



# THE GARDENER'S DIRT

*The Latest Scoop from the Scott County Master Gardeners*

July 2009

## City of Bettendorf Public Works Day (Recycle)

### Education re Composting

*Ed Sharkness, Chair*

Saturday, May 16, 2009 was a pleasant spring day. Our Master Gardener logo was proudly displayed. Master Gardeners were effective and efficient as they informed and educated the public regarding composting. Five different educational strategies were used:

1. Pamphlets which explained composting were provided.
2. The Portable Horticulture Clinic answered any difficult questions regarding composting and answered all of the other horticulture questions.
3. A TV/VCR played a video which explained composting.
4. Melody Coffey educated children and adults with a demonstration of worm composting.
5. Model compost bins were displayed.



Special Thanks to:

Melody Coffey  
John Hale

Sally Freeman  
Ron Phillips

Wayne Hannel  
Bev Thies

Deb Janke  
Bill Wyatt

The above activity completes scheduled Recycle and composting work for the year. Special thanks to all committee members.

Should any committee member need service hours a special project can be made available.

### 4-H Fair Committee Meeting

*Submitted by Dean Stotz, 4-H Fair Committee Chairperson—332-4685*

Event: Information Meeting for assisting 4-H leaders (flowers and vegetables) for the 2009 4-H Mississippi Valley Fair Judging

Date: July 27, 2009 7:00 p.m.

Place: Extension Office, Cyclone Room

The 4-H superintendent will outline how the Master Gardeners will assist 4-H leaders. All Master Gardeners are invited to attend (even if you did not sign up for the committee.) Attendees will be able to sign-up for duties at the July 27th 4-H Fair Judging Event.

The Fair Judging Date is Sunday, August 2nd, at 12:00 p.m.

#### Our Mission

*To provide home horticulture information and education to the citizens of Scott County consistent with Iowa State University recommendations. We also strive to increase members' knowledge of horticulture through educational programs.*



Sounds like Iowa summer is right around the corner with high temps and humidity coming our way after a long spring of clouds and cool weather. All plants have been loving the weather but so have the weeds.

Volunteer opportunities are endless:

- Hort clinic is busy and will continue as plants & lawns begin to stress over the hot, dry summer months.
- Garden tenders needed for the Extension Garden, contact Karen Crawford ([karenqca@mchsi.com](mailto:karenqca@mchsi.com)). By the way, check it out if you haven't been there. Raised herb and vegetable beds, lots more perennials and annuals along with French drains, roses and asters, oh my.
- Interested in other committees, feel free to contact the committee chairs to see if they need help or give us (Peggy and Marilyn) a call or email.
- As you are clocking up volunteer hours, don't forget to send your quarterly report to Vicki Gall ([vgall@iastate.edu](mailto:vgall@iastate.edu)). Keep current and avoid the year-end rush (or forget the hours or committees you've helped.)

As a side note: take advantage of the weekly MG Garden Walks. Everyone is unique in the garden that they tend. You can come away with some new ideas, see different plants and meet people who share your interests. And don't forget to appreciate the work that each MG puts into providing a good showing. We commend all who have opened up their gardens and appreciate all that have attended.

Til next time, volunteer, record and report.

Marilyn & Peggy, Volunteer Co-Coordinators

*Weeds are nature's graffiti. ~Janice Maeditere*

# Congratulations!

Bob Krush is the winner of April's Hort Clinic incentive prize. Bob volunteered over 16 hours in the Hort clinic for May. (7 certified MG's had over 9 hrs, Bob's name was drawn at June's board meeting from all who qualified.) Thanks to all!

Bob's prize was a bag of Natures Touch Organic Fertilizer. Congratulations Bob!



# HORT CLINIC NEWS

Submitted by Bob Krush

- **CLIENTS:** During May 2009, the hort clinic assisted 198 clients. MGs handled 111 of the 198 clients (56 %). For April and May combined, MGs assisted 229 out of 358 total clients (64%). Tree questions were the most popular in May. There continues to be deterioration of trees due to improper planting and mulching.
- **STAFFING:** Between May 16<sup>th</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup>, MGs staffed the hort clinic on 27 of 40 available sessions or 67.5%. The MG staffing rate in the hort clinic for the year so far is as follows:  
 April 1-15 = 21/22 = 95.5%  
 April 16-May 15 = 42/44 = 95.5%  
 May 16- June 15 = 27/40 = 67.5%  
 Overall = 90/106 = 85%
- **FIRST-YEAR MGs:** Between May 16<sup>th</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup>, the following first-year MGs completed their required hort clinic service hours. Congrats!!

Jeremy Benge          Pat Christy          John Hale          Bill Wyatt

- **VETERAN MGs:** Many thanks to the following “veteran” active MGs who volunteered in the hort clinic between May 16<sup>th</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup>:

JoAnn Garlough          Bob Krush          Arnold Olson          Diane Soltau          Dean Stotz  
 David Sunleaf          Bev Theis          Karen Truesdell          Steph Wedeking

So far this year, the veteran MG participation rate in the hort clinic is approximately 11%, i.e. 15 out of 135 veteran MGs have volunteered.

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## Planting Trees in the Landscape

*(The following information is from ISU Ext Horticulture and Home Pest News) by Richard Jauron*

Trees are a vital part of the home landscape. Trees provide beauty, shade, and habitats for wildlife. They can also screen unsightly views, provide privacy, reduce noise pollution, lower utility bills, and provide many other benefits. The most common way to establish trees in the home landscape is to purchase balled and burlapped or container-grown plants at local garden centers and nurseries.

Balled and burlapped (B&B) trees are dug with balls of soil around their roots. The rootballs are wrapped in burlap and held in place with twine or nails. Large trees are placed in wire baskets for additional support. Balled and burlapped trees can be successfully planted from spring to fall. Container-grown trees have been grown in containers for one or more seasons. As a result, container-grown plants have well developed root systems. The planting season for container-grown stock is the same as for balled and burlapped material. Generally, container-grown plants are smaller in size and lower in price in comparison to balled and burlapped stock.

To successfully establish trees in the home landscape, it's important to follow proper planting techniques.

### Planting Balled and Burlapped Trees

Dig a hole that is 2 to 3 times wider than the diameter of the tree's rootball. The depth of the hole should be 2 or 3 inches less than the height of the rootball. Slope the sides of the hole so the top of the hole is several inches wider than the bottom.

Grasping the tree's rootball, carefully lower the tree into the hole. The top of the rootball should be approximately 2 or 3 inches above the surrounding soil line. Make sure the trunk is straight. Then, begin backfilling with the original soil. Do not add compost, peat, or other organic materials to the soil. Gently firm the backfill soil in the hole with your hands.

When the planting hole is one-half full, cut and remove all twine. Also, cut away and remove the burlap on the top one-third to one-half of the root ball. If the rootball is in a wire basket, remove the top one-third to one-half of the basket. Completely fill the remainder of the hole with soil. Place soil up to the top of the rootball and gradually slope it down to the surrounding soil line. Thoroughly water the tree.

*Continued on page 4,*

Poorly drained sites are difficult locations for many trees. When selecting trees for these sites, choose trees that can tolerate poorly drained conditions. When planting, the depth of the planting hole should be approximately two-thirds of the height of the rootball. When placed in the hole, the top one-third of the soil ball should be above the surrounding soil. When backfilling, place soil to the top of the rootball and gradually slope it down to the surrounding soil line.

### **Planting Container-Grown Trees**

Prepare a planting hole as described for balled and burlapped trees. The width of the hole should be 2 to 3 times the diameter of the container. The depth of the hole should be 2 or 3 inches less than the height of the soil ball. Slope the sides of the hole so the top is several inches wider than the bottom.

In poorly drained soils, the depth of the hole should be approximately two-thirds the height of the soil ball.

Once the hole has been prepared, carefully lay the tree on its side. Tap the sides of the container to loosen the soil ball from the container, then slide the tree out of its container. It's often necessary to cut off the containers of large, container-grown trees. Also, cut away the containers of poorly established trees to prevent the soil ball from falling apart. Begin by cutting off the bottom of the container. Place the tree in the hole, then, cut away the sides of the container. All containers should be removed, even supposedly plantable containers. If the sides of the soil ball are a mass of roots, make several 1/2-inch-deep cuts up the sides of the soil ball with a sharp knife. Also, make a 1/2-inch-deep, x-shaped cut on the bottom of the soil ball. Carefully place the tree in the hole. The top of the soil ball should be approximately 2 or 3 inches above the surrounding soil. In poorly drained sites, the top one-third of the soil ball should stick above the surrounding soil.

Gradually fill the hole with soil. With each new addition of soil, firm it in place with your hands. Once planted, water thoroughly.

### **Watering**

The key to watering newly planted trees is to check the moisture status of the plant's root-ball. The roots of newly planted trees are initially confined to the plant's rootball. Newly planted trees should be watered when the rootball (not the surrounding soil) begins to dry out. Frequently check the moisture status of the rootball as it can dry out quickly. To water the rootball, slowly apply water to the base of the tree. The frequency of watering can be reduced and the watering area enlarged as the tree's root system begins to grow into the surrounding soil. Small trees usually require watering for 1 or 2 growing seasons. It may be necessary to water large trees for 3 or 4 years.

### **Mulching**

To help conserve moisture, place 2 to 4 inches of mulch, such as wood chips or shredded bark, around trees. Mulches also help control weeds, moderate soil temperatures, and reduce the risk of mechanical damage to tree trunks from errant lawnmowers and string-trimmers.

When mulching trees, do not place mulch against the tree's trunk. Keep the mulch at least 6 inches away from the trunk of the tree. Mulch piled against the tree trunk may create favorable conditions for fungal cankers, root rots, insects, and rodents.

### **Fertilization**

It is generally not necessary to fertilize newly planted trees. Most Iowa soils can supply sufficient amounts of nutrients during establishment. If the trees are growing poorly 2 to 3 years after planting, fertilization may be beneficial. Poorly growing trees often exhibit sparse foliage, yellow-green leaves, or short annual twig growth.

### **Pruning**

Trees utilize sugars and other carbohydrates manufactured by the foliage for plant growth. Therefore, avoid the temptation to severely prune newly planted trees. Severe pruning reduces the tree's ability to manufacture food and actually slows plant growth. Newly planted trees require only corrective pruning. Remove structural defects, such as double leaders and dead, broken, or crossing branches. Retain most of the lower branches to help stabilize the tree. The lower branches also provide food for the growing tree. Gradually remove the lower limbs as the tree grows during the first 5 to 10 years.

### **Staking**

Staking is not required for most newly planted trees. However, top-heavy trees and those planted in windy, exposed sites may require staking. If staking is necessary, allow the trunk to move or sway for proper trunk and root development. To prevent damage to the trunk, use strong, wide strips of canvas, rubber, or other materials to support the tree. Remove the stakes as soon as possible. In most cases, stakes can be safely removed after one growing season.

### **Wrapping**

Wrapping protective materials around the trunks of newly planted trees is usually not necessary. There appears to be little or no benefit to tree wraps. If you do decide to use a tree wrap, place it around the tree in fall (November) and promptly remove it the following spring (April.)

## **Thoughts From The Belly**

*By: Dan Mays—Ironbelly1@aol.com*

Some lessons about gardening are never found in books or Extension Service bulletins. Nowhere have I read about cautions and/or cures for the problem of ‘jumping grass plugs’. This is one problem I had to figure out on my own.

Over the years, I have bought a lot of plant plugs. If you are not familiar with plugs, they are just very small plants grown in flats containing numerous, tiny, tapered pockets. The taper promotes the root growth to go downward instead of circling around. Most of the plugs I buy are about half as big as my thumb. Sometimes, they are only thimble-sized. These little starter plugs are what commercial growers pot up into the larger containers that consumers buy off the shelf some weeks later. It is an economical way to purchase a lot of plants; which require only minimal additional care until the plants get settled in.

Last fall, I planted a number of Little Bluestem Grass plugs that I had gotten for a late season, close-out price. A few plants did not make it through the winter. Since this planting was to be a featured mass planting in a new bed along my patio, I purchased 20 replacement plugs from my friend, Gwen Coobs, at Allen’s Grove Nursery. The next morning, I went out to water them and noticed that a couple of plugs were lying on top of the soil. Hmm ... I thought I had planted every plug. However, they are pretty small and easily overlooked when you are in a hurry. I merely stuck those two plugs into the ground and continued watering.

At next morning’s watering, all 20 of the new plugs were found lying on the ground. Was someone playing a sick joke on me? I quickly replanted them but found the same thing the next morning ... and the next. YIKES! It was like my plugs were jumping right out of the ground. I was beginning to get concerned because my little plugs were starting to show signs of stress. The basic gardening rule of “Green part goes up – Roots go down” was being violated far too often. Hmm ... think about this, Danny.

There were no signs of soil disturbance such as a mole or other subterranean creature. No footprints were visible in the freshly mulched bed either. However, I did notice that a lot of birds were still actively collecting plant litter for nest building. I realized that birds had to be the villain (as I cast a suspicious look at 2 black birds that seemed to be hanging around my patio a little too much of late). Ugh ... what do I do now? I certainly did not want to build a bird fence. The fabled black bird pie didn’t sound too inviting either!

I was lamenting the conundrum to my lovely wife, Cyndia, over coffee one morning. She was politely listening to my tale of woe when she suddenly gave me “that look”. You know ... the one where spouses say nothing but communicate everything. Of course, I responded with the obligatory, “What?”

Her role as a professional hair stylist had noticed that my hair was getting a little shaggy. She responded with, “You need a hair cut.”

Eureka! That was it! Cyndia had just provided me with the solution to my gardening problem. The plugs planted last fall were sporting fresh, green awns that were never bothered. However, the replacement plugs sprinkled into the voids had smaller grass blades that were very fine and fluffy – perfect for lining a nest and coddling a new egg. My little plugs also needed a haircut in order to make them look a little less inviting to the birds. I jumped up from the table, grabbed an old scissors and gave my 20 replacement plugs a haircut.

However, when I got done, Cyndia was still waiting at the breakfast table with another, “that look”. As I sat down and resumed drinking my coffee, she said, “Now ... when are YOU going to get a haircut? I have an opening today at 11:00 am.”

Needless to say, I began the afternoon with my hair looking a bit more dapper. And so far, the plugs have stopped ‘jumping out of the ground’. The next morning, I noticed that all the grass clippings had disappeared. Perhaps I will get to see young black birds searching that bed for bugs later this year. By then, I’ll probably need another haircut.

## Meet Your Advisory Board Member: Richard Sayles



My childhood world was full of gardens. The most wonderful was my grandparents garden with strawberries, grapes, cherries, apples, pears, peaches, and of course “vegetables.” A wonderful depression era garden with a stone cellar full of bell jars and memories.

Growing up exploring the wild places of Walnut Creek and the ever changing Raccoon River in West Des Moines led me to the back roads. I was always exploring in the search of the next great adventure. Those wild places of western and southern Iowa led me to Iowa State University and a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology.

While at Iowa State I met Kit Fox and my real life journey began. We were married in 1977 in Forest City, Iowa (another breathtaking beautiful part of this world) and moved to the Quad Cities in 1978. We have one daughter, Kim, who is married and lives in Virginia.

I worked in the transportation industry up till 2005, when I retired.

That summer in 2005, I read an article about the ISU Scott County Master Gardeners, and I was interviewed and accepted into the program. While being interviewed I was asked a question about the influence of gardening in my life? I told a story about the very first day of summer after 8th grade, my friends wanted me to play some baseball at Holiday Park. My mother had other plans, and they were in the garden, my friends made a bad decision that day in the pursuit of sweet tarts. I am sure that decision did not damage anyone’s future but I am also sure that it reinforced my “grounding.”

I have enjoyed developing our acreage in Blue Grass. I started with vegetables, and then started to plant some trees such as Bald Cypress, Bur Oak, Tulip Tree and Fraser Firs. This all led me back to thinking about the bell jars and my passion for wild places, I have planted more service berry, raspberries, blueberries and thornless blackberries and that has led to more and more diversity of plants, birds and butterflies.

My other interests, include spending time traveling, birding, golfing, and listening to Kit play the dobro. I especially enjoy reading and highly recommend “Planting the Natural Garden” by Piet Oudolf and Henk Gerritsen.

I have really enjoyed meeting and working with wonderful energetic gardeners on such projects as the Kids’ Garden, Vander Veer Plant Zoo, Great Garden Show Off, and Social Committees.

I have been the High Chair on the Advisory Board since 2007 and presently serving my 2nd term.

I think that gardening is art that can play music for the viewer and Wendell Berry’s music sums up my vision of the garden.

The day ends  
and is unending where  
the summer tanager,  
warbler, and vireo  
sing as they move among  
illuminated leaves.



## WHAT'S HOT IN SCOTT!!

The latest "hot calls" and what to look for from ISU Scott County Extension.

### **ISU Extension Specialists Offer Recommendations on Protecting Ash Trees**

AMES, Iowa -- The presence and new discovery of emerald ash borer (EAB) in states adjacent to Iowa has increased interest in this exotic, invasive insect and what Iowans can do to protect ash trees (*Fraxinus* species) on their property.

ISU Extension is collaborating with Iowa state regulatory agencies and local officials to prevent introduction of EAB into Iowa and limit its spread. For a full list of EAB detection and education activities, please visit our website at: [www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html).

Treatment options to protect ash trees from this destructive pest are available but careful and thoughtful analysis is needed to circumvent spread of false information and excessive and needless use of insecticides. Forest, horticulture, and insect specialists with Iowa State University Extension have developed a guide that outlines your management options against EAB.

The first step for many is confirming that you do have an ash tree. Only ash trees are susceptible to EAB attack, but all species and cultivars of ash trees are at risk.

Second, is the ash tree growing vigorously and in apparent good health? Trees must be healthy and growing for treatments to be effective. Ash trees with mechanical injuries, loose bark, thin canopies, and those growing on poor sites (limited rooting area, compacted soil or other stresses) are not worth treating. If your ash tree looks healthy and is important to your landscape, then *preventive* treatment options may be considered.

Insecticide control measures against EAB should not be used unless you live within 15 miles of the confirmed EAB infestation. Treatment outside this risk zone is not advised. Protecting ash trees with insecticides is a long-term commitment. Most treatments will need to be reapplied annually or twice per year for an indefinite number of years to protect the tree. With that in mind, most homeowners would be ahead to remove and replace susceptible trees.

Treatment timing is critical and must be matched to insect life cycle. After mid-June treatment is *not* recommended because it takes time for the systemic insecticide to be distributed within the tree (from 2 – 8 weeks depending on the application method.)

The recommended time of application is early to mid April each year. If the tree is large (more than 16" diameter), a treatment in early fall is also suggested. So the next window for treatment for trees in Iowa would be mid to late September 2009.

A new Iowa State University Extension publication, PM 2084, *Emerald Ash Borer Management Options*, will be available on June 12. The North Central Region Integrated Pest Management Center's *Insecticide Options for Protecting Ash Trees from EAB* was issued in May 2009. Both can be found at [www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html).

**News articles are needed for the Gardener's Dirt  
Please have articles to the Extension Office by August 15th**



# The Gardener's Dirt

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## Yard Clippings

Submitted by Christine Rice



All gardeners live in beautiful places because they make them so.

–Joseph Joubert, *Pensees*, 1838, page 42.

To own a bit of ground, to scratch with a hoe, to plant seeds, and watch their renewal of life- this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfactory thing a man can do.

–Charles Dudley Warner, *My Summer in a Garden*, 1871, page 2

It is a sure sign of summer if the chair gets up when you do.

–Walter Winchell (1897-1972), page 49.

But though an old man, I am but a young gardener.

–Thomas Jefferson, letter, 20 August 1811, page 62.

*A Gardener's Nosegay*. Editor Jude Patterson. New York: Barnes and Noble. 2003. Pages 2, 42, 49, 62.

Flowers... are richness enough in the garden picture. To add further ornamentation is to distract.

–Russell Page, *Education of a Gardener*, (1962), page 93.

Large or small, [a garden] should look both orderly and rich. It should be well fenced from the outside world. It should be no means imitate either the willfulness or the wildness of Nature, but should look like a thing never to be seen except near a house. It should, in fact, look like a part of the house. –

William Morris, *Hopes and Fears For Art*, (1882), page 92.

All the wars of the world, all the Caesars, have not the staying power of a lily in a cottage border.

–Reginald Farber, *The Rainbow Bridge* (1921), page 71.

*The Quotable Gardener*, Editor Charles Elliot. New York: The Lyons Press. 1999. Pgs 71, 92, 93.