

Seeds of Knowledge

June/July/August 2007

Message from the Coordinator

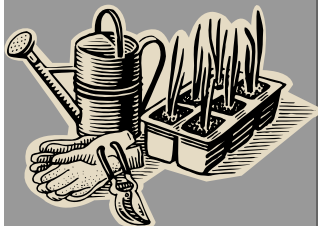
First of all, please let me apologize for how late this newsletter is getting to everyone. Things around the office have been a little hectic. That combined with my taking some time off, has put several things on hold, the Master Gardener Newsletter being one of them. For that reason this will be a three month newsletter, taking you through June, July & August. Things will come up through the summer months, but I'll keep you informed through e-mails and snail mail as needed.

Volunteer projects are started and taking off nicely. The county building gardens have been planted and are looking very nice. Volunteers have been working at the Women's Shelter as well. The Farmer's Market started this week and the Master Gardener Hotline started in early May. The Spring Plant Swap was May 19th and had approximately 40 people in attendance.

Since the last newsletter we had our Recognition Banquet. Eight Master Gardeners received their Basic Certification, seven received their Advanced Certification, and thirty-six recertified. Wonderful job everyone! Your time and effort are greatly appreciated by myself as well as the community that you have helped.

At the banquet we honored our very first Master Gardener class from 1994. Several people from the class attended the banquet and were presented with a plant as a "thank you" for getting the ball rolling. Tom Moffit gave a wonderful commentary on how nice it was to see things that got started with that class continuing on today. If you couldn't make it this year, we hope to see you next year.

Tracey Knack
Master Gardener Coordinator



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Looking for Featured Gardens

I am in need of some volunteers for our "Featured Gardens" section for future newsletters. I used my last one in the last newsletter. If you would like to tell us a little about your garden and your gardening experiences, please do so. We'd love to hear about it. I would need about a page long story and a few pictures. Think about it. They are so much fun to put in the newsletters.

Big, Green Tomato-Eating Machine -- That's the Tomato Hornworm

One day your tomato plants look fine. Then, seemingly overnight, the foliage is gone, stripped from the stems. The first clue to what happened: dark, uniformly shaped droppings on and around the plants.

A close look turns up the perpetrator itself: a plump caterpillar exactly the same shade of green as the now denuded tomato stems, clinging to the underside of a stem -- a tomato hornworm, the larva of a largish brown moth.

"With this perfect camouflage coloration, tomato hornworms may go unnoticed until they reach nearly their full size -- 3 to 4 inches," says Walter Pett, Michigan State University entomologist. "At this point, they can defoliate whole plants virtually overnight. Suddenly leafless stems and fecal pellets on the plant and on the ground beneath it tell you tomato hornworms have been at work." Tomatoes have other insect pests -- flea beetles early in the season, which eat small, round holes in leaves; Colorado potato beetles; aphids -- but none is as dramatically destructive as the tomato hornworm.

Hand picking small larvae can be effective if you can find them, Pett says. A nonchemical alternative is to spray plants with *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki*, a bacterial disease of caterpillars formulated as an insecticide. Applied thoroughly to all foliage and reapplied after rain and overhead irrigation starting when the first signs of leaf feeding are noticed (usually mid- to late July), it will protect plants. It works best against small larvae, Pett notes, so don't wait to apply it until you see extensive damage. Another caterpillar, the tomato fruitworm, feeds on the tomato fruits. Often they move from one fruit to another, damaging several without eating the equivalent of a single fruit. The tomato fruitworm moths arrive in Michigan from the south around mid-August and lay their eggs on the undersides of tomato leaves.

"These are the same insect that we call corn earworm when it's in sweet corn and cotton bollworm in cotton," Pett points out. "They're rarely a significant problem in tomatoes in Michigan, but because they damage the part of the plant that we want to eat, gardeners are particularly unhappy to find where they've been at work."

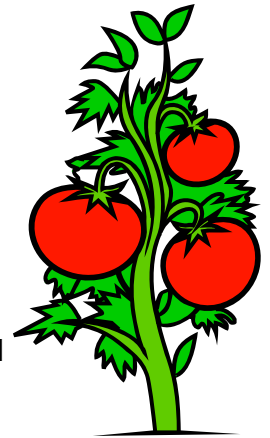
There's not much gardeners who don't want to use pesticides can do about them, he adds, because as soon as the egg hatches, the caterpillar finds a fruit and bores in unless it comes into contact with an insecticide while it's moving.

Colorado potato beetles will feed on tomato foliage as soon as transplants are set out. Hand picking the first adults and removing the bright orange egg clusters as soon as you see them is a good alternative to pesticide sprays, especially in that pesticide resistance is common among potato beetles, Pett notes. Planting a trap crop a short distance away -- potatoes or eggplant -- may keep the beetles



out of your tomatoes, he adds.

Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects that suck plant sap. Warm weather speeds up their reproduction and numbers build quickly. Tomatoes tolerate high numbers of aphids, but severe infestation can stunt plants. Pett recommends using nonchemical controls such as a forceful spray of water from a garden hose or insecticidal soap to control aphids without pesticides.



Farmer's Market Thursdays, Island Park Pavilion

If you are interested in doing a shift or two at the Farmer's Market, please contact Carol Miller at 644-3707. She is looking to fill time slots in August.



Master Gardener Hotline
Mondays - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Wednesdays - 6:00 to 8:00 pm



We still have some time slots open for working the hotline. If you are thinking about it and would like to work with someone who has done it before, just get in touch with me and I'll get you scheduled.

For those of you that have been working it - a big thanks. I know that it is a little slow here at the beginning of the summer, but hopefully things will be steady, now that we've had some very nice weather.

Keep it up!

Master Gardener Volunteer T-shirts

I will be ordering some more of the Master Gardener Volunteer T-shirts. I know we only had a few sizes this time around and I'd like to accommodate as many of you as possible. So here is my plan:

I am going to order several Medium, Large and X-large sizes. If you would like either a small or XX-large (or larger), please let me know and I'll make sure to order them for you.

The cost of them should still be \$3.00, but due to inflation, that may go up a little, but I don't see them as more than \$5.00.

I would like to get them ordered next week so if you want a specific size, please let me know by next Wednesday, June 20th.

Looking for Open Gardens

Do you have a nice garden/yard? Do you have an interesting feature in your garden? Have you used a new or different technique? Would you just like to have people over to show off?

Well - if you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then have I got a suggestion for you! The Association would like to have Master Gardener host "garden walks" for fellow Master Gardeners.

I know we'd all love to see each others gardens and just can't figure out how to do it. We would like to set up opportunities to make this happen.

If you would like to host visitors to your garden, please call me with dates and times that will work for you. It can either be in the evening or weekend. We would like to make this as convenient for you as possible without putting you out too much.

I can probably even be persuaded to give some education hours for these walks. Especially if you, as a host, talk about something or demonstrate something you have done.

Please remember these are your fellow Master Gardeners and we don't expect "perfection", we'd just like to see what other people have done. Even if some things you have done have been mistakes, or the dreaded "Why in the world did I plant that!", remember we all learn from our mistakes. What was that Tony Avent said at the conference this spring: "I feel you never really know a plant until you've killed it at least three times!"

Call me and schedule a time. I'll be sending those out to everyone as I get them. I'll also put a calendar of them on the website.

Future Demonstration Project

Have you every heard of a Rain Garden? In cooperation with Carrie at the Recycling Center, we are going to work on installing a Demonstration Rain Garden project. We hare already done some preliminary work. We have a soil test, we've called MISDIG for underground lines, and done some research on-line. We would like to get this installed so that other businesses, individuals and environmental groups can see what can be done to preserve and protect groundwater.

If you would like to check out some more information about Rain Gardens a great website is www.raingardens.org. That is where we have gotten most of our information. This could be quite an undertaking. I believe we will need to solicit donations from excavating to replacement soil as well as plants. We would sure like some help with this. If you are interested, please let me know and I'll be in touch when we start really getting moving on this.

Master Gardener Website

Since I just talked about the website, I believe I'll expand on that. One of my objectives this summer is to work on making the Master Gardener page of our website much better. Currently I have some Hotline workers typing up some bulletins to be posted on the website. And I will be working on putting more of that type of information on there, that everyone can access.

My intention is also to put a calendar of some type on that page with pertinent Master Gardener things on it, such as scheduled Garden Walks and speakers. That way you all can go and check to see what is going on. I'll also post Executive Board meetings and other committee meetings if case you might be interested in attending.

I just wanted to let you know what my plan was and to keep checking it throughout the summer for new things. The website is www.isabellacounty.org/dept/msue.

Upcoming Events

- July 22 - Daylily Celebration @ Stone Cottage Gardens in Gladwin. Check out www.stonecottagegardens.com for a schedule of their events.
- Aug 10 - Garden Day @ MSU, Several speakers, workshops, tours of the gardens, etc. will make this a wonderful opportunity. You will earn MG education credit for attending. Go to www.hrt.msu.edu/outreach/GardenDay2007.htm for a Registration brochure.
- Sept 8 - Cooking with Herbs, Gail Card will once again fill our senses with wonderful uses for all those herbs you grow. More details will be coming later, but mark your calendar for this date!
- Sept 15 - Fall Plant sSwap - Chipp-A-Waters Park, 11:30 am
- Date to be Announced - "Gardens of the World" presented by our very own Linda Ferreira. I'll let you know when this is happening, but it will be this summer.



ISABELLA COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER
NEWSLETTER

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We are on the Web

www.isabellacounty.org/dept/msue

Summer Getaway - Shopping/ Country Garden/Lakeside Resort Tuesday, July 17, 2007



Bring some friends and get away with us for a day of fun and variety. Our first stop will be downtown Traverse City for shopping and lunch on your own. Then we'll head for the country with some time to wander, take pictures and feast our eyes on thousands of flowers at the Betsie River Centennial Lily Farm. This historic farm specializes in day lilies, lilies, grasses, and garden art. The Lily Farm also features an antique walk-in corncrib, gift shop and studio. Our next stop is Bear Lake Manor; a magnificent Victorian bed and breakfast located 12 miles north of Manistee in Bear Lake. Enjoy a cold drink and short tour of this elegant manor with its wrap-around front porch and three stories of lovely rooms. Board the motorcoach for a short ride to Portage Point Inn for a buffet dinner. This 103 year old inn is two blocks from Lake Michigan beaches and is situated right on beautiful Portage Lake

TOUR INCLUDES: Round trip transportation on a Hartzler motorcoach; visit to Traverse City; visit to Betsie River Centennial Lily Farm; visit to Bear Lake Manor; Dinner at Portage Point Inn; all taxes and gratuities on included items except driver/escort tips.

COST PER PERSON: \$79.00

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: June 15, 2007

For more information or to register for either trip, please contact Hartzler Travel at 989-773-6123.

****I realize the registration deadline is a couple days away, but if you are interested, please call Hartzlers to see if it is available.**

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