



Horticulture Happenings

An Iowa State University Extension Newsletter for Mid-Iowa Gardeners

August 2005 Vol. 2 No. 7

In This Issue:

Events Calendar.....p.2

Recipe Corner.....p.2

On-line Hort Classes...p. 2

*Meet a
Master Gardenerp.3*

Hardy Hibiscus.....p. 3

Flower of the Month.....p.4

*Garden Show &
Bruce more Bus Trip....p.4*

Cracks in Tomatoes.....p.5

*Wright Co. Fair
Horticulture Showp.6*

*Hamilton Co. Fair
Flower Shows.....p.7*

*Webster Co. Fair Garden
& Flower Shows.....p. 8-9*

Food Safety.....p. 10

**IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY**
University Extension

Helping you become your best.

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

State Fair and Harvest Time!



It's that time of year-Iowa State Fair is here!

Although I love the fair, it is rather sad to think our summer is all too soon to be nearing the end.

But now is the time to enjoy our work of this growing season, by harvesting fruits and vegetables, freezing and canning to preserve some of our work for a snowy December day, or just sitting in the yard on a clear evening admiring the landscape.

This issue includes some photos from several of the open class Horticulture fair shows in our Mid-Iowa area. Fairs are a great opportunity to provide horticulture education to the public.

Many non-gardeners have attended fair shows and discover a variety of something they may want to try their hand at growing.

Inquiring children may inspire their parents, grandparents or an aunt or uncle to start a small garden plot to teach them on how food is grown in the garden.

On a different note, our bus trip to the Bruce more Mansion Estate and the Eastern Iowa Garden and Landscape Show on Aug. 28 in Cedar Rapids is rapidly filling—we even had to reserve to a larger bus!

There are a few seats still available for this trip, call me at 515-832-9597 if you would like to join us.

There will be many vendors, so it is a good thing we will have a bigger bus with more room for purchases! (Gifts for others of course & maybe a little something for me?)

Happy Harvesting!

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

Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners adjourn for the summer

The next Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners meeting will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 6, at the Humboldt County Extension Office, 727 Sumner, in Humboldt at 6:45 p.m.

Humboldt 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

- Aug 11 – 21...IOWA STATE FAIR!
- Aug 16...Fort Dodge Fed Garden Club
Izaak Walton, 1:00 pm.
"Prairie Plants"-by MJ Hatfield
- Aug 18...Fort Dodge Fed Garden Club
Prarie Walk at Liska-Stanek
Prairie with Karen Hansen
- Aug 19...Canner Lid gauge testing
Webster Co. Ext. 10am-Noon
- Aug 26...Master Gardener Field Day
ISU Research Farm, Gilbert
- Aug 27...Mid-IA Bus Trip to Eastern IA
Garden & Landscape Show.
At Bruce more Estate, Cedar
Rapids. Leave Ft Dodge 7am
Fee - \$40.00. Call 515-832-
9597 to register.
- Sept 1...Fort Dodge Area Gardeners
Webster Co. Ext. Off. - 7pm
- 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"

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

Submit your articles & events to:
Horticulture Happenings
ISU Extension Hamilton County
311 Bank Street
Webster City, IA 50595-2303
Phone: 515-832-9597
Fax: 515-832-9599
E-mail: ynilles@iastate.edu



ISU Hort Courses on the Web!

You don't have to come to Iowa
State to take gardening courses.
They are as close as your
computer.

Online courses help you develop and expand your skills, whether you're a Master Gardener, a homeowner, or work in a garden retail setting. Each course is one college credit (undergraduate or nonmajor graduate) or noncredit. You will spend two to three hours per week studying the lesson and completing assignments. Courses are divided into units. Each unit will have a quiz. A final project is required in the credit courses.

August 22-October 3, 2005 *Horticulture 493B, Perennial Garden Flowers*

Learn to use color, texture, height and bloom when combining plants to create a harmonious look in the garden. Study 40 perennial plants hardy to USDA hardiness zone 4.

January 9-February 10, 2006 *Horticulture 493C, Houseplants*

Learn basic aspects of houseplant selection for different indoor conditions. Get in-depth fact sheets with culture information and care instructions for 40 popular foliage and blooming houseplants.

February 13-March 24, 2006 *Horticulture 493D, Vegetables*

Examine specific cultural practices for 40 vegetable varieties. Learn the basics of growing vegetables in containers – which varieties work well, what soil to use and fertilizer requirements.

March 27-April 28, 2006 *Horticulture 493A, Annuals*

Learn about planting annuals in containers, starting seeds and transplanting in the garden. The course is an in-depth study of 40 annual plants for Iowa gardens.

If you would like to register for the Perennials course, you may do so at: <http://www.uccs.iastate.edu/mnet/hort493/home.html>

If you have further questions on these courses, contact Yvonne Nilles at ynilles@iastate.edu or call 515-832-9597.

RECIPE CORNER



Do you have salsa coming out your ears? Try homemade catsup for fun!

Tomato Catsup

- 24 lbs. ripe tomatoes, cored & skinned
- 3 c. chopped onions
- ¾ teas. cayenne pepper
- 4 teas. whole cloves
- 2 sticks cinnamon. crushed
- 1½ teas. whole allspice
- 3 T. celery seeds
- 3 c. cider vinegar
- 1½ c. sugar
- ¼ c. salt

Quarter tomatoes into 4-gallon pot. Add onions & pepper. Bring to boil & simmer 20 min. Combine spices in spice bag. Place spices & vinegar in 2-qt saucepan, bring to boil. Cover and turn off heat-let stand 20 min.

Remove spice bag, add the vinegar to tomato mixture & boil 30 min. Press boiled mixture through sieve or food mill. Return to pot, add sugar & salt. Boil gently until volume is reduced by ½ or mixture rounds up on spoon without separation

Ladle hot mixture into hot pint jars, leaving 1/8 inch headspace. Wipe jar rims, adjust two-piece caps. Process 15 minutes in a boiling water bath. Yield: About 7 pints.

-from *So Easy to Preserve*,
University of Georgia Extension, 1999



Meet a Master Gardener ...

Marjorie Groves



Hamilton County Master Gardener
Marjorie Groves of Jewell, IA.

Our featured Mid-Iowa Master Gardener for the month of August is Hamilton County Master Gardener Marjorie Groves. Marjorie has been a very active volunteer, working each year with the 4-H Horticulture show at check in and assisting as a clerk with the horticulture judging at the Hamilton County Fair in Webster City.

Marjorie also serves on the four county Mid-Iowa Master Gardener's Advisory Committee as a representative for Hamilton County. Marjorie and the other Hamilton County Master Gardeners and Interns have also worked on the landscaping and plantings at the new Iowa Heritage Garden, located at the All Cultures Equal building in Webster City, as a Master Gardener volunteer project.

Thank you Marjorie, for all your many hours of volunteer work!

Hardy Hibiscus in bloom...



Rita Wohler and Laurie Epps are the flower keepers at the First American Bank in Webster City. They planted this hardy Hibiscus that is now in bloom with large red, 8" flowers.

Rita relates after its first winter, she thought the plant was dead and tried to remove it, but found she needed a shovel.

Later, when Rita brought her shovel and went out to remove it, but found it had started to grow! (Perhaps she shocked the plant into growing) What a beautiful plant it has grown to be, now in its fourth year.

****Do you know of a business in the Mid-Iowa area with lovely plantings such as this?***
Submit a photo to Horticulture Happenings to recognize their efforts!



Rita Wohler is pictured in the flowerbed with the hardy Hibiscus purchased locally in Webster City.

Flower of the Month... *Gladiolus*

August's birthday flower is the gladiola. A member of the *Iridaceae* (Iris) family, gladiolus florets open one by one, starting from the base of the tall stems, making this a very long lasting cut flower.



The ruffled spikes come in every color of the rainbow and look stunning alone or as a backdrop for other flowers.

Glads grow from corms, which are solid masses of tissue rather than layered like true bulbs, such as lilies. Here in Iowa, corms must be lifted and stored each fall for replanting in the spring.

A new corm is formed each year, on top of the old mother corm, which shrinks and dies. These new corms start to form as soon as the leaves emerge.

Small bulblets, called cormels, will also form around the root area. Cormels can also be stored and planted, but will take 2-3 years to reach a blooming size corm.

Flower spikes should be removed soon after blooming to prevent seed from forming. Doing so will allow the plant's energy to go into making the new daughter corm and baby cormels, rather than seed. Glads should be dug about six weeks after blooming. If leaves are still healthy, let the corm remain in the ground until just before it freezes, to allow further development of the new corm.

Space still available for Garden Show and Brucemore Bus Trip



The Eastern Iowa Garden and Landscape Show at the Brucemore Mansion in Cedar Rapids.

Mid-Iowa ISU Extension Horticulture will sponsor a bus trip to the Eastern Iowa Garden and Landscape Show to be held at the Brucemore Estate in Cedar Rapids on Saturday, August 27, 2005. This event will showcase area gardeners and products in an educational forum. Keynote presentations and demonstrations for gardeners and landscapers of all abilities throughout the day.

Cost for the trip will be \$40.00, with lunch on your own. Bus will leave from Fort Dodge at 7:00 am, with a pick up in Webster City at 7:30 am. The bus will return to Fort Dodge at 6:30 pm. **Pre-payment is required.** Limited seating is still available. Call (515) 832-9597 to reserve your space today

What's the cause of those cracks in your homegrown tomatoes?

The secret may be in the water

By Yvonne Nilles
Master Gardener

We have reached the time of year when tomato harvest is reaching its peak. You may notice extensive cracking on your tomatoes this year. There are two types of cracking; one type is concentric cracking, in which concentric rings of cracking appear around the stem; and the other type of cracking is called radial cracking, which consists of cracks down the sides of the tomato.

Although some cultivars are more prone to cracking than others, most cracking is caused by additional water being received during the ripening period. If a tomato has received adequate moisture of about one inch per week throughout the growing and fruit setting period, it should not crack. But if you remember, we received a lot of rain in June and the first part of July, and then we had the heat wave. (Remember how hot it was at county fair time?) If you had not kept up with your watering program, the fruit developing during this time received less than adequate moisture.

Tomatoes ripen from the inside out, and supplying water to the green fruit causes it to absorb the water. Unless water has been uniformly applied, watering a half-ripened tomato can cause the cells to burst and the fruit to crack, as it enlarges after absorbing the addition-

al moisture.

Watering is more important during the early stages of fruit development. In fact, some tomato processing companies want growers to lower watering in the last two weeks of fruit ripening, to reduce the amount of water they must evaporate to concentrate the tomato to solids, such as tomato paste.

The concentric cracking will usually seal back up, but the radial cracking is more serious as disease can enter the cracks, and flies can lay eggs in these open cracks as well. Spoilage will occur rapidly in tomatoes with radial cracks.

Radial cracks can also appear after a rain, as water sits on the top of the tomato and absorbed. This can cause breaks in the tomato skin, which is called the cuticle, to appear. This type of cracking will just split the cuticle, which is similar to Saran Wrap, and does not crack into the wall of the tomato.

Moral: Keep tomatoes uniformly watered and don't water excessively during later stages of ripening to avoid cracking!!

• Another point of interest, tomatoes should not be stored in the refrigerator - as cells will "self-destruct" when exposed to cold, turning mushy and losing flavor as carbohydrates turn to starch.

(Article from the archives, circa 1999)

Attention Master Gardeners: Articles needed!
Submit your articles to *Horticulture Happenings!*

Wright Co. Junior Fair Horticulture Show...



Annual flowers on exhibit at the Wright County Junior Fair Garden Show held July 9, 2005.



Top honors for show went to Jo Elberg of Eagle Grove. Left, Horticulture Show Superintendent Barb Ainger, Eagle Grove, presents Jo with the purple rosette ribbon for her Boston fern entry in the container plants division. Jo and Barb are both Wright County Master Gardeners.



Jo Elberg pictured with her blue ribbon gladiola.



This exhibit by Nancy Schnell of Eagle Grove received a blue ribbon. Her cranesbill exhibit was the violet-blue 'Mrs. Kendall Clark'.



Show clerks included husband/wife Master Gardener team of Rich and Shelly Rethman of Eagle Grove.

Hamilton County Fair Flower Shows

Each year, the Hamilton County Fair hosts two flower show each year. The first was held July 27, and the second, July 30, 2005. This year's fair theme was "Gotta Be There".



Shirley Doolittle, Webster City, pictured with grandson Ryan Doolittle, won the Design Sweepstakes and the Senior Artistic Award at the 2005 Hamilton Co. Fair's second flower show in Webster City.



Lelia Hemmen of Webster City won the Sweepstakes Award and the Creativity Award at the first flower show on July 27.



LoEda Paine, Webster City, and her table setting titled "When Irish Eyes are Smiling". Town & Country Garden Club of Webster City co-sponsored this show.



Hamilton County 4-Her Nicole Heinrichs drew the winning ticket for the Garden Trough Give-a-Way, held July 31, won by Lindsay McCormick, of Webster City.



Barb Sylvester, Webster City, is the Open Class flower show superintendent & husband Jim is her assistant.



Nola Raner of Duncombe swept the Horticulture division for the Sweepstakes Award at the second flower show held July 30. She also received awards for Best Foliage Plant, Best Dahlia and Best of Show for her variegated schefflera.



4-H Veggie Creations! Nick Oberender, Webster City, created this ball player with a potato.

WEBSTER COUNTY FAIR –

Garden Show



Lloyd Foresi, Fort Dodge, with his blue ribbon winning 'Texas Sweet' yellow onions.



First year exhibitor Brian McLoughlin won top honors with 'White Lisbon' bunching onions. Brian says his gardening expertise is due to that he has six kids to raise vegetables for!



Shirley Webb, Moorland, had the largest head of cabbage at the show. She had 11 entries in the garden division this year!



Howard Larson, of Fort Dodge, with his blue ribbon winning green beans at the Webster County Fair held July 16 at the fairgrounds in Fort Dodge.



David Moody, Fort Dodge & Shirley Webb were the clerks for the show.

Trivia Question: Which Mid-Iowa County does not have an open class Horticulture Garden or Flower Show at their county fair?

(For answer, see page 10)

WEBSTER COUNTY FAIR

Flower Show

Held July 16, 2005 in Fort Dodge



Joe Linney, Fort Dodge, won a blue ribbon for his sunflower!



Eva Byerly, Dayton, shows off her blue ribbon winning vinca.



Pauline Reubel, Barnum, received a blue ribbon on this design using butterfly weed and milkweed pods.



Mary Dick, Dayton, a first time exhibitor who won a blue ribbon with this petunia.



Jeanette Lawrence, Fort Dodge, displays her Best of Show Award for her design made of all fresh materials.



Carol Tomlinson, of Fort Dodge, swept the Webster County Fair flower show with 7 purple ribbons, including this potted plant display.



Behind the scenes of any successful flower show is a great committee.

L-R: Barb Gollob, Fort Dodge; Pauline Ruebel, Barnum; Merna Thomas, Fort Dodge; and Loretta Daisy, Lake City.

EXTENSION CONNECTION – Food Safety

-by Paulelda Gilbert, ISU Extension Nutrition & Health Specialist

Q. How can you preserve tomatoes?

A. Tomatoes can be safely preserved by the boiling water bath process, pressure canning or freezing. Processing time will vary depending on how you prepare the tomatoes. Do you pack them hot or raw, whole or crushed, pieces or juice? Are you using a water bath canner or a pressure canner? To be sure you have the correct information, ask for a copy of *Canning and Freezing Tomatoes*, Pm 638, at your county Extension Office or find the publication on line at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM638.pdf>.

Q. Are there special concerns in canning tomatoes?

A. Yes, tomato varieties vary in acidity. Growing conditions, climate and locations also affect the acidity level. Overripe and infected tomatoes may be low enough in acid to support *Clostridium botulinum*. Use only firm, ripe tomatoes that have no spoiled parts or mold. Tomatoes harvested from dead vines are low in acid. They can be eaten fresh or frozen, but do not can tomatoes from dead vines.

To ensure safe acidity levels in your whole, crushed or juiced tomatoes, you must add bottled lemon juice or food grade citric acid to each jar before processing. For quarts, use 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice or 1/2 teaspoon citric acid per quart. For pints use 1 tablespoon bottled lemon juice or 1/4 teaspoon citric acid per pint. Food grade citric acid is available at some food stores or drug stores. Do not substitute ascorbic acid for citric acid.

Q. How do you freeze tomatoes?

A. Tomatoes can easily be frozen. Wash, core and peel them, leave whole or cut them up. They can be frozen in the raw form or cooked until tender, cooled and frozen. Blanching whole tomatoes (cooking in boiling water for about 3 minutes) will make it easy to remove peelings.

Q. How do I preserve salsa?

A. Canning salsa or other mixed tomato products, that add vegetables such as onions, green peppers, or celery requires recipes that have been carefully designed and tested to meet the proper pH or acidity level. Use up-to-date, tested recipes that meet USDA guidelines. You can find those at the ISU Answerline website or at your local county Extension Office. Do not change the proportion of ingredients in these recipes. If you have a favorite homemade recipe or want to vary the ingredients, it is best to freeze the product to ensure safety. Another solution is to use the pressure canner and processing time recommended for the vegetable included in the salsa that requires the longest processing time.

Call Paulelda at the Webster County Extension Office, 515-576-2119 or e-mail pgilbert@iastate.edu with your nutrition and health questions. You may also call our toll-free ISU Answerline at 1-800-262-3804.

Answer to Trivia Question (on p. 5):

---Humboldt County

(Perhaps Mid-Iowa gardeners should investigate this possibility?)