

Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture

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Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to kemeryr7@frontier.com.

Japanese Tree Lilac



It is the beginning of June, and Japanese Tree Lilacs are in bloom all over the city. This tree has become the new “go to” tree for street and residential planting in our area. I first saw his tree on the St. Francis University campus long ago. The tree was gorgeous but we were told it had issues with boring insects which made it a risky tree to plant in our area. Hmmmmm.....

Japanese Tree Lilac, *Syringa reticulata*, is a small tree with large clusters of white flowers. It grows up to 20-30 feet tall and 15-25 feet wide which allows it to be used in more locations due to the smaller size. Japanese Tree Lilac produces large panicles of creamy white flowers against the dark green foliage in late spring to early summer. The flowers are

fragrant, but not to the extent that common lilac shrubs are, the scent is often compared to a Privet shrub.

Another interesting trait of the Japanese Tree Lilac is the smooth, gray bark that has very noticeable lenticels, the corky spot on the bark that allows for gas exchange through the trunk, similar to the bark of a cherry tree.

The Celts believed that the lilac had magical powers due to its overpowering fragrance, while the Victorians thought that giving someone a lilac indicated an old, often bygone love. Widows frequently wore the flowers to commemorate their lost husbands. In some parts of the UK, it was believed that bringing white lilacs into the house was unlucky but finding a five-petaled one can lead to good fortune.

Within the British Isles, the lilac was considered an unlucky flower. It was perfectly fine to grow them outdoors, but bringing the flowers inside was asking for disaster. Purple lilacs were supposed to be far unluckier than the white ones, to the point that some said bringing a bouquet of purple lilacs inside would “bring death to a healthy home.” So bad was the reputation of lilacs that old British lore claimed that any girl wearing a sprig of lilacs on her dress was destined to be single forever.

In Greek mythology Syringa was a beautiful wood nymph. The god Pan spied her one day, lusted for her and k chase. Depending on one version of the story, to get away from him, she either transformed herself into a reed or a lilac bush, both of which make great flutes. Ultimately, Pan won because he made a flute from her disguise and it never left his side.

The Romans believed that the scent of lilacs could ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune. During the Renaissance period, lilacs were highly valued for their and were used in herbal remedies and potions. Their spiritual significance continued to evolve throughout the centuries, as they became a symbol of purity, enlightenment, and spiritual awakening.

Russians believed that holding a lilac blossom over a newborn could help bring the child lasting wisdom, while in the United States, the lilac flower is the official state flower of New Hampshire.

The lilac is the official flower for a couple's eighth wedding anniversary, so it is a great choice as a flower for this occasion. The tree is a member of the Olive family and reaches heights of 25-30 feet at maturity. The tree Lilac is native to Japan and is commonly found as a landscaping tree.

Japanese tree lilac (*Syringa reticulata*) contributes to the creation of wood products like instruments or knife handles. In China the beautiful flowering plant is a symbol of good luck.

Japanese Tree Lilac can be grown as an understory tree or as a specimen tree. It grows best in full sun but will tolerate part shade found in an understory condition. It is a very adaptable tree and will tolerate acid or alkaline soils as well as street conditions including salt spray in the winter months. Japanese Tree Lilac will even tolerate drought conditions; however, it is a tree that is not tolerant of poor drainage areas.

There are many good varieties to choose from when looking at Japanese Tree Lilac, other than going with the straight species. 'Golden Eclipse' is an interesting choice that is more compact and the leaves develop a golden edge as the season progresses. 'Ivory Silk' is a compact choice as well, that is sturdy and compact with a dense form and it blooms at a younger age than some of the other varieties. If you want to add a longer season of interest, you can plant 'Ivory Silk' and Signature together. Signature flowers 1-2 weeks later than 'Ivory Silk' and has smaller, more rounded flower clusters.

According to North Dakota State University, Japanese Tree Lilac is not a great choice for wildlife; however it does have value as a nesting location for many songbirds,

The tree is native to Japan but has acclimated to grow in cooler climates. The tree can grow to heights of 30' tall and 20' wide with an oval-rounded crown

Japanese lilac tree prefers moist, well-drained soils. It can also tolerate dry sites, alkaline soils, and road salts. The wide range of tolerable environments that the tree can handle makes it well suited as an urban landscape tree.

If the tree is in your landscape, remove faded flower panicles prior to seed set. Prune as needed immediately after flowering. Best growth typically occurs in cool summer climates. Not recommended for planting south of USDA Zone 7.

'Ivory Silk' is the most common cultivar and is a small tree which typically grows 20-25' tall with a rounded crown. Creamy white, fragrant, single flowers are arranged in dense, terminal clusters (panicles to 12" long). Blooms later than most other species of lilac.

Problems with Japanese tree lilacs only arise if planted in a less-than-ideal location. If you plant in a shady location, for instance, the leaves can develop powdery mildew like their shrub cousins. You can identify powdery mildew by the white powdery substance on leaves and stems. This problem usually occurs in rainy seasons and rarely does serious damage to the tree.

Too much nitrogen fertilizer can bring on bacterial blight. Keep your eye out for young shoots that develop black stripes or leaves that develop black spots. Flowers may also wilt and die.



Lilac borer can be an issue with stressed tree lilacs planted incorrectly or planted in poor sites. The larvae tunnel into the branches. Very badly infested branches may break off. Cut out infected stems and destroy them. If you provide adequate irrigation and fertilizer, you'll keep the borers at bay.

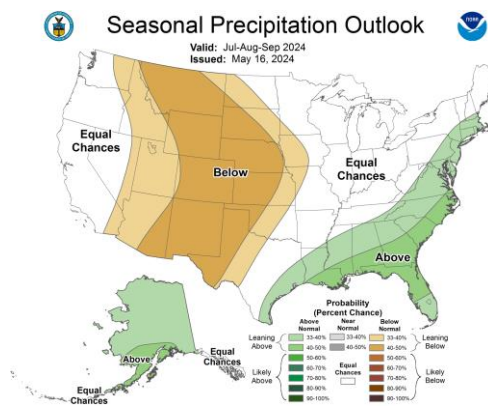
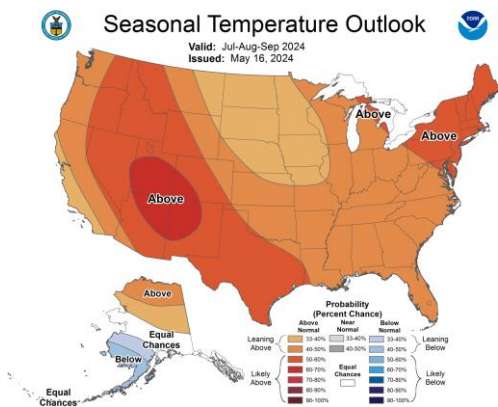


Lilac Borer Adult

Hot Weather Ahead

The hot weather in mid-summer very quickly makes me long for the cooler crisper days of autumn.

The climate prediction center has predicted our summer will be hot – and a bit of a change – and drier from their earlier forecasts.



The first thing to always remember is to take care of yourself. Avoid prolonged periods of exposure to intense heat. Drink plenty of fluids and wear sunscreen. It's a good time to invest in a proper garden hat to protect yourself from the intense sun. Make sure to wear mosquito repellent as I expect to see heavy mosquito populations this year. Try to get out into the garden in the early morning or later afternoon – but avoid the later evening if possible.

Many gardeners tend to overwater plants during hot weather periods. We know it's hot and plants use more water – so we just pour on the water whether the plants actually need it or not. If you have the resources, purchase a soil probe online. Soil probes allow a gardener to check the soil at various depths near plants to see if the soil at depth from six to twelve inches is damp or bone dry. This to me is the only way to tell if you need to water or not.

Late afternoon/evening is the worst time to water a garden because foliage and soil tends to remain wet for long periods compared to early morning watering. This promotes disease as most diseases need water to grow and spread. So try and get up earlier and water your garden in the morning. It wastes less water and reduces the chance of disease. Try and water at the base of plants – especially plants like tomato or roses that are more susceptible to foliar diseases.



Using mulch around plants is a great way to cut down on the need to water. There are so many mulch types available. The golden rule is that three inches is the correct depth for mulch. Avoid piling up the mulch near the base of any plant as this practice can cause problems. I don't like stone mulches as the stone retains too much heat which can bake a plant. I also don't like putting down plastic mulches or weed barriers in most situations as they can both make it more difficult for water to penetrate the soil – or hold too much water in soil if the area is overwatered.

A good golden rule to follow is that if we receive anywhere close to an inch of precipitation in any given week, one shouldn't have to worry too much about watering that week. There are always exceptions, which is why the soil probe can come in handy. Hanging baskets or other containerized plants need constant watering – sometimes every day to keep plants alive in hot weather. It's one reason I try to avoid too many plants in containers.

The Great British Gardening Show

The Great British Baking Show is one of my favorite shows to watch on Netflix or Britbox. The bakers undergo immense stress trying to produce perfect cakes and other desserts for the judges Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith. So I thought, “what if there was a Great British Gardening show for gardeners?”

Judging Day

10 apprehensive gardeners are sitting at long tables- each contestant has two baskets of flowers on the table beside them. Noel and Sandy – the comedic announcers for the show address the contestants: “ Bakers, you were given a showstopper challenge that involved you creating 2 hanging baskets – one an herb basket filled with decorative herbs one uses in your cooking. The other is an overall basket filled with your favorite flowers. The choice of plants and colors is entirely up to you. You were given three weeks to plant and grow your baskets. Your judges Paul and Prue expect beautiful baskets that are perfectly designed and absolutely beautiful.”

Paul and Prue – the somewhat arrogant and perfection-desiring judges address the gardeners.

“Mary, will you please bring your showstopper baskets up front please.” Mary, a shy Millennial gardener, brings her two baskets up front. Paul and Prue examine the herb basket. It appears that the basket contains nothing but mint. “What made you plant so much mint in your showstopper basket Mary?,” Paul asked - giving Mary a look that does not mask his disdain and disapproval. “Uh..I like mint” stammers Mary barely holding back tears. Prue “ Well it is obvious that You were not aware that mint can spread rampantly wherever it is planted and COMPLETELY TAKE OVER a basket” Prue looks down at Mary disapprovingly. “Frankly I am



disappointed, Mary.” Paul waves her off with a dismissive air. Mary goes back to her space sobbing uncontrollably.

Prue and Paul examine Mike’s flower basket. The basket has orange geraniums paired with pale pink and black petunias and fuchsia verbena. What appears to be a silver maple tree sapling is growing at the top of the basket.

Paul: “ Mike, I find your color choices disturbing – and alarming. **Mike:** “ I hear voices and see visions of my ex-wife constantly.” **Prue:** “What on earth made you decide to plant a tree in your basket, Mike? We never told you that trees were allowed in a hanging basket-for obvious reasons.” Prue takes out a metal flask and takes a deep pull from the flask – which seems to calm her down. **Mike:** “Earth Day was last week and I thought I needed to plant a tree somewhere.” Mike looks down at the ground. **Paul:** “I am SOOO disappointed - go back to your table. The men standing there will take you outside by where the sheep are grazing. You will receive 20 lashes and then stretched naked over an anthill.”

Final brisk music is played and credits roll as Mike is heard screaming in the distance.....

Weeds Find a Way

As gardeners it is difficult for us to accept that some things are inevitable-no matter how much we fiddle about in a garden. Weeds are but one example of the futility that things will ever be perfect in a garden space. It is because weeds are greedy for resources – outgrow many fancier plants - and will take advantage of any opportunity to survive and outcompete for any resources available. They are incredibly selfish and brazen – and they are a lot of work to control. Animals and birds are friends of weeds, and work with them to spread them around shamelessly. Following are a few common weeds that appear in gardens in late spring and summer.

Pokeweed



Birds love the shiny berries of pokeweed. They eat the berries and then poop them all over in various areas of the garden. The seeds inside the berries germinate – even on mulched areas, Soon one has a six foot pokeweed plant growing. Pokeweed is deep rooted perennial and one will have to try and shovel it out of the space-taking care not to destroy the fancy plants with the bad luck of being near the pokeweed. The berries are poisonous so they cannot be allowed to remain.

This is where scouting a garden at least weekly can help. Young Pokeweed seedlings are much easier to pull. If one listens carefully, one can hear their screams as they are pulled and thrown away in the trash. It is delightful.

Ragweed

Ragweed is an annual weed that grows quickly in a garden. The pollen of ragweed blows easily in the wind and is responsible for many symptoms that we refer to as hay fever, There are two types of ragweed, but “common” ragweed (pictured) is the most uh.. common in a garden.



Ragweed seedling

Ragweed can produce seeds – in the millions – that blow everywhere and can remain viable in soil for decades.



More mature ragweed with candle-like flowers containing tons of pollen

“Hay fever” takes its name from a popular idea in the 19th century that the smell of hay in the summer irritated the body. Bostock wrote about this idea in 1828, although he never really believed it to be true; instead, he referred to the affliction as “catarrhus aestivus” or “summer catarrh” (catarrh, here, meaning an inflammation of mucus). The main hay fever culprit – pollen – wasn’t identified until more than 30 years later,

In 1881, the American medical author George Beard concluded that hay fever was the result of the stresses of modern life: “It is the cry of the system struggling with its environment,” he argued, and rising reports of the condition could be attributed to factors including, the increased education of women, climate change and industrialization. Really George- the education of women? Given its perceived links with the upper-class, is it any wonder that hay fever became an almost ‘badge of honor’ towards the end of the 19th century? In the US, sufferers were called “hayfeverites” and the illness was considered a fashionable – even desirable – affliction among elite circles. In his book *Allergy: The History of the Modern Malady*, Mark Jackson relates how growing reports of hay fever in the 19th century prompted the creation of a number of societies relating to the condition. One of the most notable was the United States Hay Fever Association; founded in 1874 and located in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the health retreat functioned as a

sort of hay fever holiday resort, offering wealthy middle-class professionals a peaceful refuge from the irksome summer pollen. One ‘hay fever expert’ at the time, a man named Morrill Wyman, reported taking numerous ‘hay fever holidays’ in the White Mountains during his childhood.

If one knows what a ragweed seedling looks like, then they are easily pulled and removed before they ever cause issues.

Lamb’s Quarters



Lamb's quarters is an annual wild edible that is a member of the Amaranthaceae family. It was once thought that it was native to Europe. The name "lambquarters" is thought to derive from the name of the English harvest festival *Lammas quarter*. This festival was associated both with sacrificial lambs and with the plant used as a vegetable. Recent archaeological studies show that the seeds were stored and used by the American Blackfoot Indians during the sixteenth century. Lamb's quarters is a purifying plant that helps to restore healthy nutrients to poor quality soil. This unique, edible plant tends to spread quickly no matter the soil condition. One plant can produce up to 75,000 seeds!

Common names of lambquarters include goosefoot (because its leaves resemble webbed feet), white goosefoot, baconweed, fat hen, and frost-blite.

Lamb’s quarter thrives as a common weed in gardens, near streams, rivers, forest clearings, fields, waste places, and disturbed soils. It is very hardy and grows in many areas throughout Canada and the U.S. It is also found in South America, Central America, many countries throughout

Africa, the Middle East, Europe, several Asian countries (very common in India), Australia and New Zealand. Because seeds of common lambsquarters often reach high densities in soil, they are easily spread between sites by soil clinging to large animals, shoes, tires and machinery following soil disturbance from farm operations, road construction, and even in ship's ballast. The seeds survive well in the digestive tracts of cows, sheep, and pigs, and manure is commonly contaminated with common lambsquarters seeds. Some seeds will pass through chickens, sparrows, and ducks.



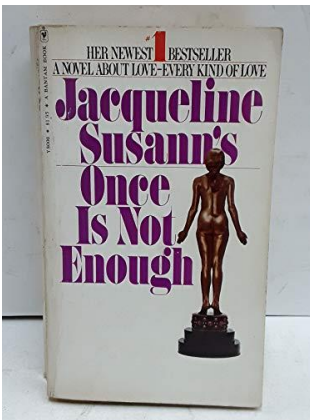
Lamb's quarters contain some oxalic acid and if eaten raw, only small quantities are recommended. Cooking removes this acid. Lamb's quarter can be eaten in salads or added to smoothies and juices. Steaming this edible weed is one method of cooking, or it can be added to soups, sautés and much more. Drying this wild edible is one way to add this nutritious plant to your meals throughout the winter or you can blanch and freeze the leaves. One 100 gram serving of raw lambsquarters leaves provides nearly all of your daily vitamin A and C requirements. It's also rich in calcium, potassium fiber, beta-carotene, riboflavin, thiamine, and niacin.

In a garden, lamb's quarter can take over. It grows quite tall and can shade and rob nutrients from nearby plants. Once it becomes established, it is difficult to pull because it is deep rooted and the stems usually break off at the base. It quickly grows back. It's tough, because the weed does have value. In a traditional garden setting, it really cannot be allowed to flourish.

So it is best to quickly identify and dispose of problem weeds in a garden.

Not only can they spread by wind and water, but they also use birds and other creatures to hitchhike their way into your garden. How naughty.

Fertilizing Plants Mid-To-Late Season



There are two philosophies of applying fertilizer utilized by gardeners. One is the “set it-forget it” method. This is when a gardener fertilizers once in the spring and assumes that is all that is needed for a garden. The other philosophy is the “Why less when I can always do more” style when gardeners – especially if they think something is amiss – apply fertilizer continually to plants throughout the entire season. Both methods have flaws. Plants generally need more than just one fertilization because they use nutrients all through the season – and generally need more as they become larger. Some nutrients – nitrogen for example – leach out of soil and must be replenished. As the famous author Jacqueline Susann wrote in a naughty bestseller book long ago – “Once is Not Enough”. The other gardening philosophy is to apply fertilizer constantly to plants- thinking that if some fertilizer is good-then a whole bunch more is better. Unfortunately many types of fertilizers are salts- and they

can burn up plants if too much is used. In addition, too much nitrogen in particular can result in too much vegetative growth – and no fruit or flowers on plants. Overfertilizing tomatoes – for example – results in “Jack and the Beanstalk” plants that could grow to the giants castle-way up in the sky.

So - better to strike a happy medium. In general vegetables and annual flowers need fertilizer about every two to two and a half weeks during the growing season to do well. Perennial flowers prefer a nice quiet prolonged meal, so slow release fertilizers such as Osmocote applied twice a year are better.

I like to use compost as a top dressing around plants or compost tea – made by soaking a panty hose filled with fresh compost dunked in a five gallon bucket of water for a few days. I then put the tea in a small sprayer with a filter and spray the tea on the foliage of plants once a week. This foliar method of fertilizing all plants is great – because one can't burn plants with the tea- and it works well on all kinds of plants. The microorganisms in the tea work their magic to provide the plants with the nutrients they need.

August is the month when it is best to stop fertilizing perennials and especially roses – as the plants need to slow down into dormancy for the winter. Over fertilizing these type of plants can result in plants more susceptible to winter damage.

“Once is not Enough” was a controversial novel published in the early 1970’s. The author Jacqueline Susann was suffering from cancer. "The day the book came out, she was booked on the Today show. She left Doctors Hospital after a blood transfusion, did the show, walked around the corner, got into an ambulance and went back to the hospital. Jacqueline Susann initially called the novel *The Big Man* but changed her mind after visiting comedian Joe E. Lewis on his deathbed. Lewis, who had famously said, "You only live once—but if you work it right, once is enough," apparently reconsidered, for he told Susann, "Once is *not* enough”

Our Garden – Revisted

This is the time of year our backyard garden shines. The daylilies and other perennials are blooming profusely- and the space is filled with color. Our roses have done well, and we have added more in several areas.



Front of Gwendra's House Mass Planting Reduces Weeds



Back Yard Was all Turf Last Spring



Bird Bath Area With Bottlebrush Buckeye in Front Left

Mass Planted Red Daylilies Side Yard





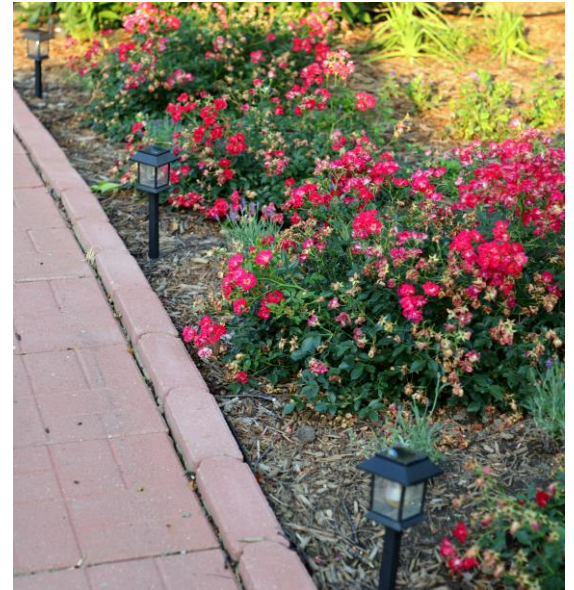
Advanced Master Gardener
Lana Wolfe Bred This Daylily
Called Meme's Ricky



These Spectacular Orange/Gold Daylilies Form a Solid
Row Along a Former Waste Area Next To A Fence



Back Yard Showing Wheelchair ramp Installed
By Neighbor Link Volunteers



Drift Roses Growing In a Tough Area



Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

The cat Naima- pictured above - is the daughter of Larry- my friend and former taster cat who died under very suspicious circumstances (you my caregiver still claim innocence). My hope is that Niema remains free to wander and never becomes a taster cat.

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