your Ecosystem Garden: (from an article in Ecosystem Gardener, August 26, 2020, (www.ecosystemgardening.com) based on a study by Doug Tallamy and Kimberley Shropshire.)

1. Goldenrod (*Solidago* species) supports 115 pollinator species
2. Aster (*Symphyotrichum* and *Eurybia* species) supports 112 pollinator species
3. Sunflower (*Helianthus*) supports 73 pollinator species
4. Joe Pye (*Eupatorium* species) supports 42 pollinator species
5. Morning Glory (*Ipomoea*) supports 39 pollinator species
6. Sedges (*Carex*) supports 36 pollinator species
7. Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) supports 36 pollinator species
8. Lupine (*Lupinus*) supports 33 pollinator species
9. Violets (*Violas*) supports 29 pollinator species
10. Geraniums (*Geranium*) supports 23 pollinator species

****If you want to check the native status of any plant, look online at: GoBotany.NativePlantTrust.org and enter the common or botanical name.**

You can also find more extensive lists in Doug Tallamy's book, "Bringing Nature Home: how native plants sustain wildlife in our gardens." The sites supply charts that provide trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants for different local growing conditions, i.e., sun vs. shade, wet vs. dry, etc. Soil type, moisture, amount of sun, and temperature are the key factors to consider in selecting the plants.

Some other popular pollinator plants:

1. Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
2. Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) not to be confused with a butterfly bush
3. Slender mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*)
4. Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
5. Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*, *maculata*, *paniculata*, *subulata*)
6. Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum commutatum*)
7. Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*)

8. Common Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
9. Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
10. Wild Ageratum (*Conoclinium coelestinum*)
11. Liatris (*Liatris spicata*)
12. Fall Witch Hazel Tree (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Additional Resources:

Audubon Society: www.audubon.com

Pollinator Pathways: www.pollinatorpathway.com

CAES (Connecticut Agricultural Extension Stations): portal.ct.gov/CAES

UConn Plant database: www.hort.uconn.edu/Plants

USDA Plant database: <http://plants.usda.gov/>

Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group: www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg

New England Wildflower Society: <https://gobotany.newenglandwild.org/>

Fun Fruit & Floral Facts

- Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*) is a valued ornamental plant in England, and Henry VIII supposedly planted it at Hampton Court.
- Goldenrod is not the source of fall allergies—ragweed is the culprit.
- Butterflies lay eggs on specific plants. They only see broad outline of plants and pick up the scent as they approach a plant. When butterflies land, they touch the leaf with their antennae or proboscis and “taste it” with their feet. Drumming (tapping the leaf with front feet) releases chemicals that a female butterfly can identify.
- By 2000 B.C., watermelons had already been cultivated in Africa; figs were cultivated in Arabia; tea and bananas in India; apples in the Indus Valley.

Share with Us!

PLEASE SEND FEEDBACK & PICTURES TO HORTICULTURE CHAIR SUE KELLEY, kelleys4@gmail.com ONLY (DO NOT REPLY ALL). The Horticulture Committee will gather your feedback and share our collective experience in a subsequent Horticulture Bulletin.

GCM MEMBER SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Tell us what damaged your garden this season, and did you find a remedy.
- Fall “sharing” of Harvest Ideas – send us your best suggestions for appreciating your harvest. Examples:
 - a. Best method to dry or freeze herbs (which varieties do you store?)
 - b. Easy fruit jam recipe
 - c. Favorite way to enjoy zucchini
 - d. Favorite vegetable recipe
 - e. Best way to store tomatoes
 - f. Which plants do you collect seeds from for the next year?
 - g. Which flower pods or seed-heads do you leave up for the birds?

- Would you be interested in submitting photos of your unique and/or best plant successes this year? Photos of your overall gardens? If so, we can include them in the quarterly bulletins.
- Would you like us to do virtual Horticulture shows? If so, we can put together a schedule with specimen classes.
- What future articles you would like to see:
 - A proven horticulture technique or method – possible examples:
 - How to dry/preserve your cut flowers, etc., —please send any suggestions!

Because there are so many talented gardeners in the club, we invite you to submit Horticulture information you'd like to share, or suggest topics you would like us to investigate. We are particularly interested in documenting our collective horticulture knowledge.

AGAIN, PLEASE SEND FEEDBACK & PICTURES TO SUE KELLEY ONLY, at kelleys4@gmail.com The Horticulture Committee will gather your feedback and share our collective experience in a future Horticulture Bulletin.

Horticulture Committee: Susan Kelley (Chair), Catherine Ferguson, Denise Forrest, Judith Tosiello and Judy Van Heiningen