



# Horticulture Happenings

An Iowa State University Extension Newsletter for Mid-Iowa Gardeners

Sept. 2005 Vol. 2 No. 8

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Extension programs are available to all  
without regard to race, color, national  
origin, religion, sex, age, or disability.

## Good-bye Summer – Hello Autumn!



This is the month that we welcome the arrival of fall.

Soon our country roads will be humming with the roar of combines, wagons full of grain, and the nip of crisp, cool evenings in the air.

On a different air, our bus trip to the Brucemore Mansion Estate and the Eastern Iowa Garden and Landscape Show on Aug. 28 in Cedar Rapids was a huge success—with a beautiful day, wonderful speakers, lots of vendors with horticultural wares and the beautiful landscaped gardens to admire.

Be sure to reserve the date of September 9, 2006 for next year's trip to Cedar Rapids to the Brucemore Mansion and Eastern Iowa Garden & Landscape show, which will feature Roger Swain as the keynote speaker.

How are your tomatoes doing? Be sure to check out the tomato cages developed by John Dodgen of Humboldt on page 6 of this issue.

Some of John's "secrets" for tomato growing include: adding dry Miracle Grow to the soil at planting, removing all suckers at the base of the plant and removing all but 2 or 3 buds per bloom cluster. He also recommends pinching off the growing stem when plants reach 6 feet tall and planting 3 plants per hill when using his tomato cage.

John also states he has good luck freezing ripe tomatoes by cutting thick slices and wrapping each in Saran Wrap--but then, he also says anchovies & cottage cheese are great tomato toppings!?!

Have a Happy Fall!

Yvonne Nilles  
Extension Horticulturalist  
Serving Hamilton, Humboldt,  
Webster & Wright counties

## Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners to meet in Clarion

The Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners will meet Tuesday, Oct. 4, at the Wright Co. Extension Office, 210 1<sup>st</sup> Street in Clarion at 6:45 p.m.

Wright County Master Gardeners & Interns will host the meeting. The MG Advisory Council will meet prior to this meeting at 6:15 p.m.



# MID-IOWA AREA HORTICULTURE EVENTS CALENDAR

- Sept 6...Mid-IA Master Gardeners  
Humboldt Co. Ext. 6:45 pm
- Sept 10 ..IA vs. ISU (Go State!) - Oops  
-Sorry Hawkeye fans (Go IA!)
- Sept 14..Town & Country Garden Club  
1 pm, at The Depot - W.C.  
"Nature Decorations"
- Sept 20...Fort Dodge Fed Garden Club  
Izaak Walton, 1:00 pm.  
*Drying Flowers*-Sherri Palmer
- Sept 28..Town & Country Garden Club  
1 pm, at The Depot - W.C.  
"Native Plants"-Carol Main
- Sept 6...Mid-IA Master Gardeners  
Wright Co. Ext. Off. - 6:45 pm  
(Advisory Council at 6:15 pm)
- Oct 4...Mid-IA Master Gardeners  
Wright Co. Ext. Office-6:45 pm
- Oct 6.....Fort Dodge Area Gardeners  
Webster Co. Ext. Off. - 7pm

*For further details on these events,  
call 515-832-9597*

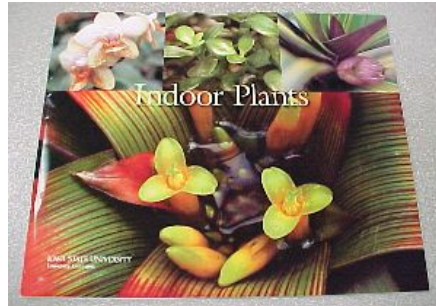
**Please submit your news articles & events to:**

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# New book now available!



A new publication, "Indoor Plants" authored by Dr. Cindy Haynes of the ISU Dept. of Horticulture is now available for purchase at your local Extension office.

The books are \$7.00 each and are part of the series on plants. Foliage and flowering house plants and succulents and florists' plants are also covered.

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## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ISU Extension needs your help. We are interested in your ideas about the most important needs in communities land how ISU Extension could be useful in meeting those needs. Information that you provide will benefit all Iowans as it is used over the next five years to provide programs and services that help Iowa residents and their communities to become the best.

Your participation is voluntary - you may decide not to answer any of the questions or not to complete this survey. The answers you provide will be kept confidential. Your name or web address will not be associated with your answers when the data are compiled. Your web address will not be shared with anyone at any time.

Please visit your local county extension web site to participate in this on-line survey. To find your county web site, visit:  
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Countries/state.html>

Thank you!

# RECIPE CORNER



*By popular demand – here is the recipe for my all-time favorite bars, served on the bus trip to Brucemore!*

## 7-Layer Bars

- 1 c. graham cracker crumbs
- 1 stick butter
- 1 c. coconut
- 1 c. chocolate chips
- 1 c. butterscotch chips
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 c. pecans, chopped

Preheat oven to 350°. Melt butter in a 9" x 13" pan in oven. Remove and add ingredients in the order given. Return to oven and bake 25 – 30 minutes. Cool and cut into squares.

These are simply delicious!! They also freeze well—if there are any left to freeze.

# We Need You!



**Articles of interest,**

**Photos,**

**Tips & Ideas...**



**Please submit YOUR article for the next issue of Horticulture Happenings**



**ALL submissions will be considered!**

## Meet a Master Gardener ...



Webster County Master Gardener **Joe Jerome** of Fort Dodge, Iowa.

### Joe Jerome

Our featured Mid-Iowa Master Gardener for the month of September is Webster County Master Gardener Joe Jerome. Joe has been an active Master Gardener in the Webster County area and is a long-time member of the Fort Dodge Area Gardeners club. He has served as their president for three years prior to the club's current president, Marilyn Peterson-Shipp.

He also plays a part in helping to set up the Fort Dodge Area Gardeners annual Garden Seminar, which has been held for the past 27 years.

Joe has been instrumental in organizing the Garden Show at the Webster County Fair each year. He, along with fellow Webster County Master Gardener, Shirley Webb, provided most of the work for this year's show.

*Thank you Joe, for all your many hours of volunteer service!*

## Iowa State Fair 4-H Horticulture Show...



Several of our Mid-Iowa 4-H youth enrolled in the Horticulture project area exhibited at the Iowa State Fair this year.

Hamilton County 4-H'er Markie Spykerman of Jewell exhibited the top wax beans, 'Pencil Pod Black' at the 2005 Iowa State Fair. (See photo at left).

Humboldt County 4-H'er Katlin Wiener, Humboldt received a Purple on her Vegetable Collection.

Katie Hammen and Kelly Hammen, both Wright County 4-H'ers from Clarion received red ribbons on their vegetable collections at the 4-H Horticulture Show at the State Fair.

Congratulations to all our 4-H Horticulture exhibitors!

# Flower of the Month... *Aster*



The birthday flower listed for September is the *Aster*. Some sources also credit the Morning Glory, but for fall color, we'll stick to the *Aster*.

The English called the European asters both "asters" and "starworts". *Aster*, is the Latin word for "star", referring to the flower's shape.

"Wort" originally meant "root" and that term was applied to plants thought to provide healing properties at the time. According to the herbalist John Parkinson, Asters were good for "the biting of a mad dogge, the greene herbe being beaten with old hogs grease, and applied".

Yes—it's no wonder Iowa State University Horticulture does not recommend this practice!

-from "*100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names*"  
by Diana Wells

## Fall Floral Design

### Workshops to be offered...



Learn to create a floral design for your fall décor at this workshop.

Mid-Iowa ISU Extension Horticulture will sponsor floral design workshops to be held in the four-county area this fall.

Each participant will learn the basics of floral design and create a fall design in a miniature pumpkin container.

Cost will be \$15.00, with locations and dates yet to be determined. Call Yvonne Nilles, Extension Horticulturalist at the Hamilton County ISU Extension at (515) 832-9597 for further information on this workshop.



Come discover your creative ability!

# Hort-Line Questions & Answers

By Richard Jauron, ISU Horticulture Help-Line

## When can I cut back the peony foliage?

Cut back the peony foliage after it has been destroyed by a hard freeze. Cut off the stems near ground level. If the peonies experienced foliar disease problems, remove the plant debris from the area and destroy it.

## Are the seeds of the horsechestnut edible?

Horsechestnuts and buckeyes (*Aesculus* species) should not be confused with true chestnuts (*Castanea* species). The seeds or nuts of the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), Chinese chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*), and the Allegheny chinkapin (*Castanea pumila*) are edible. The seeds of horsechestnuts and buckeyes are considered poisonous.

The two groups (genera) are not difficult to tell apart. The leaves of horsechestnuts and buckeyes are opposite, palmately compound, with five to nine leaflets. The fruit is a three-valved capsule with a thick, leathery husk. The outer husks are often spiny and contain one to six shiny brown seeds with a large, light-colored spot or eye; hence the common name of buckeye. Chestnut leaves are alternate and simple. The fruit is a spiny bur containing two or three chestnut brown nuts. The American chestnut was once a major tree of forests in the eastern United States and a commercial source of chestnuts. Today, it has nearly disappeared, a victim of chestnut blight introduced into this country in 1904

## When should I fertilize the lawn in the fall?

a moderate rate of shoot growth and helps to thicken the turf. An application of fertilizer in late October/early November (at the time of the last mowing) promotes root growth and early green-up next spring. Apply 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in both September and late October/early November.

## What causes my peaches to rot and turn brown?

Brown rot is a common fungal disease of peaches and other stone fruits. Affected fruits develop circular light brown spots that expand rapidly and rot the fruit. Sometimes the fungus that causes this rot is visible as ash-gray tufts. The fruits may fall from the tree or develop into shriveled "mummies" that stay attached to the branch.

Brown rot can be prevented through sanitation (removing infected fruits) and avoiding wounding the fruit. Fungicide sprays applied throughout the season, starting at bloom, can also help.

## What is the large black and yellow spider in my garden?

Some of the most common spiders in gardens are the *Argiope* spiders. They are also commonly called garden spiders. There are many species, but most have distinctive yellow and black abdomens and silver cephalothorax (the front part of the body with the head and legs). Garden spiders build large webs that they use to capture insect prey. Garden spiders are not poisonous and can be left alone when found in your garden. If one has made a web across a garden path, the web can be knocked down, or you can move the spider to a better spot in your garden.



Doyle Darnall of Humboldt enjoys his homegrown blackberries!

## You can't grow Blackberries in Northern Iowa?

**-Don't challenge this Master Gardener!**

Doyle Darnall, Master Gardener Intern of Humboldt, was told three years ago that blackberries don't grow in northern Iowa.

In fact, the local nurseries did not even carry them – they thought Doyle meant "Black Raspberries" when he inquired as to the plant's availability.

So by mail order, Doyle has obtained blackberry plant cultivars of Navaho, Arapaho and Triple Crown, and has grown tasty blackberries for the past 2 years – Yum!

**Invents new tomato cage**

John N. Dodgen has re-invented the tomato cage with a design he says will help people grow the best tomatoes around. His original design had 27 wires and it cost more to ship the cage than it was worth. His new design has five wires and is completely collapsible. It sells for \$29.95. Iowa Central Community College has agreed to make the Dodgen Tomato Cage through their industrial arts welding class.

"My plan is to ask each regional community college with a welding program if they would be interested in making the cages. They give them back the profits in the form of scholarship funds," Dodgen said. The unique design starts with three rods that go in the ground. The rods are bent with 167° to support a ring. The five steps can be added one at a time to the plant grows, or all at once. Dodgen uses a brand to keep the steps on the shoulder. "It's the right design for the growth of the tomato plant, and strong enough to hold a large abundance of tomatoes," Dodgen said.



John N. Dodgen is pictured with more than 200 tomatoes growing through his new Dodgen Tomato Cages. The cages will be manufactured by the industrial arts welding class at Iowa Central Community College. Some of the tomatoes are over two pounds in size and plants have reached over seven

Up to three tomato plants can be planted in each cage. Dodgen said by using a 12" diameter and 12" high plastic pipe in the middle, it can be filled with water that goes straight to the roots and not on the leaves. "This eliminates blights," Dodgen said. Five people without space for a garden, Dodgen said a person only needs a four and one-half of space in a grassy area. "Guns actually build the structure is better and there are no north aspects leaning on the leaves from the evening light. There's also no shading," Dodgen said. The cage can be used for those who want to put the plants in a large tub. "People with no yard can use a tub and have tomatoes all summer long," Dodgen said. Dodgen is now in phase his season growing tips with others. He uses a mixture of four parts water and one part milk and sprays it on the plants during blossoming stage to control blight. He waters every three days and fertilizes once a week with Miracle Grow. "You can't water tomatoes too much. It keeps them from cracking," Dodgen said.



This photo shows the Dodgen Tomato Cage with tomato plants at an earlier stage. John N. Dodgen said the key is keeping the tomatoes off the ground.

**Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners meet**

The Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners met on September 6, 2005 at the Humboldt County ISU Extension Office in Humboldt. John Dodgen of Humboldt was the speaker for the evening. John has invented a new tomato cage which is an original design using re-rod for strength needed to support huge plants.

In fact, John has grown tomatoes in these cages with over 200 tomatoes. If that doesn't impress you, how about the fact that many of these tomatoes reach 2 pounds and over in size!

John has enlisted the help of Iowa Central Community College's welding class to make his Dodgen Tomato Cage. Profits made from the sale of these cages, which are completely collapsible, go to the Dodgen Scholarship Fund.

If you are interested in purchasing one of John's tomato cages, you can contact him at Dodgen Industries, Highway 169 North, Humboldt, IA 50548. Cost of the cages is \$29.95 each or 3 for \$85.00.

The Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners will hold their next meeting on Tuesday, October 4 at 6:45 pm at the Wright County ISU Extension Office in Clarion.



John Dodgen grows huge tomatoes!



The group listened intently to learn John's secrets for growing a great tomato crop with Dodgen Tomato Cages.

# Brucemore Trip

## - An Enjoyable Day!



Attendees brought home everything but the kitchen sink! From willow chairs to Japanese Maple Trees – thank heavens for the large under bus storage areas!!



Waiting to load the bus with all their loot! Birdbaths, garden ornaments, trellis & stakes, flats of plants, 10¢ herbs...a garden shopper's paradise!



A garden party atmosphere on the beautiful grounds.



Roger Paulsen, Carol Showalter, Carol & Larry Severson all from Belmond enjoyed the mansion tour and grounds.



All aboard and on our way! A better appreciation of stewardesses was had following serving drinks and snacks on a moving bus...



...and luckily, no one on the bus purchased this moose – but as we gardeners are skilled at packing vehicles to the max – we would have tried to find the room to bring it home!