



# Garden Talk!

for the Heartland Garden Enthusiast

August 2003

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## Don't Miss a Single Issue

Due to upcoming budget restraints and changes in mailing procedures, please check your mailing label and make sure we have your correct address.

If not, please call 660-665-9866 or email millerva@missouri.edu with your correct address. If you would prefer not to receive this newsletter please call or email us with that also.

## NEVER TOO LATE TO PAR

*Submitted by: Mona Wood, Master Gardener Intern*

Turn your mini-harvest into a mega-harvest and give the surplus to the hungry. I'm beginning a *Plant A Row for the Hungry* campaign, and would like your assistance. PAR is a national people-helping-people project initiated by the Garden Writers Association (GWA). It's aim is to enlist the nation's gardeners in helping to feed the hungry by donating fresh produce to area food banks. I need your assistance in finding all of the contacts for any local food banks, food kitchens, etc. I will chair this project, and may eventually need help setting up deliveries to the contacts. I would like to focus on Adair, Knox, Macon, Schuyler, and Shelby counties. You can contact me at 660-739-4397, or e-mail me at [dehall@marktwain.net](mailto:dehall@marktwain.net) with any information or donations. **All donations are tax deductible.**

Here's what you can do right now to increase your harvest and have surplus to give. Wait—and harvest more. Let your crops go—and grow! Pick bean babies for your own table, and let a crop mature. Too many tomatoes is what happens when you let the plants sucker: they'll slow the crop a bit, but yield lots later. You'll have loads of extra cucumbers, zucchini, and squash if you allow the plants to mature. Ditto the root vegetables, and much else. Don't allow fruit to rot on the ground: bag it and take it where it will do some good!

To sustain the extra growth, scratch a little compost or fertilizer into the soil beside the plants designated for increased yields and PAR giving. To have produce to give later, start seeds of the cool-weather vegetables now. Some of these have time to mature here—lettuces, radishes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, and the cabbage group including kale and broccoli.

A few apples, a sack of tomatoes, a handful of cucumbers may not seem like much. But when gardeners in a community get going, they can deliver big time! Who needs the little, or lot, you've got to give? Again, that's where I need your help. Help me to find these contacts. Gardeners can make a difference.

### PLANT PROFILE: **Liatris**

**Scientific Name:** Liatris

**Common Name:** Blazing Star, Gayfeather

**Flowers:** spikes of erect pink, purple, or white colored flowers

**Bloom Time:** mid to late summer

**Hardiness:** zones 3-9

**Size:** plants are 2-5 ft. tall; flower spikes are 1-2 ½ ft. tall

**Culture:** full sun, average to rich well-drained soil; native North American wildflower

**Propagation:** Plant in spring or early fall, setting corms 2 ½ inches deep and tuberous roots 4-6 inches deep. Space plants one foot apart. Mulch plants to add organic matter to the soil and help control weeds.

**Landscape Uses:** Use in sunny beds and borders as well as in sunny meadows and wildflower plantings.

**Disease & Insect Susceptibility:** none serious

# FREQUENTLY ASKED VEGETABLE QUESTIONS.....

## AND THE ANSWERS

➤ **My tomatoes are dying from the bottom up. Why?**

One likely cause is Early Blight. Early Blight is a fungus that attacks the tomato leaves and fruit beginning in June in Missouri. A distinguishing characteristic of early blight is the lesions on the leaves and stems. Early Blight lesions have a distinct “bulls-eye” appearance. To control this disease, stake and mulch the tomatoes, increase plant spacing to reduce humidity around the plant and remove some of the lower leaves.

➤ **Why do tomatoes get a black spot on the bottom of the fruit?**

The black spot on the bottom or blossom end of the tomato is called blossom end rot. Blossom end rot is a problem in dry, hot weather. Make sure that your pH is adequate (6-6.5), and the tomatoes are evenly watered.

➤ **Why do cucumber vines suddenly wilt and die?**

Cucumbers are susceptible to bacterial wilt that is transmitted by striped and spotted cucumber beetles. The best method for control of this disease is to control the cucumber beetles. The slicing cucumber cultivar ‘County Fair’ has some tolerance to bacterial wilt.

➤ **Can cucumbers cross-pollinate with cantaloupes and watermelons?**

No. Cucumbers will not cross-pollinate with other cucurbits because they are different species.

➤ **Are red peppers different from green peppers?**

No, all green peppers will color to red or yellow as they become more mature.

➤ **My cantaloupes have not set fruit. Why?**

Cantaloupes are cross-pollinated by bees. If you do not have good bee activity, pollination and fruit set is reduced.

➤ **What makes cucumbers bitter?**

Generally stress during growth makes them bitter. This includes heat and nutrient or water stress.

➤ **My potatoes have formed a green fruit that looks like a tomato. Is it possible that the potatoes cross-pollinated with my tomatoes?**

No, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and potatoes are in the Solanaceae or nightshade family, but are self-pollinated. The green fruit that is observed is actually the true fruit of the potato that contains many small seeds. The fruit is poisonous and should not be eaten.

➤ **My snap beans look healthy but aren’t forming bean pods. Why?**

Bean blossoms will abort (drop) from the plants in hot, dry weather. Also, too much nitrogen fertilizer or manure will prevent pods from setting. Beans do not need a lot of nitrogen. Bean pods will not set if soil is waterlogged.

➤ **Why does super sweet (Sh2) sweet corn need to be isolated from field corn or other types of sweet corn?**

Super sweet cultivars must be isolated from all other sweet and field corn because cross-pollination between super sweet and other corn cultivars will produce kernels that are tough and starchy. Isolation by a distance of 300 feet or 12 days difference in silking is recommended.

➤ **Why didn’t the ears on my corn fill out to the tip?**

Poor tip fill can be caused by poor pollination. Hot, dry weather during silking inhibits good pollination. Rather than plant a single row of sweet corn in the garden, you should plant several short rows. This will allow for better pollination.

➤ **Why aren’t my peppers setting fruit?**

Pollination can be reduced if temperatures drop below 60 degrees or above 90 degrees. Too much nitrogen will also reduce fruit set.

.....continued on next page

➤ **Why are there a lot of small holes in the leaves of my eggplants?**

This damage is caused by the flea beetle. Rowcovers will provide some protection. Sevin insecticide can be used, but do not apply within one day of harvest.

➤ **Why do tomatoes crack?**

Tomatoes will crack when there is a fluctuation in the growth of the tomato plant. So, anything that affects the even, steady growth of the tomato can induce cracking. Usually, you see cracking in dry weather when rainfall is uneven. Water your plants regularly.

➤ **My tomatoes are misshapen. Why?**

Misshapen fruit is likely the result of poor pollination. Pollination is inhibited by low temperatures (<55 degrees), high temperatures (day >92 degrees; night >70 degrees) or cloudy weather at the time of flowering or fruit set.

➤ **What makes corn tassel while plants are still very short?**

Assuming that this is not an early, naturally short variety, lack of nitrogen, poor soil conditions, or drought might cause this.

➤ **What makes pea plants die, often as they are just coming into production?**

It may be wilt, root rot diseases, or hot weather. Use wilt resistant varieties, and rotate pea plantings to prevent build-up of soil diseases. Mulch between rows to keep soil cool longer. Plant to get maximum growth and production before hot weather arrives.

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## **JUMPING OAK GALLS REPORTED IN MISSOURI**

**By: Robert K. Lawrence, Forest Entomologist  
Missouri Department of Conservation**

We have recently been getting several reports of jumping oak gall damage to white and burr oaks. Normally we don't get too concerned about damage from leaf galls, but jumping oak galls occasionally get heavy enough populations to cause whole stands of white oaks to brown up, and generate calls from land-owners. If galls are really heavy, the leaves can turn black and drop prematurely. These galls are caused by tiny cynipid wasps (*Neuroterus* sp.) To confirm presence of jumping oak galls - look for pin-head size galls scattered across the undersides of the leaves. They will be round or sort of a flattened ball-shape. As the galls 'mature' they will drop from the leaf, so you may only see a few on there now. But there should be several yellowish/brown spots where they were previously attached. After the galls drop, they can sometimes be seen to 'jump'. That's caused by the wriggling inside of the wasp larva. We assume this behavior causes the gall to drop down further in the grass and litter and provides better survival for the wasp. The wasp remains in the gall until emerging next spring.

The only management available is sanitation (raking and destroying fallen leaves) and good tree care to maintain tree vigor. Insecticide applications are not an option because 1) it's usually not worthwhile using them on leaf galls, and 2) you would need to apply them in very early spring, before you know whether you are going to have a problem. Jumping oak galls typically appear in high numbers for 1-2 years, and then subside.

See these web sites for photos and more information:

<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/forestry/Health/jumpingoakgalls.htm>

[http://ppdl.org/dd/id/jumping\\_oak\\_leaf\\_gall-oak.html](http://ppdl.org/dd/id/jumping_oak_leaf_gall-oak.html)

## **FOOD FEST TO BE HELD SEPT. 20**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Northeast Missouri Food Fest will be held on Saturday, September 20 on the courthouse lawn in Kirksville. The Kirksville Area Master Gardeners will be having a fruit and vegetable show and several fruit and vegetable contests this year during the food fest. Some of those contests will be the "largest tomato, largest squash, largest sunflower, largest pumpkin, largest gourd, smallest gourd, smallest mini-pumpkin. There will also be vegetable art contests. Decorate your fruits and vegetables and enter them in our contest. For the fruit and vegetable show, you can enter any fruit or vegetable. Fair rules apply. Small vegetables (carrots, beets, beans, ect.): you need 5 on a plate; Large vegetables (gourd, squash, melon): you only need one; Tomatoes: you need 3. Ribbons will be awarded, along with some prizes in various categories. For more information call Jennifer at the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866.

# August Gardening Tips

## Ornamentals

- Deadhead annuals and perennials as needed.
- Continue spraying roses that are susceptible to black spot and other fungal diseases.
- Roses should receive no further nitrogen fertilizer after August 15th.
- Divide bearded iris now. Replant so tops of rhizomes are just above ground level.
- Prune to shape hedges for the last time this season.
- Evergreens can be planted or transplanted now to ensure good rooting before winter arrives. Water both the plant and the planting site several days before moving.
- Soak shrubs periodically during dry spells with enough water to moisten the soil to a depth of 8-10 inches.
- Once bagworms reach full size, insecticides are ineffective. Pruning off and burning large bags provides better control.
- Spray black locust trees now to protect against damage by the locust borer.
- Watch Scotch and Austrian pines for Zimmerman pine moth damage. Yellowing or browning of branch tips and presence of pitch tubes near leaf whorls are indicative. Prune and destroy infected parts.
- Hummingbirds are migrating through gardens now.
- Monitor plants for spider mite activity. Hose these pests off with a forceful spray of water.
- Second generation pine needle scale crawlers may be present on Mugo pine now.

## Vegetables

- Compost or till under residues from harvested crops.

- Broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower transplants should be set out now for the fall garden.
- Cure onions in a warm, dry place for 2 weeks before storing.
- Sow seeds of beans, beets, spinach, and turnips now for the fall garden. Spinach may germinate better if seeds are refrigerated for one week before planting.
- Begin planting lettuce and radishes for fall the last 2 weeks of August.
- Pinch the growing tips of gourds once adequate fruit set is achieved. This directs energy into ripening fruits, rather than vine production.

## Fruit

- Prop up branches of fruit trees that are threatening to break under the weight of a heavy crop.
- Thornless blackberries are ripening during the first week of August.
- Spray peach and other stone fruits now to protect against peach tree borers.
- Sprays will be necessary to protect late peaches from oriental fruit moth damage.
- Cultivate strawberries. Weed preventers can be applied immediately after fertilizing.
- Watch for fall webworm activity now.

## Turfgrass

- Apply insecticides now for grub control on lawns being damaged by their activity.
- Lawns scheduled for renovation this fall should be killed with Roundup. Have soil tested to determine fertility needs. During the last week in August, dormant lawns should be soaked to encourage strong fall growth.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**August 2:** SMALL FARM FIELD DAY-hosted by Russ Heindselman of LaGrange. Registration at 8 a.m., program starts at 8:30. The morning session will be held at LaGrange Lion's Club, afternoon farm tour at Russ Heindselman. There is no cost for the field day. For more info, contact Russ at 573.655.4639

**August 7-17:** Missouri State Fair, Seldalia

**August 11:** Master Gardener training starts in Hannibal. For more information contact Alix Carpenter at 573-769-2177.



## Garden Talk!

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