



Trumpet Vine

Knowledge for the Community from Loudoun County Master Gardeners

Spring 2010

Volume VI, Issue 2 www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org

LOUDOUN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER MONTHLY MEETINGS

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
UNLESS NOTED, MEETINGS ARE HELD AT
THE VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
OFFICE, 30B CATOCTIN CIRCLE SE,
LEESBURG, AT 7PM

Thursday, April 1st: *Container Gardening: Five Best Practices* with Mike Virts, Owner of Catoctin Gardens. Mike specializes in procuring high-quality annuals, perennials, herbs, trees and shrubs from what he considers to be the premier providers available in the area. Come find how to use the best plants for spectacular containers.

Thursday, May 6. *Tips from a Floral Designer* with Louise Lynn of Louis Lynn Floral Designer. A member of several prestigious guilds and organizations, Louise will explain how to condition flowers to ensure that flowers and foliage last for the maximum time. In the process she will arrange 3 baskets that will be given away as door prizes just in time for Mother's Day!

June 3: *Herb Talk: Wild Edibles in your Garden for Food and Medicine* with Judith Dreyer. Judith Dreyer, MS, BSN, RN has an MS in Nutrition/Biochemistry and her BS in Nursing. She is an adjunct lecturer at Western Ct State U in Danbury, Ct focusing on holistic health including western based herbalism and recently became certified as a Holistic Stress Management Instructor.

Upcoming Awesome Spring Gardening Events

First Annual Gardening Symposium at Ida Lee March 20 - 21

Presented by the Loudoun County Master Gardeners, this two day symposium will educate the public on various areas of Vegetable Gardening. The two day symposium comprises guest speakers such as "Joe Gardener" fame from "GardenSmart" PBS, Ellen Ogden, author and garden designer (she will be available Sunday for individual consults - see our web site for sign up information); and finally "Dr Bug", Dr. Mike Raupp from the University of Maryland! The remainder of the symposium is comprised of specialized speakers from the Loudoun County Master Gardening world. Come share in the wonder of vegetable gardening! Register via PayPal on our web site now (<http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org>).

Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival 2010

This year's F&G show in Leesburg is slated for April 17th and 18th in Leesburg, Virginia. We can be seen



<http://www.leesburgva.gov/index.aspx?page=566>

on the new "Demonstration Stage" giving local gardening tips. As we have in many years past, the Loudoun County Master Gardeners will be there in full force. Our Master Gardener selections of tomatoes, peppers, herbs and many other veggies have become a "must have" by many gardeners. Grown personally by your LCMGs, each plant type was selected by our gardeners who have had success in their own gardens. The best thing? We have preorders available! What does this mean? You order your plants ahead of time, we will pull the best of the lot for you, then you drive up and pick them up at the Extension office on Catoctin Circle in Leesburg on April 24, between 9am and 1pm. See our website for a detailed plant list and order form (<http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org>).

Wet Fall, Wet Winter, What Will Spring Bring?

The fall of 2009 was wet. Then it was followed by record breaking snowfalls in December and February. Right now the soil is very wet. What does this mean for our gardening plans and for our plants in the spring and summer?

Wet Soil

No matter how excited we are that the snow has melted and it's warming up, don't work the soil when it's too wet. The soil should not be tilled or spaded until it is sufficiently dry to crumble when worked. Use the "squeeze" test to determine if the soil is ready. With a spade, turn over a slice of soil about 6 inches deep. Pick up a handful of soil and squeeze it. If the soil remains in a tight ball when pressure is released, wait several days (without rainfall) before spading or tilling. If the soil crumbles when pressure is released, it is ready for working. Soils high in clay content are easily damaged if worked when wet. In fact, it's best not to even walk too much on very wet soil to avoid compacting.

Seeds do not germinate well in soil that is too wet. If you think your soil may be too wet, phase your seed sowing over the span of up to two weeks around the proper planting time. This will help ensure that some of your seeds will germinate successfully. This is especially true of seeds such as early June peas, which should be sown around St. Patrick's Day.

Root Rot

Unless they are particularly adapted to wet conditions, most plants will only tolerate flooding during the growing season for short periods, usually less than two days. This is because plant roots require oxygen to survive. When the open spaces in the soil are filled with water for more than a couple of days, roots literally die from drowning. If enough of the root system of a plant is killed, the plant will also die. If only part of the root system is killed, the plant may be able to survive, but will often appear unhealthy and grow slowly and be more susceptible to other problems until it has recovered. In addition, wet soils set up the perfect environment for root rot diseases to infect, further compounding damage caused by prolonged wetness. When plants stay too wet during spring or summer, they often die immediately. But when plants lose roots to drowning or root rot in fall or winter, the symptoms often do not show up until the following spring. Deciduous plants that have lost considerable root mass in fall and winter will often have enough energy stored in their trunks and stems to put out new growth in the spring, but will then wilt and die as soon as warm weather arrives since they do not have the root system needed to support their new growth. Evergreens that lose roots in fall will often appear healthy through winter since there is much less need for their roots to transfer water to their leaves during cold weather, and likewise wilt and die as warm weather returns.

Pests

A wide variety of fungi including powdery mildew and black spot thrive during periods of excessive moisture and cool temperatures. Several soil borne fungi attack rhododendrons, mountain laurels, leucothoes and Japanese pieris, causing them to wilt and die one branch at a time.

Trees and shrubs stressed from winter damage and too wet soils are also prone to attack from borers and insects.

Our challenging winter may continue to pose challenges well into the spring and summer.

Master Gardener Carol Ivory

Ask the Hardscaper

CONSTRUCTING AN ARBOR: "It doesn't have to be difficult"

Q: I need a focal point for my garden and I think an arbor would be a beautiful asset. How do I build an arbor??

As the last of the snow melts quickly away, now is the time to be organizing the arbor project that never seems to get done. It really doesn't have to be difficult, expensive, or built to last 50 years. The best bet for the average person is to use treated lumber and stock items from the local home center. The finished project should give you years of enjoyment with minimal maintenance required, just like the arbor pictured in the Demo Garden.

The planning process can be very informal, the important thing is to have a picture in your mind of how you want your arbor to look and a good idea of how you are going to connect the components. Then, make yourself a rough drawing with approximate dimensions and use this to compile your list of materials needed. Remember, nothing has to be exact; this is a rough plan that will be changing along the way. As you go through the plan you will also want to compile your list of tools required.



This Arbor is at the Demonstration Garden at Ida Lee Park, Ida Lee Drive, Leesburg, VA

Tools

Shovel (round)
Table or saw horses
Saw (circular)
Hammer

Square
Pencil
Level
Drill and bits
Crescent wrench
Long straightedge
Quick release clamps

Materials List (For pictured arbor)

4x4 posts, 10' long
2x2, 2x4 and 2x6 boards
Lattice
Exterior screws, galvanized carriage bolts, washers (no nails)
Sakrete mix (2 bags)
Crushed stone (2 bags)
Water

(Continued next page)

Basic Construction:

- Dig holes for posts, 1 1/2' - 2' deep, 8" diameter, add 6" crushed stone in each.
- Set posts, add 1/2 bag of dry concrete, add water, measure plumb and square and brace overnight.
- Cut posts to length
- Cut and connect cross members at top
- Construct sides and attach to inside of posts
- Stain or seal after a period of drying time



The crossmembers of the arbor are often the first thing that catches the eye. You can keep it simple, as I did, or you can add some gentle curves for added interest. Cutting the curves will require more tools including a jig saw or band saw. On a do it yourself project I would recommend staying away from an arched top as it will become very labor intensive. The best method for connecting the crossmembers is with galvanized carriage bolts, a helper is handy for this but you can hold things in place with the quick release clamps if you are working alone. Leveling is important, then predrill holes so the bolts slide freely through and connect with washers and nuts. If you don't get it level it will stand out like a sore thumb. The top supports running front to back are generally there for structure only and are usually nondescript and connected with screws.

**Helpful hints:**

The construction process should not be a race to the finish line, take your time and enjoy the day in the garden. If this takes you a week of working 2 or 3 hrs per day you'll look back and think how much you accomplished while you admire your work. Most importantly, get the posts set accurately as this is the foundation of your project. The stability, aesthetics and every measurement along the way will be affected. The secret to doing this is to make the holes larger than necessary so that you can move your posts freely before cementing.

Master Gardener Larry Burk

New Introductions for 2010

So many choices - so little land! I found a great new site with new introductions and the owners generously said - share! The plants below are just a few of the new intros reprinted from www.gardendebut.com, go visit their site and see more wonderful plants to covet and envy. The second page is from other sources. Enjoy!



Golden Ruby Barberry PP16203 - For all of you feeling guilty for having invasive barberry in your yard, this one's for you! Along with a non-flowering one called Admiration Barberry PP16921. Quoting from the website "This eye-catching new Barberry, hardy to Zone 4, stands out with a stunning color transformation throughout the season. Spring foliage emerges a striking fluorescent orange, with leaves maturing to a burgundy maroon with a gold ring around the outer leaf margin in summer. Fall color is a flame orange to brick red. This bold color combination adds drama in the garden against more subdued landscape plantings."

"Golden Ruby is very slow growing, reaching approximately 15 inches high and 24 inches wide. Unlike many other Barberry varieties, the fruit set with Golden Ruby is sparse. It is an easy-care plant and will perform best planted in full sun with well-drained soil"

"Crystal Falls® Mondo performs best in a shaded landscape accompanying other perennial shade loving plants. Crystal Falls® is very cold hardy and disease resistant.

This plant has no cold injured foliage and no leaf spot as is commonly seen in liriopse. Crystal Falls® exhibits large dark green leaves 24"-30" long and one half inch to three quarters inch wide. The lovely flower plumes of Crystal Falls® Mondo emerge in July lasting until September. The plume ends in a 6"-8" long x 1" wide raceme of 1/2" star-shaped white flowers. Following the bloom period, very large berries are produced which turn bright blue by November. Plants are hardy in USDA Zones 6b-9 and can be used as a specimen or grown as a ground-cover in shade."



"Park Hill, OK - A peachy keen new introduction, The Rising Sun™ Redbud is destined to light up the landscape with appealing tangerine and peach colored - leaves. This native small tree contributes brilliant, golden-orange heart-shaped foliage all summer with no burning, even in full sun. The Rising Sun™ is a vigorously growing small tree with a full, rounded shape, whose leaves hold their color into autumn. Spring, a third season of interest, delivers sweet pea-type flowers, rosy-orchid in color. The flowers appear before the foliage in spring and are attractive to bees and butterflies. New foliage is a brilliant rosy-apricot. Even the bark is a smooth tan with a yellowish cast, distinctive from other Redbuds. With a mature height of only 12 feet, The Rising Sun™ is perfect for smaller gardens." I see a new container in my garden!



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Ok - can we say out of this world? This is First Editions **Vanilla Strawberry Hydrangea**. Introduced by Bailey Nurseries their description says it all. "A delicious new creation from France. The enormous flower panicles are a blend of vanilla and strawberry, held upright on red stems. They emerge creamy white in mid summer, change to pink and finally to strawberry red. New blooms give the plant a multicolored effect in late summer and early fall. The red coloration persists for at least 3-4 weeks. The habit is upright becoming cascading later in the season. Comparable to 'Pinky Winky', however the habit is more upright and the red flower color persists longer. Excellent for fresh cut and dried flower arrangements." 6'-7' tall with a slighter smaller spread give this beauty full sun for best results. Website: www.baileynurseries.com



Did I mention I love hydrangeas? These two are from Proven Winners and part of the P Allen collection. The one on the left is the latest intro for The Breast Cancer Research Foundation and is named **Invincibelle Spirit**. The one on the right is named **Incrediball**. Both are natives and have large, up to 12" across blooms with Spirit being heat tolerant. For more information on these beauties go to www.provenwinners.com



Who doesn't like Butterfly bushes but hates having to cut them back all the time? Well, here's a non-invasive miniature one that blooms from mid-summer to frost: **Adonis Blue!** Attracting butterflies and hummingbirds, deer resistant and drought tolerant with fragrant flowers? What's not to like? And it's small enough for a container garden! Another proven winner from Proven Winners!

I hope you found something here to try - I think my budget is already shot and I haven't even bought anything yet! But I am going to have so awesome containers this year!

Master Gardener Becky Phillips

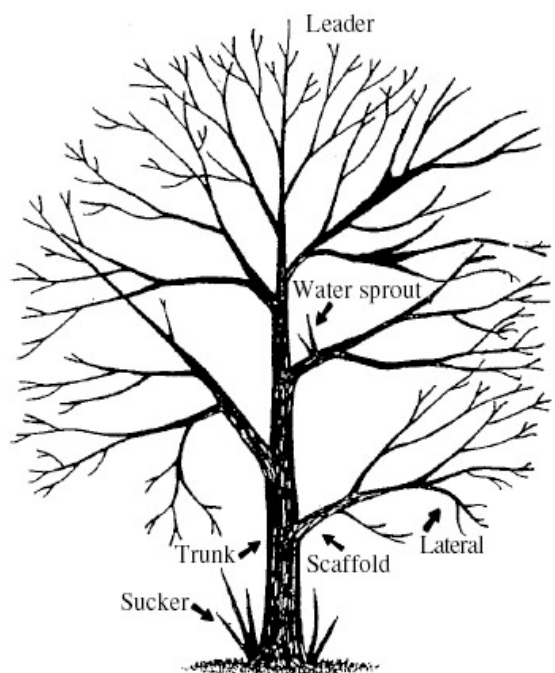


Spring Pruning

Late winter is the major pruning season but in some circumstances and for certain trees and shrubs, spring is the time to prune.

Winter Damage

Heavy winter snows damaged many of our trees and shrubs. Hanging branches, broken branches, and crushed shrubs pose a hazard, especially where children, who like to explore and climb more than adults, are concerned. Take a look around and note any branches leaning on power lines (call the power company), any loose limbs hanging over walkways, and high hangers in trees threatening to fall on unsuspecting pedestrians. This type of damage should be cleared as soon as possible, regardless of the type of tree or shrub.



Typical above-ground tree framework

few years, therefore, limbs that have split should be removed. Given a few years, new limbs often fill the space.

After all of the work of clearing and cleaning, take a look again in April and May - shrubs that have not rebounded by mid spring should be pruned back hard.

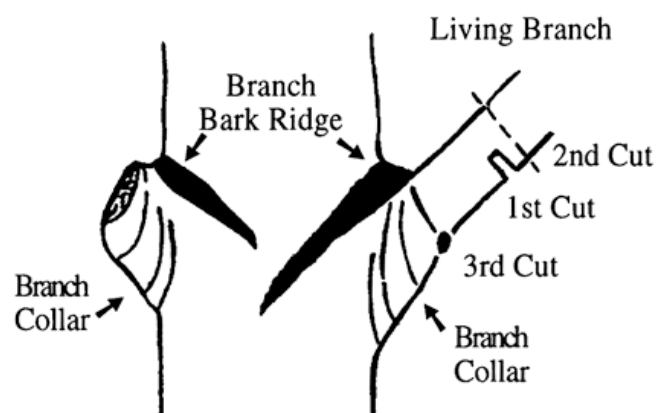
Shrubs that are Pruned in the Spring

The following shrubs should be pruned in the late spring **after** they have finished blooming: Azalea, Bridal Wreath Spirea, Flowering Crabapple, Forsythia, Hawthorn (*Crataegus species and cultivars*), Hydrangea, Bigleaf (*Hydrangea macrophylla*), Lilac, Magnolia (*Magnolia species and cultivars*), Mockorange (*Philadelphus coronarius*), Mountain Laurel, and Rhododendron.

Snapped branches should be cut cleanly just outside the branch collar. If the top of a tree has snapped the nearest lateral branch will form the new leader. If two side branches are competing for the leader spot, remove the weaker one. Though it is possible to salvage a split limb with bolting and screwing along the split, the benefits may last only a



Pruning Competing Leaders



Branch bark ridge and branch collar

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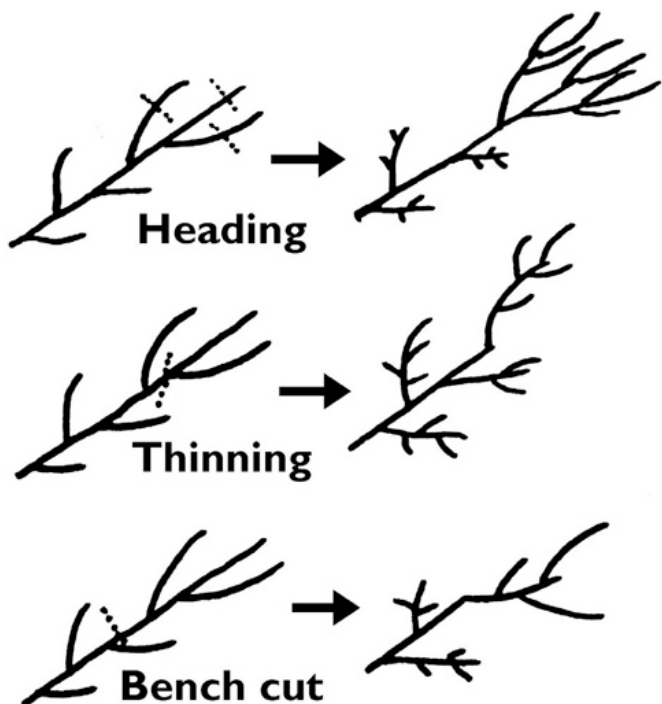
Pruning Fruit Trees (and good advice on tree pruning in general)

The best time of year to prune fruit trees for those of us that live in the Piedmont region is between the 1st and 15th of March. They should not be pruned if a hard, prolonged freeze is expected or if unusually warm weather is forecast.

The reasons for pruning are to improve and maintain the appearance and health, control size, prevent personal or property damage, provide clearance, reduce wind resistance, train young plants, influence fruiting, maintain shape, size and form, and rejuvenation. The most important reason for pruning fruit trees is to improve fruit production.

The first step is to observe the tree from a distance at different angles and decide how you want the tree to look when finished and to produce the most fruit. The two basic type of

pruning cuts that should be considered are the **heading cut** and the **thinning cut**. If you feel the tree is too tall or wide, you will use the heading cut to reduce the width and/or the height of the tree. The heading cut is made by cutting back lateral branches and removing terminal buds. Heading cuts may stimulate growth of buds closest to the cut. Thinning cuts remove branches at their points of origin or attachment. Thinning cuts stimulate growth throughout the tree rather than a single branch. See VA Tech Publications for images and more information on proper pruning: <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/>



All broken, crossing branches, damaged, or diseased branches should be removed first. Then remove all water sprouts growing in the crown of the tree and suckers growing at the base of the tree. Water sprouts are any branch that is growing straight up.

Water sprouts will not produce fruit and

will only sap the energy from the tree once it begins to come out of its dormant state. When the cut is made it should be a straight cut at the branch collar. The branch collar is the swollen area of tree tissue that forms around the base of a branch. The collar area contains a chemically protective zone that promotes healing and protects the tree from infections, fungi, and disease.

After the broken, damaged, diseased limbs and water sprouts are removed you will have a much better view of how the tree is shaped and then decide if additional pruning is needed.

Master Gardeners Dave Hellums & Carol Ivory

Vegetable Varieties for Success

The snow piles may be around for a bit longer but the time has arrived for vegetable planning. Beginners to vegetable gardening can be overwhelmed determining which vegetables to grow as well as varieties ... as the choices are endless!

Newcomers to the vegetable garden will find the following vegetables the easiest to grow and are listed along with optimal planting times: radish and peas: Mar - mid Apr, lettuce: Apr-May, tomato and pepper transplants: Mid-Late May, cucumbers: Mid-May +, squash and beans: Late May+.

Two terms to keep in mind concerning seeds and/or transplants are hybrids and non-hybrids. Hybrids result when 2 different “parents” are crossed and usually results in a vegetable better able to withstand the challenges of the garden season. Seed that has not been crossed is considered a non-hybrid and includes seeds passed down through many years among families or groups and are commonly called “heirlooms”.

The following listed varieties of vegetables should do well in your garden. “H” designates hybrid and “N” designates non-hybrid. Look at the package for proper planting instructions along with other information crucial to success.

Bean (Bush) “Bush Blue Lake 47” H, “Blue Lake 274” N

Bean (Pole) “Kentucky Blue” H, “Kentucky Wonder” N

Cucumber (Slicing) “Diva” H “Marketmore 76” N, Container “Salad Bush Hybrid” H

Lettuce (Loose Leaf) “Salad Bowl” H, “Black Seeded Simpson” N, “Red Deer Tongue” N, “Oakleaf” N, Most lettuces do well in containers.

Peas (Snap) “Sugar Snap” H, “Cascadia” N

Peppers (Sweet - all types) “Ace” H, “California Wonder” H, “Corno di Toro-Red” N, “Giant Marconi Hybrid” H, “Sweet Banana” H; Most peppers do well in containers.

Peppers (Hot - All ranges on heat scale) “Burning Bush”, H “Cayenne-Long” H, “Hungarian Wax” H, “Mariachi” H, “Mexibell”, H “Mucho Nacho” H,

Radish (Spring) “Cherry Belle” H, “French Breakfast” N, “White Icicle” N

Squash (All types summer) “Early Golden Crookneck” N, “Eight Ball” H, “Fordhook” H; Container “Burpee Hybrid” H “Bush Baby” H,

Tomato (Produce all season or indeterminate) “Big Beef” H, “Big Boy” H, “Better Boy” H, “Brandywine” - N, “Celebrity” H,

Tomato (Cherry) “Juliet” H, “Sungold Hybrid” H, “Sweet 100” H,

Tomato (Container) “Early Girl Hybrid” H, “Super Bush Hybrid” H, Tiny Tim” H

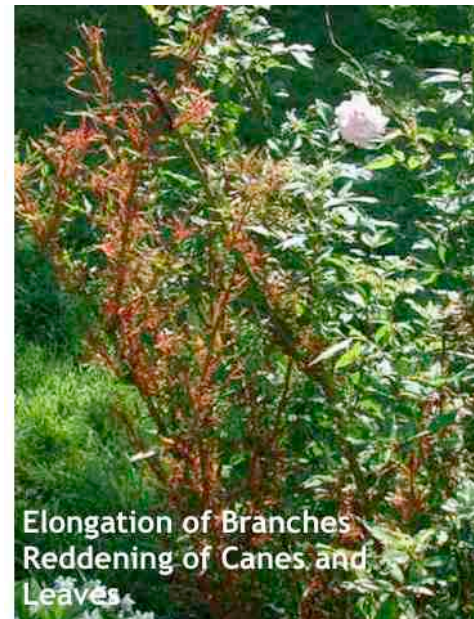
Master Gardener Denise Palmer

Rose Rosette - A Disease

If you are an avid rose grower, here in Loudoun County, you surely know about all of the difficulties we have in our area when growing roses: black spot, downy mildew, and rust to name a few. Most of these problems result from our high summer humidity. And, most of these can be treated preventatively by pruning to provide air circulation.

If roses weren't "difficult" enough, there is now another rose thief in our midst. Discovered in Prince William County a few years ago Rose Rosette is a virus for which there is no cure. The most susceptible of roses are the Multiflora Rose, a non-native invasive which has been a thorny burden to our area for many years. The virus is transmitted by mites which bite an infected plant - often a wild multiflora rose in your neighboring area. These mites can then subsequently bite and infect your prize roses.

Prevention is the recommended control - first by removing the host plants such as the multiflora roses or garden roses as soon as you know they are infected. From the Virginia Tech publication 450-620, here are some things to look for: Elongation of new branches, clustering of new branches (called "witches broom") with leaves distorted and small. An often seen symptom is reddening of infected leaves and canes. Excessive thorniness may also be present.



What else can you do? Control any mite infestations on your roses. It is possible to use horticulture oil or sevin to kill the mites, and you might find a systemic that might be listed for control of the eriophyid mite - of course the mite has to feed on the plant in order to get the systemic and that one bite could infect the plant. However, the best control is cultural control. At first sign of the disease, remove the plant to avoid spreading the disease. Also, if you live near an area containing multiflora roses (often found along fence lines or in dormant fields), take a walk to see if you can spot the disease in the wild. If it is prevalent, you may have to take extraordinary measures to keep your prize roses mite free.

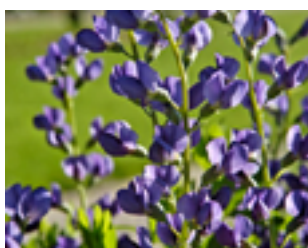
Master Gardener Linda Shotton

Top Ten Perennials

Each year the Perennial Plant Association (PPA) chooses a plant of the year among tried and true plants. The choice is based on the following criteria:

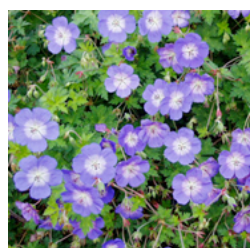
- Suitable for a wide range of climatic conditions
- Low maintenance
- Pest and disease resistant
- Readily available
- Multiple season of ornamental interest
- Easily propagated by asexual or seed propagation

The following 10 plants represent the choices from 2010 back to 2001. For more information on these perennials and the choices back to 1990 see <http://www.perennialplant.org>.



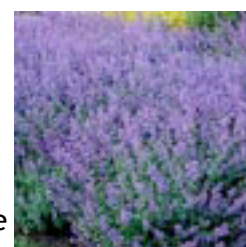
Blue false indigo (*Baptisia australis*) grows three to four feet tall and three to four feet wide in an upright habit. This exceptional perennial grows across a wide range of zones and is one of the most adaptable native species. The common name, blue false indigo, refers to the use of this perennial by early Americans as a dye. The flowers give way to inflated seed pods which turn charcoal black when ripe and which flower arrangers use in dried arrangements. False blue indigo is best when planted as a specimen or planted in small groups. Two notable cultivars are 'Midnight,' pictured here and 'Solar Flare' with brilliant yellow flowers that fade to orange.

Golden Hakone Grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola') This slow creeping, deciduous grass is a creeper, but never invasive. It grows 12 to 18 inches tall and 18 to 24 inches wide with an arching form that resembles a cascading miniature bamboo. It grows best in partial shade, where its light color illuminates a shadowy area. It complements the leaves of many dark green leaf plants such as hostas, tiarellas, heucheras, bugbanes, astilbe and wild ginger. This grass requires little maintenance, has few insect or disease problems and is not favored by deer.



Geranium 'Rozanne' This cranesbill geranium grows to 20 inches high and mounds to 24-28 inches wide. Its violet blue flowers are 2.5 inches in diameter. It thrives in full sun to partial shade and has exceptional heat and drought tolerance. Geranium 'Rozanne' can be cultivated as a ground cover or a specimen plant. The dark green foliage which is marbled with chartreuse turns red in the autumn. To maintain peak appearance, shear back the old foliage to 3 inches in August to promote new growth. Rozanne can be paired with salvia or veronica, hostas and roses. It also does well in containers, window boxes and hanging baskets.

Walker's Low Catmint (*Nepeta*) This mint has blue-violet flowers and gray foliage. It will bloom from May through frost if it is pruned back by two-thirds when the initial flowers fade. The small flowers are clustered on upright, arching stems creating a charming and colorful effect. *Nepeta* Walkers Low can be a good companion plant with coreopsis, salvia, dianthus and short grasses. In the herb garden it combines well with sage, thyme and lambs ear. This nectar laden plant attracts bees and butterflies. Once established it is drought and salt tolerant. It is also resistant to deer and rabbits. Stem cuttings can be taken at any time of the year from actively growing plants. Cuttings root in about a week.



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Cheddar Pink (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus* "Firewitch") This evergreen has bluish gray foliage and purplish-pink, fragrant flowers in mid-spring. Rebloom can occur in mid summer and into the fall if spent flowers are removed. Mature mats are 3-4 inches tall and 6-12 inches wide. Flowers reach 6-8 inches tall. It performs best in full sun. Cheddar pink is excellent as a border edge, as a rock garden plant, in wall crevices and as a ground cover on a sunny slope. This dianthus combines well with plumbago, coreopsis and catmint. It does best in well-drained, slightly alkaline soil.

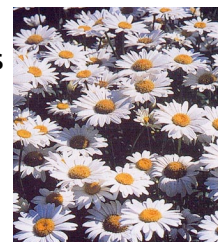
Mulch with pea gravel to keep foliage clean and dry.

Lenten Rose (*helleborus x hybrids*) This evergreen, late winter, early spring flowering plant is an excellent shade plant. Mature plants can form clumps that are 18-24 inches tall and 24-30 inches wide. Long lasting blooms are available in many colors in single or double forms. Mature plants often have 50 or more flowers which can last for 2 months or more. Hellebores can be grown as specimen plants, clumped or used as a ground cover. Companion plants include epimedium, wood anemone, hepatica and any spring flowering plants. Alkaloids in the leaves may cause dermatitis but also makes Lenten undesirable to deer.



Japanese Painted Fern (*Athyrum japonicum* "Pictum") This low-maintenance plant is one of the showiest ferns for the shade garden. It grows 18 inches tall and a mature clump can be more than 2 ft. wide, fronds are 12-18 inches long. The best frond colors result from part-shade with some morning sun. This fern makes an outstanding combination plant for adding color, texture and habit to a shade garden. It combines well with hosta, columbine, astilbe, coral bells, foam flower and sedge grasses. It needs well-drained, compost rich soil, moisture and humidity. This fern can also be grown in containers.

Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum* "Becky") this daisy has bright white flowers, sturdy stems and a long blooming season. This is a large plant, 40 inches tall and almost as wide. The 3-inch wide flowers start appearing in June and can bloom into September when deadheaded. Shasta daisies can be grown as a specimen, massed or even grown in large containers; they make an excellent cut flower. "Becky" can withstand southern and northern climates, making it a better performer than other Shasta daisies. This plant grows best in full sun and well drained soils. It is not tolerant of excessive moisture or wet soils in the winter.



Phlox "David" *Paniculata* Group Phlox is a native from New York to Georgia and west to Illinois and Arkansas. "David" is an erect plant 36-40 inches tall with white flower panicles 6-9 inches long and 6-8 inches wide. The florets are 1 inch in diameter. Blooms are fragrant and add color to the garden from July through September if deadheaded. If planted in full sun, organic matter and extra water will mitigate the effects of heat and drought. Otherwise stressed plants are susceptible to spider mites and powdery mildew. Phlox "David" can be propagated through root cuttings, stem cutting and division.

Metamorphic grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foster') the deep green, shiny foliage of this cool season grass appears in early spring and lasts until early winter. Loose feathery flower inflorescences appear in June and are initially light pink. As the seed heads mature they become golden tan and last through the fall. This grass can grow to be 5 feet in height. The slightest breeze sets this grass in motion. It is an excellent specimen plant or vertical accent. Stems cut before the flowers mature will last for months in a dried arrangement.



Master Gardener Carol Ivory

Garden Basics - Soil Test

It's the time of year where pouring over seed catalogs and dreams of lush green lawns, spring blooms and June Peas are at the front of our minds. There is one important step that we may forget: the Soil Test. Any time is a perfect time for a soil test - but it's best to test your soil before adding any amendments.

You can purchase soil test kits from your local home improvement store, and it will allow you to put little bits of soil into test tubes, telling you some specific information on the soil. Virginia Tech offers soil testing for \$10. The results you receive will give you recommendations on soil amendments for not just the soil but also for the type of plant you have in that spot. All you have to do is take a sample for the kit, fill out the form, and send it along with your check. Free Soil Test Kits are available at the Loudoun County Extension Office, 30B Catoctin Circle SE, Leesburg, Virginia. LCMG presence at the Leesburg and Purcellville Farmer's Markets will begin soon, and test kits are available there as well.

Soil test results give the homeowner information on soil texture, pH, lime content, and available phosphorus and potassium. Results are mailed to the homeowner with recommendations on types of fertilizer which should be applied. When plants are given proper nutrition, along with optimal placement, they thrive. Soil tests can also pinpoint toxicity in soil which may be causing plant death.

Loudoun County soils are generally clay and acidic. Soil tests should be performed every three years.

How many Soil Tests Kits do you require? You will not be doing one test for your whole yard. You must divide your yard into zones. The Soil Test information sheet will ask you to specify which type of plant is being grown in the area. Test Kits can be useful for these areas:

- **Lawn:** if you have a large lawn, you will need to divide your lawn into areas. Take a look at your lawn, Do some areas thrive better than others? Are some surrounded by trees or flower beds. Does your lawn abut an road which may put salt onto the lawn? Do a test kit for each distinct area.
- **Ornamental Beds:** Not all ornamental beds are the same - a kit should be performed for each bed, noting the main type of plant growing in the bed.
- **Vegetable Gardens:** In general, vegetable gardens require more nutrients. Testing pH for veggie gardens is one of the most important factors for success. Most vegetables do well with a pH of 6.2 to 6.8 - a slightly acidic soil. The soil test will also give you an idea of the level of phosphorus and potassium

After taking a sample (by following the explicit instructions on the Soil Test Kit), you will wait a couple of weeks for your results. These results will tell you what your pH is, and how to adjust it appropriately for the type of plant grown in that soil. For instance, if you are looking to optimize your lawn, and your soil test shows an acidic soil, your soil test may tell you that you need to add lime. The soil test will also provide your nutrient content for macronutrients: phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium. Results will be indicated by Low, Medium, or High, and give you the method for correction. The last bit of information is for the levels of micronutrients: zinc, manganese, copper, iron, and boron.

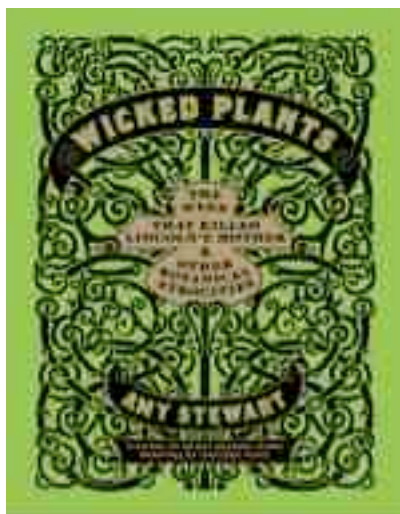
Nitrogen nutrient values are not given as a result of the soil sample, but information will be provided for nitrogen based on the type of plant you have growing in the area (nitrogen levels change quickly, thus they aren't tested).

If you would like to see a recorded Soil Testing presentation from Virginia Tech's Turfgrass specialist, Dr. Goatley, please see: <http://connect.ag.vt.edu/p36588349/>

As always, if you have any questions, call our Help Desk (number at footer of each page of this publication). They will be happy to walk you through your soil test and the recommendations you received.

Master Gardener Linda Shotton

Book Review



***Wicked Plants; the Weed That Killed Lincoln's Mother & Other Botanical Atrocities* - by Amy Stewart.**

So - I like to read. So much in fact that the last time I went on to Amazon to see what they had to recommend for me - they had 980 books for me! Yikes! Well I restrained myself and only bought three that time. One of them was this book by Amy Stewart. I'm not really sure why - except that the title cracked me up and she is the author of *Flower Confidential* which has gotten rave reviews and awards. Well, this book is a hoot! And vastly entertaining and informative at the same time. I was talking with a friend and fellow Master Gardener on the phone about this book - she had heard about it - and before we knew it, I had practically read the whole book to her. It's a quick read, you can read one chapter at a time or the entire thing in one seating. Amy's website is another thing all together - probably more than you will ever need to know about deadly plants but filled with lots of fascinating information - such as public gardens that have a Poisonous Garden that you can visit! Don't touch those plants! Amy has her own [poisonous garden](http://www.amystewart.com/poisonous-garden) and does public speaking. To find out more about her and to get a free PDF on a couple of the chapters visit her website at www.amystewart.com or visit her blog at www.blog.amystewart.com.

And don't just take my word for it; below are some other reviews on her book.

"A fascinating, albeit morbid, nonfiction account of the dangers of poisonous plants... Stewart's compelling style along with the attention-grabbing subject matter will keep gardeners riveted.." [--Washington Post's Best Gardening Books of 2009](#)

"A state of ease is not what awaits the reader of "Wicked Plants," chapters of which include "This Houseplant Could Be Your Last," "Lawn of Death" and "Deadly Dinner." Browse through it and you will tremble at the sight of a salad. It is, however, a fine gift for owners of country houses who have become altogether too smug about country life." [-- New York Times](#)

"A practical and entertaining guide to fierce flora...Amy Stewart's guide to the misdeeds of the plant kingdom's most vicious, roguish members may be one of the most fascinating, funny volumes you've come across in ages." [--Amazon.com's #1 Home & Garden Book, 2009](#)

"Amy Stewart has done it again...Wicked Plants has crazy Nazi scientists, murderous Russian spies, poison arrows, and plenty of hallucinations...You will be drawn into the stories of plants like killer algae, jimsonweed, and some thing called marijuana. I can't wait for the movie to come out!" [--Fine Gardening Magazine](#)

Master Gardener Becky Phillips

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