

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich answers your growing concerns

Issue #42, May 23, 2009

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My cat Fraxinus approves a native spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) for planting. Even she is impressed by its spicy smell. The plant came from Wildtype Plants in Mason, Michigan, where just about any native Michigan tree or shrub you might want is ready to buy in small pots and large. See page 15.
Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

If fence is insufficient, don't overwhelm it with vine

I want to **put up a wooden screen** five to six feet high **to block the view** of my neighbor's back yard and traffic on the very busy street beyond. This will be at the back (for me) of a shrub/perennial border along the property line. It'll get the west wind coming across an open field. What are your **suggestions for an easy-care, fast-growing perennial vine** to climb this wooden screen? I am thinking of honeysuckle vine but wonder how fast it will get established and up that screen. The sooner it blocks the auto traffic, the better.

I'm willing to prune it to keep it under control. Any concerns about honeysuckle? Other suggestions? I thought about trumpet vine but am afraid that would be too aggressive. - Linda -

Hello, Linda. Why **isn't the fence enough on its own?** A vine won't make it taller or wider...

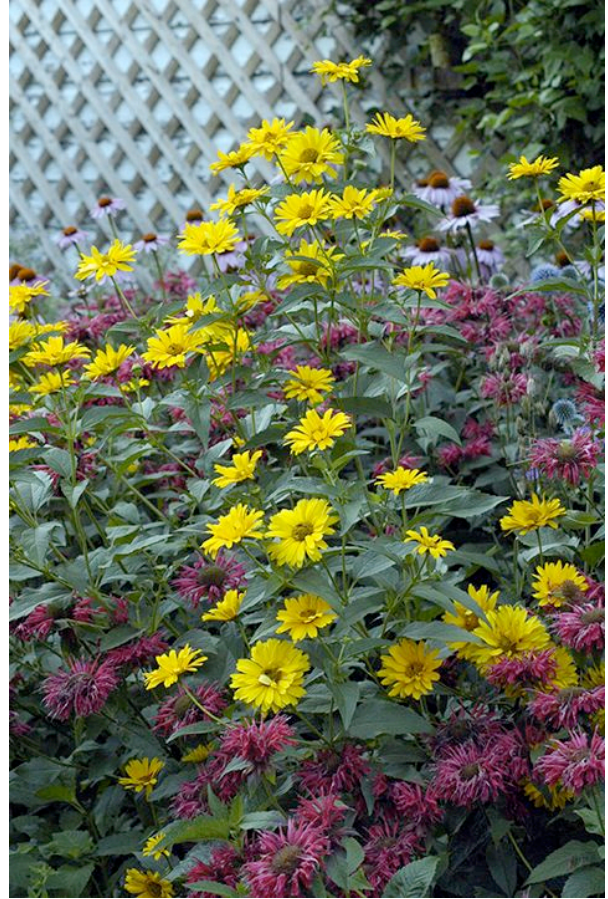
I always hesitate to jump into vine-on-fence situations. In terms of design, a vine has no effect except to change a fence's color and texture. That can be done with paint, which is then simpler to maintain. **Even the best vine needs pruning** and even someone willing to prune can tire of a never-ending pruning requirement.

All that the vine does to the lattice-covered fence behind this perennial garden is to change its color (upper right). Yet as a green, medium texture surface, this fence would not work as well as a backdrop for the flowers. Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

All vines need some clipping. Some need a lot. Keep in mind that if it's **fast enough to cover** a fence quickly it's also fast enough to lap over and smother nearby plants. Its caretaker might have to **prune every month**. Also, if wildness is displeasing to you, the top edge of any vine will call for regularly along the top rail, where its questing branches will writhe or wave about in search of higher purchase.

Then there's **the issue of how much weight the fence can support** and whether the vine will grow through slats or around posts which will be crushed as those limbs increase in girth. Many fast vines are *big* and can age a support structure very quickly.

If hiding the wood is important enough to make monthly clipping worthwhile, a **grape vine** is probably the thing to use. You'll prune to keep the vine out of adjacent shrubs and trim on top. Grape climbs by clinging with twisting tendrils. You'll have to provide it sturdy pegs or hooks.



Hall's honeysuckle may work for you. It (*Lonicera japonica* 'Hallsiana') is fast, can handle the wind and also smells very sweet. Its drawbacks include **a tendency to mildew**, especially where air flow is blocked by a solid fence on one side and dense vegetation (your shrubs and the garden) on the other. It has the same smothering tendencies as grape but with an added dimension -- it is **quick to run along the ground**. So when you prune it each month, be sure to clip off basal limbs as well. Honeysuckle climbs by twining so **it must have a sturdy lattice** or chicken wire screwed to vertical slats on the fence -- the slats create an essential gap, so branches of the vine can slip under and around the support.

Trumpet vine is self-supporting -- it forms holdfasts where its wood ripens against a vertical surface. However, it is not only **huge** and thus needs frequent pruning, but it develops **underground runners** that make it a weed throughout the garden despite separative pruning.

Sweet autumn clematis (*C. terniflora* a.k.a. *C. maximowicziana* or *C. paniculata*) is another option. It, too, needs pegs or hooks its leaf stalks can twist around and **regular clipping** to separate it from nearby plants. Sweet-scented when its blooms are fresh, the aging flowers' fragrance can be rank to some noses. If you find you're in this group your pruning may continue into fall, to clip away older blooms.

White, fluffy stuff means little to beech, more to pine

Hi Janet. In mid- to late summer my beech tree at the edge of the woods has **small, white, fluffy** creatures **covering the lower branches**. There are thousands of them and they reappear each year. These **do not seem to harm the tree** and are on the branches not the leaves. I usually get rid of them by spraying the branches with water and they are washed away. They do not reappear. Would you have any idea what these might be? - David -

That white fluff sounds like **cottony maple scale*** (*Pulvinaria innumerabilis*), David. This insect is also called wooly maple-beech scale. Your observation is correct, that it doesn't usually cause much damage. Your instinct is also great -- regular rinsing helps keep the pest population down without a lasting impact on ladybugs, other scale predators and innocent bystander insects.

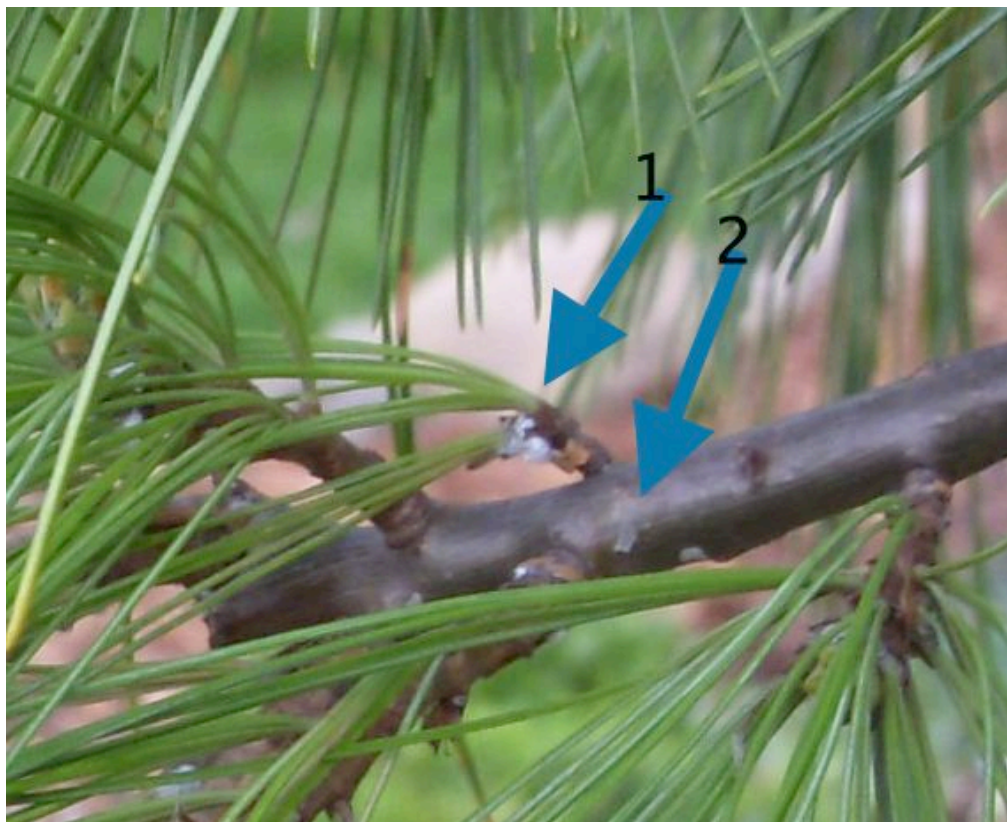
Hard hosing in July may be most beneficial, since that's when the next generation of young scales -- crawlers -- emerge from the eggs and are most defenseless.

Despite its name, this scale **can occur on many different tree species** including dogwoods, elm, lilac, oak, plum, poplar and willow.

*For photos and more information about cottony maple scale, copy this URL to your browser:
hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/features/insects/cms/cottony%20maple%20scale.htm

And that pine...

Thinking about white fluffy critters reminded me of Sandy's white pine. So sorry, Sandy, I told you I'd get back to you with details and forgot until David's note called up images of cotton-flecked twigs. Your white fluffies are not cottony maple scale, however, but white pine adelgid (*Pineus strobi*). That sucking insect can become a serious problem if the pest's population increases. Your infestation is not major, yet. Your tree, if growing vigorously, may keep these pests in check on its own. To weight the odds against the pest, follow the lead David took in dealing with his beech tree's scale. Hose the tree frequently with a forceful spray of clear water, or apply an oil before budbreak in



spring to smother emerging pests. Give a round of applause to hoverflies or ladybugs*** you see in the area, since their young feast on this adelgid. Your light infestation (above, #1 pointing to a more mature scale and #2 aimed at a crawler) can be compared to a pine branch that's in real trouble by copying the URL below** to your browser. Photo ©2009 by the author

**forestryimages.org/images/768x512/0717002.jpg

***Copy and paste this URL for more information: woodypests.cas.psu.edu/factsheets/InsectFactSheets/html/Pine_BarkA.html

Ashes over ashes is not the way to go in gardening

Janet, what do we need to know about **spreading ashes from the fireplace out in the yard**? My friend has been doing this every couple of weeks during winters and asked me to ask you if it'll hurt anything. - Kurt -

Wood ash spread thin and in different places count as **a fertilizer**, Kurt. Applied too heavily in one place they **can make the soil too sweet (alkaline)** which despite the sound is not a good thing for most of what we like to grow.

Here's an excerpt from my 5th ("E") Q&A book, *Evergreen Entries*. It's one of six books on my CD *Asking About Asters* (Page 17). On the CD you'll find this in the A-Z index by searching for ashes.

Wood ash is a source of potassium and phosphorus, and usually some trace elements. It can be sprinkled on a garden or in a compost to return those nutrients to the soil.

Avoid any heavy concentration of wood ash, especially where water may also puddle, since a concentrated solution of wood ash can burn roots and kill soil microorganisms -- it's caustic, just like the old lye soaps that were made from wood ash.

In quantity and over time, wood ash can also raise soil pH levels. Gardeners who have spread wood ash in an area for several years may find that neutral, pH 7.0 soil has risen to a very alkaline 7.6 or higher. High pH can slow growth or cause nutrient deficiencies in many plants, so if you make a regular use of wood ash you should keep a close eye on your plants' performance and test your soil annually for pH and nutrient content.

Weeds are the main green in this lawn

Hi Janet, I am new to gardening and **lawn care**, but being recently retired, I would like to give more time to pampering my property. Last summer, I was horrified at the big weeds in my lawn. I tried weed and feed, but managed only to kill some of the grass and the weeds all around thrived. I would like to get a head start this year and **get ahead of the weeds**, but would prefer not to use weed and feed, because I understand it is bad for the environment. Thanks for any suggestions. - Beatrice -



Don't feel bad, Beatrice. Grass growing conditions in the Midwest have not been ideal of late.

Many lawns have slipped into decline over the last few years, Spaces opened as grass succumbed to drought, disease, insect feeding or lack of oxygen in the soil. Seeds that may have lain dormant two decades sprang to fill the gaps.

D.G. saw less ground ivy (*Glechoma*), a tough lawn weed, after beefing up her grass. Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

You're right. **Weed control products for lawn are overused.** For instance, some people apply them to a whole lawn even when only one section is weedy. That does mean trouble, especi-

ally if the product includes fertilizer so we overload the environment with manufactured chemicals of two kinds.

Yet these products are also essential unless you're willing to do some spot weeding.

So try this. **Focus on your lawn's health**, rather than on killing weeds. **Aerate** the lawn. Apply **slow release organic (carbon based) fertilizer** such as Fertrel or Ringer Lawn Restore now and this fall. Keep the grass **watered** well. **Set your mower to cut 3" high** so the grass blades can produce lots of energy and cooling shade for their roots. **Overseed** with high quality grass seed, which contains new varieties that are resistant to disease. A healthy, thick lawn can outgrow its insect pests and crowd out weeds.

Once you've started helping the lawn recover and thrive, **look closer at those weeds.** Are they concentrated by type in a few areas? Conditions may be right for them but not for grass. Where the lawn is thin under a tree, violets may dominate. Plantain, spurge or dandelions grow thick where the soil is hard packed in the sun near a street. **Recognize patterns** like this and you can do more for the lawn's condition -- **prune trees** to increase light, use a garden fork rather than a core aerator to **loosen soil deeper**, even **switch lawn to shade-loving groundcovers** such as sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) or lamium (*L. maculatum* varieties such as 'White Nancy').

The thicker the lawn, the fewer the weeds. Whether you decide to dig out weeds, apply a broadleaf weedkiller that may kill the weeds but spare the grass, or kill or dig out a whole area to start over, always **sow grass seed as soon as possible** afterward, before Nature can fill the gap with weed seedlings.

Make a commitment to the lawn and **allow it a full year for recovery.** Good luck, and let me know what questions you develop about specific weeds or conditions. Email photos if you can.

Meanwhile, peruse weed picture collections or brochures to **identify your lawn's invaders.** Then you can ask more of me and others, and search the Internet for a particular weed name. Copy these addresses into your browser to see if there are any familiar, weedy "faces" there.

<http://jrscience.wcp.muohio.edu/downloads/LawnWeeds1.jpg>

<http://jrscience.wcp.muohio.edu/downloads/LawnWeeds2.jpg>

<http://www.topturf.net/lawnweeds.htm>

<http://www.ext.nodak.edu/county/cass/horticulture/lawn/weed.htm>

Alone in the Garden? Never! Our mentors will always be with us:

Most of us had a **parent, neighbor or other veteran gardener** to guide us through our first attempts to grow. The **gardening advice they gave us** may include facts that took many years to develop and generations to confirm and tweak. Think how many observant eyes, growing seasons and trials went into this line about the right time to put a given seed into the ground: "When elm leaves are big as a shilling, plant kidney beans if you are willing"?

Is there such wisdom in your hands now? Want to pay public homage to all those generations of effort? Tell me about it.

Here's one a reader's submitted. Send yours -- I'll pass along all I can.

I remember planting annuals,
with (my grandmother)
watching nearby, and someone
remarking that I was doing it
wrong and she said,
"Never mind, they'll put
themselves right and shake
themselves off". They did, too!
- Corky Smith -

Probing the worth of deep watering wand

I have one of those gadgets with a **long probe** which you put on your hose for fertilizing/**watering trees at the root level**. **Do you recommend this** method for watering or fertilizing trees? Can it be used to water rose bushes? - M. S. -

Letting water soak in from above is better, M.S. If you're still working on your soil's structure so water tends to run off, scrape extra soil from between plants into watering rings -- circular levees about an inch high. Mulch over the levees to hide them if you want. Then water to fill the levee, knowing it will be held over the root zone to soak in several inches.

When the top soil is loose and roots are growing actively, water that soaked in long ago wicks up from many feet down.

Watering wands do little except to perpetuate the myth that roots are deep. Even the largest trees have their most important water-collecting roots in the top 18 inches. And plants suffering from soil that's become compacted over their roots need aeration, which is difficult to accomplish with those probes, which go most easily into already-loose soil.

A gardener I know did find a **worthwhile use** for one, however. He would stick it into the soil around a newly planted tree, shrub or large perennial and press the trigger, flooding the backfill soil and gently **settling air pockets around the new transplants**.

Speaking of the old wisdom, when it turns out to be right, what a delight:

When my daughter got married... she wanted an outdoor wedding in our backyard. We checked with the Farmers Almanac and they said May 3 would be the only non-rain day in May. We picked it and they were right. We invited 180 people and most of them came. It was a lot of work, but a lot of fun."

- Sylvia Schult -

Spring rain is a vegetable garden's gain

To find out when I could plant my tomatoes and green peppers and I came up with your site. I live on Prince Edward Island. It is my third year growing a vegetable garden. Besides the tomatoes and peppers, I like to grown cucumbers, gourds (my nieces and nephews like them), lettuce, carrots, beets, squash, and beans. I've had pretty good success, especially last year when we planted in the rain. We didn't know what would happen, there was a **large downpour just when we finished planting**. **It was the best garden**, I was so proud. - R. -

Rain right after planting is an unbeatable blessing on a garden, R. It sounds like your good year of growing is a prime example of that.

Thanks for letting us know how big a difference it makes. In a year like this when rain seems to come on each day we want to garden, it helps to focus on that benefit.

Let me know whenever you have questions. I'd love to talk differences in gardening between our two areas.

A-OK to work in the rain but don't risk it in electrical storms

It can be pleasant to work in a light rain on a warm day, and transplants take root at great rate in those conditions.

However, the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) warns us that **lightning can strike from out of the blue**, well ahead of rain and clouds. Having been in a garden just 50 feet from a lightning strike, close enough to two others that I felt the boom in my stomach and never wanting to be there again, I heed the NOAA's advice: **If I can hear thunder** I know that **lightning can strike**. I drop my metal tools and go inside.

For more, copy this URL to your browser: crh.noaa.gov/fsd/summer/lightning.php



Sometimes we don't even notice a minor aphid infestation like this, and the plants endure!

Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

A fit over aphids may be energy mis-spent

Dear Janet, Expecting a day of joy in the garden instead **I found -- aphids!** Was it the wet spring? More to the point what do I DO? I doused them with insecticidal soap and will repeat, but is there something that works? I am distraught. **I've never had this before.**

Also I've never seen **roses start out so badly.** Two already have a few **yellow leaves.** I've treated them with Bayer Advanced 3-in-1 (Insect,

Disease and Mite Control) and fed them with Osmocote. What else to do? - S.F. -

P.S. (I know you aren't a rose fan--but I so love them)

P.P.S. Also my **iris already have spots** on the fronds. Was it the wet spring? Everything looks worse this year than in previous years and I've spent so much time and money!

I know you feel challenged already, S.F., but I have one more challenge for you. Come see me next Saturday or Sunday at Specialty Growers (details on page 17). Bring with you ten flowers that you pick from your garden because they're wonderful and deserve to be shown off. I'll help you add just the right companions to your star line-up. Afterward, once we're focused on the fun that has been and still is in your garden *then* we can talk about the problems a couple of your plants are having.

I preface my answer this way because I suspect **you're focused too intently on what's wrong** in your garden. Something is always going "wrong" in a garden because every perennial has up years and down. They can afford it, since there's always next year for a comeback. Better to focus on the fact **for every troubled perennial, 8 or 9 others are having a good or great year.**

This ratio holds true even in the world's top gardens. Even there, trouble comes and plants get ugly. Yet much that's beautiful remains to be highlighted in the gardens' newsletters and gift shop postcards. What's not beautiful receives forgiveness, treatment as needed and camouflage if the problem's ugly. Once in a while plants with chronic trouble are shown the door and replaced with pest resistant cultivars. (Such as at right, zebra iris *I. pallida argenteo-variegata*, resistant to the soft rot that can ruin other irises.)



Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

Insecticidal soap can manage aphids. So can soapy water or a forceful spray from a hose-end water gun. Users of biological controls report that releasing just a few ladybugs per plant can reduce aphid abundance by 98% in two days. None of these tactics kills all of the aphids, which can produce more in just a few days, so **follow-up is necessary.**

Timing is critical in this as in all insect control. When the weather's warming in spring new aphids take four- to five days to mature and produce young, so it's a good idea to strike again at **four day intervals until the aphid population simply crashes.**

Does wet weather promote aphids? Not necessarily. Warm weather plus water puts plant growth in high gear. All that **lush new greenery fuels fast development of leaf eaters** such as aphids. **Lots of fertilizer can give insects a boost, too,** because the sap they sip (aphids) or tissue they chew (iris borers) is that much richer. It may seem an onslaught, but it's not unusual.

Using pesticides in the way you describe troubles me. Do your roses have mite trouble? Are the yellowing leaves from nutrient deficiency? Applying miticides and fungicides without specific reason is **like taking antibiotics "just because."** There is no way to measure if any good result occurred. Real causes and **more serious trouble can be overlooked** -- yellowing foliage that's a symptom of winter injury to the crown or cane, for instance -- until any opportunity to control or correct them passes. Meanwhile, it's likely that any problem operating at tolerable, naturally controlled or not-even-noticeable level is now **building a resistance to the pesticide.** Should the plant falter and the low-level trouble steps up a notch, we may find that the remedies available to us are ineffective.

At botanical gardens and other top notch growing facilities, where pests exist but beauty reigns, the **first line of both defense and remedy is plant health.** Growers have learned, and taught, that roses resist disease best that are in full sun, enjoy great drainage, have rich clay loam soil or soil supplemented with a fertilizer that counteracts its particular deficiencies. They do even better when cared for by a gardener who faithfully removes all discolored foliage. If the

assurances on a pesticide package make you feel that you don't need to look at and continually correct for sun, drainage and fertility, they are not doing you any favor.

As for **irises**, they need **regular division** to keep them vigorous and **meticulous clean-up** all year but especially in fall to prevent their ubiquitous fungal and insect pests from building up.



One reason to divide irises often, and in July, is to eliminate iris borers which are in the rhizomes at that time of year. Where the borers gnaw, rot fungus follows. Fewer borers means less rot. Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

In growing iris **the first few years may be something of a honeymoon**, but if we lay back those can be followed by unexpected trouble. Open an auditory channel to any spring in gardening history and we will hear some gardener somewhere saying "What is this with the irises?! This has never happened before!"

I truly hope I see you at Specialty Growers on May 30 or May 31 and we can not only map out your path to healthy roses and iris, but laugh together about the trouble.

Rose hater? Rhodo basher? Not guilty!

People tell me I hate roses and rhododendrons. I've given you the wrong impression.

I love roses, especially the beautiful maroon in the new foliage and the flower's smell and saturated color.

Rhododendrons enchant me. Azaleas too, especially the airy, fragrant deciduous species.

What I don't like is to try to grow them where they are not happy to grow. A rose in a humid, cold winter climate is a high maintenance creature, as is a rhodie or azalea in an alkaline region where winter air is dry and winds are strong. What I gripe about and discourage others

from committing to is giving that much care to a plant only to have it look only half as good as experience tells me it would look in a better site.

I don't think I've said, "I hate roses" or "I hate rhododendrons." From now on I will speak more clearly when I say, "Send your roses to California" or "Let gardeners in maritime climates and acid, cool Smokies have the rhodies" and "**Grow what grows best here.**" More on this on page 15, concerning native plants.

Love butterflies? Hold the pesticide

Something I do love and which I'm told has come through loud and clear, right from my first presentation in 1993 on the topic -- **wildlife in a garden**.

Although any of the thousands of non-plant species in a garden can get out of hand and I do step in to throw punches in plants' defense, I think every life form out there is wonderful in some way or at least deserves respect. *All* of them, from aphids to warblers and back to anteaters. (It's a silly dream but there it is: To borrow an anteater from the zoo and turn it loose where the ants are out of hand. It wouldn't be a low-impact ant cure: They roto-till the ground in pursuit of ant colonies!)

Butterflies are a special love. They captured my kids' interest and became an all-family hobby.

Which is why we adopted this a mantra: Want **to enjoy butterflies? Stop spraying**, dusting and dousing plants.

Your plants won't die, or the few that do will be doing you a favor by freeing you from the

work involved in thwarting Nature. Caterpillars are killed by even casual contact with an insecticide -- they're far more vulnerable than the usual target insects. A coating of fungicide will turn them away from nectar source and larval food alike.

The list of caterpillar food plants on the next page is something my kids helped to develop and now we share it with you. For each butterfly you see drinking nectar in your yard, look up what the need as a caterpillar-stage plant. Plant something from that list or watch the butterfly lay eggs on those you already have.

We used the Audubon Society's Guide to North American Butterflies to identify butterflies and their larval foods.

The black swallowtail butterfly caterpillar was my kids' first and most enduring love. It can eat parsley, rue, dill or queen Anne's lace and other plants in the carrot family -- whichever plant its parent chooses for egg laying. In our yard the butterflies favored dill and rue.
Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

Were you there? Win my 6-book CD!

When she was **nine**, my daughter made a **presentation on butterfly gardening** for me, when I had laryngitis. (You who were there to see her stand-in performance all those years ago will not be surprised that she's now a highly rated lecturer at University of Toronto.) If you were there, you remember where that presentation took place. **Email me with that location and I'll send you a free copy of my six books on one CD.**



Especially for Butterfly Lovers: Great Lakes Plants for Butterfly Caterpillars

Butterfly

American Painted Lady

Baltimore

Black Swallowtail

Brown Elfin

Cabbage White/Veined White

Checkered White

Comma

Common Checkered Skipper

Eastern Tailed Blue

Falcate Orangetop

Fritillary (several types)

Frosted Elfin

Giant Swallowtail

Gorgone Crescentspot

Hackberry Butterfly

Henry's Elfin

Hickory Hairstreak

Hoary Edge

Monarch

Mourning Cloak

Olive Hairstreak

Olympia Marbledwing

Painted Lady

Pearly Crescentspot

Pipevine Swallowtail

Question Mark

Red Admiral

Silvery Crescentspot

Spicebush swallowtail

Spring Azure

American cranberrybush-),

Sulphurs (Common-, Clouded-, Little Yellow and Orange-)

Tawny Edge Skipper

Tawny Emperor

Tiger Swallowtail

Viceroy

Zebra Swallowtail

Host Plants

everlastings: *Antennaria dioica*#, *Anaphalis* spp. (species),
Gnaphalium spp.

turtlehead (*Chelone* spp.), sometimes white ash@

Umbelliferae* (incl. Queen Anne's lace, dill, fennel, parsley), some

Rutaceae incl. rue (*Ruta graveolens*)

azalea, blueberry, bearberry

Brassicaceae* (incl. cabbages, broccoli, candytuft, rock cress); nasturtium

spiderflower (*Cleome hasslerana*)

Urticaceae* incl. stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) & false nettle

(*Boehmeria cylindrica*), elm, hops

rose mallow, *Hibiscus* and other Malvaceae*

clover, pea family/legumes (incl. sweet pea)

Arabis spp., hedge mustard (*Sisymbrium* spp.)

Viola spp. incl. pansy and common violet

Fabaceae*/legumes/pea family incl. lupine (*Lupinus* spp.), false indigo

Rutaceae* incl. rue (*Ruta graveolens*), prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum*

americanum), hoptree (*Ptelea trifoliata*) & some *Citrus* trees

sunflower, other Compositae*

hackberry (*Celtis* spp.)@

redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)@, blueberry

hickory (*Carya* spp.)@

Fabaceae*/pea family/legumes such as false indigo (*Baptisia australis*)

Asclepiaceae* (milkweeds)

willow@, elms (*Ulmus* spp.)@, hackberry (*Celtis* spp.)@, cottonwood@

red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

Brassicaceae* incl. toothwort (*Dentaria*), rock cress (*Arabis*)

daisy family /Compositae* incl. thistles (*Cirsium* spp.)

Aster spp.

Dutchman's pipe vine (*Aristolochia macrophylla*)

hackberry@, hops, Urticaceae* incl. stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) &

false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*)

hops, Urticaceae* incl. stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) & false nettle

(*Boehmeria cylindrica*)

sunflower, gray coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*), Compositae* (asters)

spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), sassafras

dogwoods (*Cornus* spp.)@, *Ceanothus* spp.@, *Viburnum* spp. (arrowwood-, Koreanspice-,

fairy candle (*Cimicifuga* spp.), *Spiraea* spp.

clover, legumes (such as perennial sweet pea, lupine, locust tree)

grasses incl. switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*)

hackberry (*Celtis* spp.)@

willow (*Salix* spp.)@, cottonwood/poplar (*Populus* spp.)@, birch (*Betula*

spp.)@, ash (*Fraxinus* spp.)@, cherry (*Prunus* spp.)@, tulip-tree

(*Liriodendron tulipifera*)@

mainly willow@; sometimes poplar@, apple (*Malus* spp.)@, plum@

paw paw tree@

* These names refer to a family of plants. Some common plants within the family are listed for you. Consult a reference book such as Hortus Third or the Internet for a complete listing of the plant groups within each family.

Use the botanical name of the plant when ordering; common names sometimes refer to a number of plants but butterfly caterpillars are dependent on a specific plant.

@ Don't forget - trees also support butterfly caterpillars. Don't use insecticides on trees unless absolutely necessary.

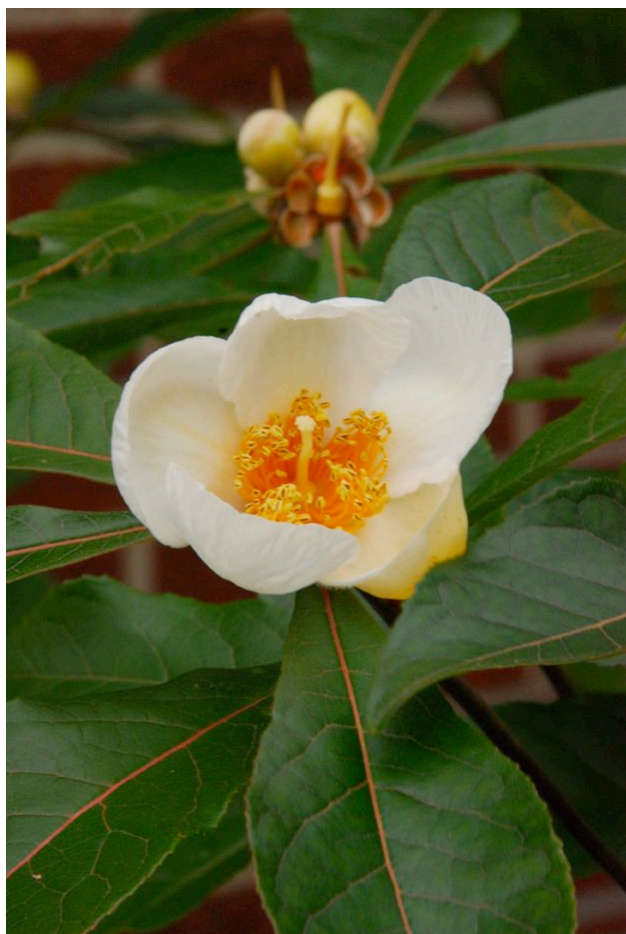
One-Two Finish for Butterfly Facts

Two final but important points. First, don't expect the addition of an individual perennial or annual to bring in the butterflies. A solitary shrub, fully grown with hundreds of flowers, can be a draw but massed plantings of annuals and perennials are more likely to catch a butterfly's eye. **Brenda Dziedzic, founder of the Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association (SEMBA)*** and more dedicated to butterfly study than my whole family combined, advises planting at least three because, "It's easier for butterflies to see a group of 3 or more plants."

Second, you may already have adult butterflies visiting your yard and simply haven't seen them. Dziedzic recommends that "From back to front of garden, plant tallest to shortest, so plants are easily observed." To insure their continued presence, verify that you're also offering them host plants for their caterpillars.

*For more on butterflies in southeast Michigan, visit SEMBA's website or drop in to a meeting to learn from some of the avid butterfly gardeners there. www.sembabutterfly.com

*For those in other regions, take a look at www.butterfliesandmoths.org



Franklinia (*F. alatomaha*) presents big, camellia-like flowers in August and September. The leaves may turn fall maroon while it's yet in bloom. I wanted the tree in a client's garden but didn't have the room (it's 15-20' in zone 5b). Realizing that it blooms on new wood I opted to treat it as a cut-back shrub. Uncut trees of its type are nearly leafed out by May 20 when this photo was taken. Mine, forced to start from low- and dormant buds, is slower. When a friend with a tree-sized franklinia asks "Is yours leafed out yet, I send her elsewhere to compare apples to apples. See page 13. Photos ©2009 Steven Nikkila

Tree's late start can be result of trouble or trimming

I have a question about *Franklinia*, **when does it leaf out?** I have one that is alive, has buds and very, **very slowly emerging**. There is not a lot of green on it right now. What do you think? Thanks. - Julia -

I can't answer for all *Franklinia* trees, Julia, because I always cut back the one I tend. I cut it back hard on each April 1 to keep it as a shrub rather than a tree. My cut forces it back to just a few ready-to-go, low buds -- those that formed low enough on the wood last year that they were under my annual cut line. It's growing from those buds now (photos on page 12). The dormant buds it's calling into play are only just swelling.

Kudos for doing the exact right thing when questioning a plant's behavior or health. That is to compare it to other plants of its type in similar circumstances. I've put you in touch with a *Franklinia* grower who does not cut his tree. I hope you hear that his is slow, too, because otherwise yours may be telling you it was damaged during winter. That's always a possibility on this tree that's on the edge of its hardiness even in protected parts of zone 5.

Steve Speaks: Straight scoop from the short shovel about weed whips and trees



Sometimes I get so caught up in explanations why and how that I forget the power of a short, sweet, just-do-it approach. Until, that is, I overhear Steve Nikkila in conversations like this:

BB: Sandy says that I **messed this tree up** too much **hitting it with the weed whacker**. She says I have to cut it down.

Steve: Take it down.

BB: But it's only some little dings.

Steve: Yup, that's a thorough job, all right -- **little dings all the way around. It's toast.** Take it down.

Bark is the tree's only defense and it's not very thick even on a very old tree. This tree can be killed by weed whip damage and tractor collisions -- decades of growing lost to a lawn cutting speed demon. If a service mows your lawn, why not establish a fine for every weed whip injury?

Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

This week in Janet's garden

Grow with me! This week I will:

Have fun at the farmers' market and garden centers. We're all having pure fun now, planting plugs, baskets and pots of color, so it's great to touch elbows with others in the zone.

My biggest smiles come from talking to people, such as the man loading 14 flats of annuals into his Ford Mustang. He got them all in, and was applauded by the woman parked alongside.

Look for trouble, but not so close I can't see what's looking good. B asked me to look at her boxwood because, "It has these strange things growing on it. Ever since you wrote about that leaf miner I've been checking on it every day."

The "strange things" were just the boxwood's own seed capsules (below). Nothing to worry about.

Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila



The **boxwood leaf miner** adults are out now, however, and laying eggs for this summer's feast. Rattle your shrubs and see if a bunch of **gnat-sized bugs*** with rusty red bodies are taking refuge there -- leaf miner adults. If yours is one of the areas hard hit by boxwood miner the last few years, you may want to take steps to cut their numbers now when they're most easily reached.

That **puckered new leaf** (right tip, above) might be a concern, too, B. Keep an eye on the shrub's new tips and if more than one in ten show that symptom, you may want to take steps to cut short a **boxwood psyllid** reunion.

* Copy this URL to your browser to see them ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/shrubs/ort016e/blmadul2.jpg

Cut down the early bulb foliage -- crocus, squill, early daffodils and hyacinth. If it hasn't been covered over by other plants and its fade is unpleasant to watch, cut it. It's been there long enough to insure a 2010 return. I give the later-blooming bulbs about two more weeks, then cut them, too.

Find those elusive special plants. There's no need to plant everything at once. Planting is fun, so why not keep doing a little bit all summer? I do that, and am now on the hunt for the plants I drew into designs but couldn't find earlier.

Native plants often fall in this category, so thank heaven for a strong Native Plant Producers Association with good growers like Bill Schneider at Wildtype* in Mason, MI. We brought home a beautiful young spicebush (below, left, *Lindera benzoin*) from Wildtype (below, right) for a friend who wants it as a larval host plant for the spicebush swallowtail butterfly.

*www.wildtypeplants.com



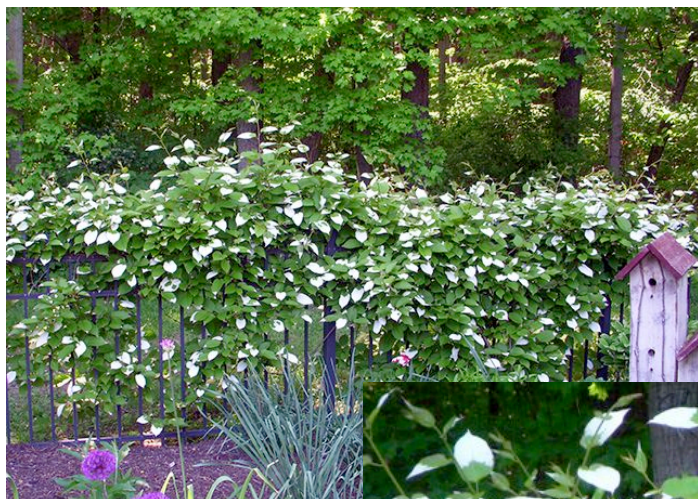
Spicebush blooms yellow before *Forsythia* and would make a great addition to almost any back yard shrub border. On June 7 in Rochester at the Native Plant Festival** you can shop for plants, hear lectures and talk to experts like Trish Hennig from American Roots nursery about natives you might include in your landscape. Some of you may recall Hennig's fine nursery (in Ortonville; 248-627-2585) and display gardens from your attendance at my 2007 Wooded Lot workshop.

**www.oaklandlandconservancy.org/

Wrap-up with Grins and Grow-ans that turn our green thumbs up or down

Grins: To the mental and creative reserves that we find to keep kids out and interested in the garden. Here's something overheard over the fence as a young woman attempted to accomplish some yardwork in the company of her sons aged 4, 3 and 1. From the 4 year old: "Awww. How come he gets *that!!* I want something sharp, too!"

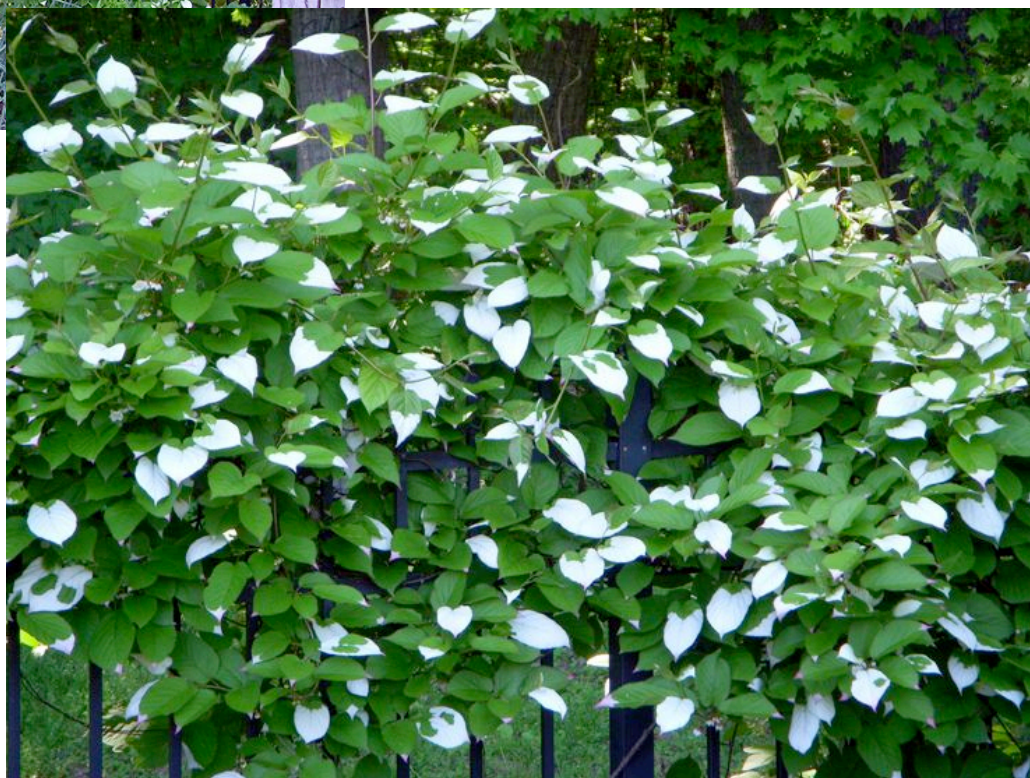
Grow-ans: To a problematic plant deciding to look its best only when you can't be there to see it. In that case what you know of it may come as a message from your well-meaning garden-sitter, along these lines, "Hi, Virginia! You know that kiwi vine that's supposed to have white- and pink-edged leaves and usually the frost nips the first flush of growth, then the second growth comes in all-green? Well it's too bad you're not here to see it because for once it's glorious. No frost damage at all this year and it looks just like the catalog pictures. Makes that part of your garden look fabulous. I hope the deer don't eat it or something now."



Kiwi vine (*Actinidia kolomikta*) appears to be in bloom all summer, thanks to the white and pink margins and tips on its leaves. This one is in sun all morning, shaded all afternoon and wind protected by the woods to the west. At five years in place it has just become established enough to have a full complement of mature (blooming condition) branches that will bear the most colorful foliage. Its June flowers are tiny and greenish white, not showy although they are very fragrant. Photos by the author.

Who's Janet?

A trowel and notebook gardener. Janet gardens professionally and so often benefits from what others have told her, or from what she learned in researching questions for other gardeners, that she cultivates learning as diligently as she does her clients' gardens. She's written ten books, produced a



Q&A column weekly since 1993, created and run a gardening school, speaks to groups and teaches classes every chance she gets. "And what I know for certain after all this time are about two things. One, that I'm never going to know enough to be completely on top of a garden. Even if I could remember everything at the right times to keep every plant in line, Mother Nature always has something new to toss my way. And two, that even though there are always more things going right than wrong in a garden I might miss it all if I focus on the negative. Every minute in a garden can be wonderful if I keep those two things in mind." Email questions to her at JMaxGarden@aol.com.

Following up on past items: Did volunteer snaps survive winter?

In late December last year, Ann wrote to tell me, "As the snow has melted from my deck, I have discovered in a flower pot three **volunteer snapdragons** that look as happy as can be! They'll be interesting to watch as winter rolls on!"

I've been seeing some zone defying survivors this week, including blue *Salvia farinacea* that **wintered here, two zones colder** than their norm. So Ann's snapdragons came to mind. Did they survive, Ann?

Where to catch Janet in-person:

Saturday and Sunday, May 30-31, 11 a.m. *Great Bedfellows*. At **Specialty Growers Spring Open House**, 4330 Golf Club Drive, east of Latson and north of Grand River midway between Brighton and Howell, Michigan. This is Janet's crash course on finding the perfect mates for perennials you're growing or thinking to add to your gardens. Learn what goes with what and why. All the critical characteristics are covered: Complementary physical features, compatible energy levels, similar cultural needs! \$5.

(Yes, it's true, this is all there is to the list -- I've finally slowed down. If you want to see me during the next month, this is the place! I'll stay after my talk until 3:00 p.m. each day to answer questions, so bring your garden designs for review and suggestions.)

Call Specialty Growers at 517-546-7742 or visit ww.specialtygrowers.net for more details.



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