

# Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture

January 2025 Issue

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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](mailto:kemeryr7@frontier.com).

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## Thanks!

Thanks to many readers who sent me comments about my memories of Christmas long ago. It was touching to hear your memories of your long ago holidays. Getting feedback on the stories I write makes the writing all the more worthwhile.

## Loss

Long ago I was talking with a Master Gardener named Joy at one of our events. When I asked her how she was doing she said 'All my friends are dying, and it is really depressing'. I now understand how she felt. I have lost so many good friends recently. I guess I feel lucky I am still going at age seventy – even with all the medications necessary to keep me still going. What is somewhat disturbing is that many friends I have lost had much better lifestyles than me. They ate organic food and healthy foods, tried to have a lifestyle filled with exercise. And yet they still have died from a variety of ailments. Has this happened to you also? For me it is a struggle to deal with all the obstacles presented to me in my life. Loss had made me want to make the most of every moment, though everyday life – with all the red tape and hassle to get anything done – makes it difficult.

If you are older like me, I strongly suggest you meet with a good Elder Law attorney to discuss strategies for how to handle a very uncertain future. Medicare and Medicaid laws are rapidly changing, and it is very important to at least discuss what can happen if you become sick- a spouse is very unwell and needs additional care, what will happen to assets if one needs long term care. My attorney remarked recently that he believes nursing homes will disappear as more and more- care at home is a preferred option.

I recently was granted a Medicaid waiver after months of fiddling around – providing detailed financial info to my attorney advocate. It is very difficult to obtain Medicaid assistance without the help of an attorney to assist with and submit the application paperwork. One has to work with help from folks from Aging and In-Home services – their staff are necessary to help manage the process. In general they are probably the first contact to begin planning your future. An Elder Law attorney can assist with moving assets so the person in need can qualify for the waiver. It is easier now because the old five year waiting period for moving assets has been eliminated. If one receives a waiver, then one has to pick from insurance companies in a program called Pathways to manage the waiver. I picked a company that offered help with rehab services. I now am going to Turnstone to use their facilities to try and strengthen my legs and arms. It is a great facility. I am looking forward to using their pool to help with my rehab. It has equipment so I can get in and out of the heated pool much easier. Anyway, it is best if you are a cranky oldster like me to try and be proactive about your future. Enough said.....

# Useful Garden Plants

I recently was asked by a reader for plant recommendations for a garden area in the backyard that was basically a clean slate. They wanted to plant the area with annual plants as they already had a perennial flower garden. Here are my recommendations.



**Ring of Fire Sunflower**

are also interesting.

For the back of the garden I would plant sunflowers. Sunflowers are great for cutting, and they attract loads of pollinators. There are so many varieties to choose from. I prefer sunflowers that produce slightly smaller flowers in clusters on multiple branches. ‘Chianti’ grows to about six feet in height. Its wine red flowers do not produce pollen which makes it great for cutting. ‘Ring of Fire’ produces red/gold flowers with many side branches. ‘Soraya’ ‘Strawberry Blonde’ and the new Procut series



I would also plant a few Mexican sunflowers (*Tithonia* sp.) into the planting. This gorgeous plant attracts tons of pollinators to the garden. Butterflies and hummingbirds are drawn to this plant like a magnet.



Vervain or *Verbena bonariensis* is a great filler plant that attracts tons of pollinators and is also useful for cutting. It is a very upright plant that can be supported by the plants around it. It can spread in a garden over time, but I don’t mind.

**Mexican Sunflower**

I would add at least one tomato plant into the space. I think cherry tomatoes give on the best bang for the buck in smaller spaces. The fruit can be eaten fresh, added to salads, or used in pasta dishes to add texture and flavor. Stake the plant, grow it in a large container, or use a wire cage to make the plant easier to care for.

Fill in and around the tomato with pepper plants. I prefer sweet peppers, but one can also use hot peppers if that is your preference. I also add plantings of basil near the plants, as they are great companions.

Every smaller space in a garden should have some lavender. It has so many uses, as a cut flower, a flavoring agent in tea, candy, and baking. Lavenders prefer very well drained soil, so add coarse sand to the planting hole. Add gravel around the plant after planting to retain heat near the plant. Make sure to use hardy lavender for this area.



I like to use everlasting plants in a garden. My favorite is gomphrena, or globe amaranth. It produces small globe shaped flowers that are wonderful for cutting. ‘Strawberry Fields’ and ‘Fireworks’ are two of my favorites.

I like using nasturtiums. This annual flower is easy to grow from seed, and the flowers and leaves are edible and are great to add to salads. Johnny Jump ups are also great to use in edible arrangements.

**Gomphrena 'Fireworks'**



I also like to add annual poppies in smaller gardens. I prefer Shirley poppies and the taller bread seed poppies. One can sow the seeds in late March / early April on bare soil. Just keep the area moist until the seedlings appear. Most of the plants mentioned can be seeded directly into space. Some plants such as tomato and pepper, are easier using transplants. In fact I would use transplants as much as possible to save time – a valuable commodity in today’s world.

## A Rotting Leaves Reminder



In early spring use any stockpiled or rotting leaves laying around that might be left over from last year. Top off raised beds with the leaves to reduce weeds and provide a natural source of compost tea to the bed. One can also turn in the leaves in the soil to enrich the soil with valuable leaf mold – the best soil conditioner one can use to improve soil.

One can also put the leaves around trees, shrubs and even perennials to once again provide free compost tea and reduce weed pressure. Make sure to keep the leaves away from the base of ornamentals so they don’t smother. As Martha Stewart says, “It’s a good thing”

## Your Knock Out Rose is Dead – Probably Not



Knock Out shrub roses are very popular and used a lot in home landscapes nowadays. First created in the 1980s by independent rose breeder William Radler, the Knock Out rose became available for the public to purchase in 2000. Thanks to its vibrant colors, hardiness, and long-lasting blooms, the Knock Out rose soared in popularity as soon as it was introduced. To this day, it remains one of the most common rose varieties across the U.S. When the rosarian William Radler was a teenager, he resolved to breed a hardy rose that was beautiful, bloomed all season, was disease resistant, and maintained an attractive shrublike habit. He remains committed to breeding the "high maintenance" issues out of his roses.

He succeeded with his first introduction, Knock Out™, the award-winning shrub rose that mail-order catalogs call "perhaps the best-ever landscape rose for four-season interest." Mr. Radler germinated the first Knock Out seed in his basement during the winter of 1988–89, and that spring he planted the small shrub outside in his garden. The following 11 years were spent overseeing bud grafting, testing, and production of more stock. The rose was offered to the All-America Rose Selections committee and declared a winner in 1997. Knock Out became available to the public with 250,000 plants in production. And a star was born.

Knockout roses are very nice, but they are not perfect. Most require cutting back and pruning every year to keep them in bounds. Otherwise they can sometimes take over an area. Sometimes, depending on the severity of the winter, one can see considerable dieback in the above ground foliage - so much that sometimes gardeners believe the rose is completely dead.

Most of the time knockouts, which were developed in Wisconsin – are simply damaged. The below ground portion of the rose is usually just fine. Over time the rose will grow back and be fine by June. Pruning away the dead top growth can help because it allows more light to reach the rose. One usually fertilizes Knockouts in early spring with a slow release fertilizer, and that can also help the rose recover. Bottom line: Don't give up on the Knockout rose just because it too a hit from a tough winter. Over time the rose will recover and be just dandy – I like using the word dandy.

## Wind Chill and Cold Injury



Wind chill measures how cold the air feels to people and animals. Wind chill is figured by an equation based on the wind speed and the air temperature. The stronger the wind, the more body heat it draws away from exposed skin, which in turn brings down the body temperature, making us feel colder than we would on a calm day with similar air temperatures.

As for plants and wind chill, it does not have any real effect. Plants respond to the actual air temperature. They do not generate heat that can be pulled away by wind and they do not "feel" cold. If the wind chill is 32°F but the temperature is 40°, plants react to 40°. Direct sun may increase the plant's

temperature above that of the air somewhat. However a plant's temperature will not fall lower than that of the air.

Although wind chill does not affect plants, the wind itself can. Wind can dry out stems and foliage and result in damage. This can be especially problematic in winter, when the air is already relatively dry, which can reduce the amount of moisture within soil and plants. Dry air and a dehydrating wind can cause damage especially to evergreen plants; the leaves they retain are susceptible to water loss.

Under real cold conditions when much of the water in a plant is frozen, a strong, dry wind will carry away moisture and dehydrate the plant. Desiccation is a bigger problem when temperatures are above freezing and it is windy for plants that retain their leaves or needles in the winter.

Under calm conditions it can get much colder after the sun goes down. Without the wind to stir up the air, cold air collects close to the surface and flows into cold areas. When we have snow cover, the snow reflects a lot of the sun's heat back to the sky. After the sun goes down, the cold snow chills the air above it and without a wind to stir it up and mix with the warmer air above, a very cold layer develops just above the snow. Often we see the worst winter injury close to the ground just above the insulating snow.

On clear, windless nights, temperature inversions can cause cold air to pool in low areas, called “frost pockets.” An inversion exists when the temperature is colder closer to the ground than it is higher up. As the sun sets, surface temperatures drop, and the air directly above the ground becomes cooler. Since cold air is heavier than warm air, it will form a layer above the ground. The cold air flows downhill and settles in valleys and low areas, much like water. Often, the air in these frost pockets can be as much as 15°F cooler than that of the surrounding



Often winter damage doesn't appear until the following spring as in winter damage and desiccation of this yew.

high ground. This is why some plants are injured because it can be 15 degrees colder in certain areas.

Many factors can affect a plant's ability to harden off before cold weather. Late summer or early fall nitrogen fertilization can stimulate the production of new growth, which will be too lush and tender to survive. By withholding nitrogen applications in late summer, or reducing the amount applied so that stimulation does not occur, the plant's carbohydrate (sugar) reserves can go into storage, allowing the plant tissues to withstand cold temperatures better (sugars accumulate in the tissues and act like an antifreeze, lowering the temperature needed for the water in the tissues to freeze). Heavy fruit load can deplete these reserves; therefore, it is important to maintain healthy foliage after the crop has been harvested, so that accumulation of carbohydrates in the tree can occur.

Late summer pruning, or a wet fall following a dry summer, can also stimulate new growth, which will not be able to tolerate colder temperatures later. A tree weakened by drought, insect injury (especially girdling caused by borers and defoliation caused by caterpillars and beetles), disease, or mechanical injury to the trunk or roots, will be more susceptible to cold weather. Hardiness can also be affected by the duration and intensity of sunlight, length of growing season, amount and timing of rainfall, soil type and drainage, wind exposure, and cultural practices.



Not only is the bark of this maple damaged by winter damage, the root flare is also buried

Hardiness is also affected by the return of warm temperatures. A few days of warm weather in mid or late winter can reduce plant cold hardiness significantly. Once cold hardiness is lost from mid or late winter warming, the plant cannot return to the same level of hardiness. If mild winter temperatures prevail, damage is unlikely. However, should severe temperatures occur, the tree will likely be damaged.

Different plant tissues have different degrees of hardiness. For example, flower buds are more sensitive to cold than leaf buds. Frost may damage the flower buds of a bulb or fruit tree without harming subsequent foliar growth.

Sunscauld and frost cracking are similarly caused problems of trees with thin, dark bark, such as peach or silver maple. They occur when the bark and underlying cambium, usually on the south or southwest side of the tree, heat up on cold, bright days. When the sun sets or is blocked by a cloud, the bark and cambium quickly return to air temperature, which can cause physical and physiological damage.

# Purchasing Daylilies

I think daylilies are a good choice for the soil and climate in our area. I think they have gotten a bad rap, as many gardeners wrinkle their noses when I mention daylilies as a good choice for perennial gardens. Many gardeners think they are invasive (they are not), too scraggly (nope), and they are not native (true,) It is important to know what types of daylilies are out there, as the daylily type can affect how they perform in your garden.

**Deciduous-** Daylilies flowers prefer to bloom in summer.

**Rebloomer:** During a single season, these daylilies bloom multiple times.

**Everblooming:** These daylilies bloom continuously throughout the summer, with little or no time between blooming flushes.

**Dormant:** As winter approaches, the leaves on these daylilies wither completely.

**Evergreen:** These daylilies are evergreen, meaning they keep their leaves all year. Evergreen leaves remain green throughout the winter in temperate climates. Generally speaking, evergreen varieties are better suited to USDA zones 8 to 10, but most types can thrive with proper care. Ideally, they'd like to be in full or partial sunlight. Sun exposure in the morning with partial afternoon shade is ideal for most people. Grow in loamy, slightly acidic, well-drained soil with an acidity of 6.0 to 6.5, and you'll get the best results.

**Extremely Early (EE):** This term refers to weather between March on the coast and early May in the upper Piedmont and mountains.

**Early (E):** blooming occurs three to five weeks before the blooming peak in the midseason.

**Early Midseason (EM) refers to the period between one and three weeks before most cultivars' bloom peak.**

**Midseason (M) is the period between May and June on the coast and June to August in the mountains.**

**Late Midseason (LM):** refers to the period between one and three weeks after your garden's bloom peak.

**Late (L):** the season is defined as four to six weeks after the peak of the growing season.

**Very Late (VL):** These daylilies bloom in the late summer or early fall and are the last to bloom.

**Semi-Evergreen:** a mixture of dormancy and greenery. Depending on the local climate, their foliage takes on various forms. This variety of daylily behaves like an evergreen daylily grown in a warm climate but loses its leaves when moved to a colder location.

In general I prefer deciduous, dormant daylilies and if they rebloom – that is a plus. Choosing daylilies with different bloom times for a garden is a plus because if you do – your bloom season is extended. Evergreen daylilies are a bit riskier in our area. I have grown a few semi-evergreen daylilies with success.

**Fragrance:** Some daylily cultivars are listed as fragrant. It is not the type of fragrance that will bowl one over as one walks by. However, it can be noticed in certain situations and the perfume is quite pleasant. It is a plus for me.

**Height:** I prefer cultivars about 28 to 34 inches in height. Some cultivars can be giants – up to 5 feet or so.  
Wow

**Interesting Daylily Cultivars** — There are tons of cultivars of daylily. The newest and fanciest can coast a ton. Following are some less expensive cultivars I have purchased from Oakes daylilies and planted in our garden. They all have performed well. I try and buy them when they go on sale- usually later in the season.



**Hyperion**

An old variety from the 1920s, ‘Hyperion’ is a classic daylily that's still popular for its ease of growth and clusters of fragrant, lemon-yellow flowers atop tall stems.

**Bloom Season:** Midsummer; may rebloom

**Size:** 40 inches tall

**Zones:** 3–9

**Red Volunteer**

From Oakes Daylilies: ‘Red Volunteer’ daylily is one of our own introductions and a favorite of garden visitors and past customers. This award-winning variety does just what you want do – it grows well, has excellent foliage, and, of course, plenty of gorgeous blooms. Consistently at the top of the Popularity Poll and runner up for the Stout Medal. Chosen as an All American Selection was featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* as an Editor’s Choice.

Winner of the Lenington All American Award for varieties that perform well around the country and the Award of Merit. **Ricky’s comment:** It’s a fantastic daylily



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and



**Pardon Me’** daylily is one of the best reblooming reds ever. Small, deep burgundy red blooms make it a charming choice for the front of the border. Starts blooming late in the season and continues until frost. Fragrant.

**Chicago Star**

8” bloom, 24” tall, Mid-Season, Semi-Evergreen - Chicago Star daylily is a true beauty. Masses of big, bright yellow blooms make this a favorite of our garden visitors. 8” blooms stand tall on scapes that reach 2’ in our East Tennessee garden. A customer favorite, a best seller and, if we’re being honest, a favorite of those of us here at Oakes Daylilies, too. Vigorous and reliable, you can count on it for blooms you just can’t miss!





## Wayside Americana

\* 5" bloom, 32" tall, Mid-Season, Dormant

‘Wayside Americana’ is a true beauty. Rich red blooms and a yellow throat, along with good branching and sturdy scapes, make it a welcome addition to any garden.

## Ditch Lily

Orange daylily is a herbaceous perennial bulb in the daylily family (Asphodelaceae). Its native range is Asia, including China and Japan, but it has naturalized in Europe and much of North America (including North Carolina). The genus name comes from the Greek words *hemera* for “day” and *kallos* for “beauty.” This refers to the fact that each flower lasts just one day. The species epithet, *fulva*, refers to the flower’s reddish-yellow or tawny amber color. The plants are roughly 2.5 feet in height and width. The orange daylily blooms are very striking, up to 5 inches in diameter, their scapes rising up to 6 feet tall above the sword-like leaves. It grows in large clumps, naturalizing along roads and in older gardens.



*Hemerocallis fulva*, the orange daylily, tawny daylily, corn lily, tiger daylily, fulvous daylily, ditch lily or Fourth of July lily (also railroad daylily, roadside daylily, outhouse lily, and wash-house lily) Orange daylily adds interest to a perennial border, or when massed over larger areas. It is well-suited for butterfly, drought-tolerant, edible, or pollinator gardens. It may slow or halt erosion when planted on slopes. When not in bloom, the plants provide texture to the garden and crowd out weeds.

Daylilies were known to the early Roman, Greek, and Egyptian doctors from plants brought from China over the Silk Road about 2,000 years ago. Northern Europe only learned of them in the 16th century with *Hemerocallis fulva* introduced directly from China in 1576. It quickly gained favor in gardens and became widely planted.

The first recorded planting of the tawny daylily in the United States was in 1793. It became the ultimate pass-along plant and by the early 20th century was so commonly found in wild places it was often assumed to be native. Surprisingly the plant is sterile and almost never sets up seed pods so its widespread distribution is the handiwork of gardeners.

In the 1930’s Dr. A. B. Stout began studying daylilies and unlocking the secrets of their reproduction. One of Stout’s most important discoveries was to explain that the common and vigorous ditch lily was a natural triploid with three sets of chromosomes. He gave it the cultivar name ‘Europa’ but in the *Flora of China* it is called *H. fulva* var. *fulva*. Because it is seedless, all of the millions of plants scattered around the world are clones.

Adding an extra set of chromosomes normally increases vigor. The mule, a cross between a horse and a donkey, is a common example. In the daylily world, breeders today work with “dips” (normal plants with 2 sets of chromosomes) or “tets” (plants with 4 sets of chromosomes). Crossing dips with tets can be done to produce a triploid but is difficult and is usually not desirable because it produces sterile progeny and is an abrupt end to a breeding line. Ditch lily apparently arose spontaneously and was propagated by some keen-eyed Chinese gardener.

There is another secret to the widespread success of this sterile plant. Most daylilies grow in well-defined clumps but *H. fulva* produces a foot long stolon (a modified stem) so plants scamper about the garden as they seek new places to run. Thus ditch lily is an aggressive competitor in the border where it is likely to crowd out more timid plants. But in waste places afflicted by inner-city blight this aggressiveness makes it desirable where it can even outwit weeds.

Few daylily specialists consider the lowly ditch lily a worthy addition to their collection but it may have a place as a groundcover plant in difficult locations where plants must fend for themselves. And for gardeners interested in growing heirloom plants it is popular because it hasn't changed in the past 400 years.

Special care should be taken if one owns cats, or if errant cats frequent the garden where *Hemerocallis* is growing, as most daylily species are seriously toxic to felines (while being somewhat less toxic to canines). In particular, cats are uniquely vulnerable, as they often explore outdoors, and can potentially brush against blooming daylilies, causing pollen to inadvertently collect on their fur; afterwards, the cat's instinctual self-grooming and licking behaviors can put them at-risk of directly ingesting the pollen

## Tommy Myers



**The Kitchen Table Players – Tommy is seated on left**

I first met Tommy Myers after convincing violinist Gwendra Turney to help me complete a CD project (eventually called *Painted Sky*) in 2014/2015. Gwendra mentioned she could bring along long-time friend and fellow musician Tommy, who played a variety of instruments, to help.

Tommy contributed a lot to our band over the years – playing live at many venues - and helping produce our videos and Cd's. His bass, flute, mandolin and back-up vocals were extraordinary. Tommy loved to have fun playing music, and his stories of a lifetime of playing music were interesting and sometimes very funny.

We were shocked when we heard of our friend Tommy had died just after Christmas. We had seen Tommy about three months earlier at a grocery, and we were trying to convince Tommy to do

a Kitchen Table Players reunion concert with us. Tommy was interested but he mentioned then he was having a few issues with his health that he was concerned about. That is the last we heard from him.

There were many moments with Tommy that were memorable.

One classic Tommy moment happened while we were playing at a farm market in New Haven. The stage was outdoors and located some distance from the vendors and visitors. It was a windy day. Tommy always had his notes on a clipboard in front of him that he used to review as we played each song. Tommy was adjusting his notes as evidently the song we were beginning to play was in the middle of the pile-not at the top. As he adjusted the papers, the first page was loosened by the wind and blew away on the ground nearby. As he frantically tried to sort the papers – one by one more and more of the papers blew away from his clipboard. It was like an episode of I Love Lucy when Lucy is trying to sort pies on a conveyor that are dropping off the conveyor as she tries to keep up. Pretty soon all the papers had blown off Tommy’s clipboard as Gwendra and I continued to play. The vendors and participants finally helped retrieve all the papers. It took a while. Gwendra and I still laugh remembering the panic in Tommy’s eyes as more and more of his notes blew away in the summer wind.

We both really miss Tommy and the times we had together.



## Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

*To my Caregiver: Please write to the folks at Oakes daylilies and demand that their newest and most expensive daylily be named “Hoggles” I would be fragrant, all season and extremely pristine. The best Day Lily Eva!*

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