

Green Pages



A newsletter for people interested in horticulture and
natural resources in Western Wisconsin

April 2014

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FROM THE DESK OF THE HORTICULTURE EDUCATOR

Spring lawn care

Hopefully April will allow us to see some green grass. This is the ideal time to do a few activities.

- Rake and clean up winter debris as weather allows.
- Reseed bare spots, and establish a new lawn, if you desire.
- Apply a pre-emergent crabgrass herbicide to your established lawn.
- Mow your lawn to remove 1/3 of the current grass height. Grass should be 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches tall after mowing.

Be cautious about **raking** the yard too soon. If the soil is abundantly moist and soft you can run the risk of pulling up established grass. Spring time is the second best time to plant grass seed with late summer being the preferred time (mid-August to mid-September) because during this time period there is less competition from annual weeds and soil and daytime air temperatures are still warm but not extremely hot.

For sunny areas use a **seed mix** that has 50-100% Kentucky bluegrass, 25-35% fine fescues, and 15-25% perennial ryegrass seed. For shady areas use a seed mixture that has no less than 50% fine fescues, 25% Kentucky bluegrass, and less than 15% perennial ryegrass. It's important to keep grass seed moist as it germinates. Apply enough water to keep the seed and soil moist, usually 3-5 minutes at least once a day for 2 to 3 weeks.

Pre-emergent **crabgrass preventer** is best applied when the soil temperature reaches 55 degrees because this is when crabgrass seed germinates. Based on research comparing crabgrass germination, growing degree days, and the blooming of certain plants, crabgrass pre-emergent preventer should be applied when forsythias are in bloom. Forsythias are the commonly seen shrubs with brassy yellow flowers.



Forsythia

Erie Latawiec

Non-chemical Insect control

by Susan Mahr *University of Wisconsin - Madison*

Floating row cover is a spun-bonded or woven plastic, polyester or polypropylene material that is placed over plants to exclude pests, act as a windbreak or extend the growing season by retaining heat — all while still being permeable to light, water and air.



Floating row covers protecting young crops.

For Pest Control

Covering crops can eliminate many pests on a variety of plants, including: caterpillars (imported cabbageworm, cabbage looper and diamondback moth) on cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower; flea beetles on cabbage, potato, eggplant or salad greens; onion maggot on onion; seedcorn maggot on beans, corn and other crops; early season cucumber beetles on cucurbits; thrips on a variety of plants; and aster yellows (a disease transmitted by aster leafhopper) on carrot, celery, lettuce and many flowers.

The row cover prevents the insects from getting to the plants, so it must be put on at planting. Adult flea beetles and onion and seedcorn maggots, however, emerge from the soil so you must be careful not to enclose plants over an infested area. It is therefore important to practice crop rotation and not plant related crops or those crops susceptible to a



Floating row covers protect tender plants from wind and rain damage.

particular pest such as seed corn maggot, in the same location in successive years. Also, you must remove row covers from insect-pollinated crops, such as cucumbers or squash, during bloom to allow for pollination — which obviously limits its use for pest exclusion on those crops.

As Season Extenders

Depending on the weight of the covering you choose, you can gain between 2 and 8 degrees of frost protection, or warm the local environment sufficiently to harvest certain crops a week or two early. You'll get the maximum benefit if the crop is planted on a south-facing slope.

Types of Covers

There are several weights of these covers for different uses. Lightweight covers tend to be the least expensive and are suitable for most crops. They will protect plants from desiccating wind, but there is only a minimal increase in temperature beneath the cover. Because of the light weight they don't require supports.

Medium weight covers help speed up crop maturation and increase yield. They are useful for extending the season in both spring and fall by retaining some heat. These types are suitable for use over cucurbits, lettuce, peas, carrots, radishes, potatoes, sweet corn and blueberries.

Heavyweight covers provide frost and freeze protection up to 4-8°F, so are particularly good for early and late season extension for cool season crops. They can enhance crop growth, particularly for warm-season crops, since they raise ambient daytime temperatures 10°F or more. But be aware that tomatoes and peppers may get blossom drop if the temperature beneath the cover exceeds 86°F. Also, transmission of sunlight and water is reduced by these heavy covers. They are the most expensive, but can be reused.

Using Row Covers

Floating row covers can be laid directly over low-growing, flexible crops. Just be sure to leave enough slack when covering rows so the cover can "expand" as the crop grows. You have to bury the edges completely if you're using floating row cover for pest exclusion. If you are not using it to keep bugs out, you may use rough lumber or rebar to hold down the edges.

It may be necessary to support the cover material on hoops for taller crops or sensitive plants, such as

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Spring Tree Planting & Pruning Webinar Series

Though this winter seems to be endless, spring really is just around the corner! In anticipation of the return of the GREEN, the Vermont & Urban & Community Forestry Program is hosting a spring webinar series on topics related to basic tree care and planting.

These webinars are free, open to the public, and will be held the last Thursday of the month during the lunchtime hour.

The Basics of Tree Pruning- March 27th, 12-1pm

When is the best time to prune? What is the proper way to make a pruning cut? What considerations should you make and what knowledge should you have about a particular tree before pruning? This webinar will cover benefits of pruning, basic pruning techniques, tips for making a proper cut, and tools and tool safety. Open to novices and professionals alike!

Presenter: VJ Comai, Owner of South Forty Nursery and President of Green Works, Vermont's Nursery and Landscape Association

Tree Selection and Planting Site Assessment- April 24th, 12-1pm

Do you need help deciding what tree to plant and where to plant it? This webinar will help you choose

the right tree for the right place. In addition, you'll get tips for inspecting, choosing, and purchasing trees and will learn what to consider about the planting site before the tree goes into the ground. Your future tree (and you!) will be glad that you attended!

Presenter: Warren Spinner, Burlington City Arborist

Tree Planting 101 - May 29th, 12-1pm

Tree planting is great fun but in order to ensure health and survivability, it is important to understand how trees work, how they interact with their environment, and how to properly plant them so they become established in their new home. Learn all this and more in this webinar!

Presenter: Brian Sullivan, Arborist Technician for the City of Burlington and Vice President of the New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture

To sign up for a webinar [click here](#) or visit our [webinar webpage](#) for more information.

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PLANT LIVE GROW

Insect Control Continued from page 2)

spinach, that can be abraded by the material if it sits directly on the leaves. PVC pipes are easy to bend and stick in the soil to create a framework over which to drape the row cover. Remove covers gradually to harden off the crop. Choose a cloudy day to do the final removal. Store row covers out of direct sunlight, as UV rays will cause breakdown of the material.

Row covers provide a mini-greenhouse for the plants that grow beneath — this include weeds. Periodically you will have to remove the row covers to eliminate weed seedlings that have germinated.

Floating row covers generally aren't used in flower gardens because of their utilitarian appearance, but you might want to consider using them over ornamental plants for limited uses, such as early in the season for

starting seedlings outdoors, or for temporary protection of valuable plants. Floating row cover can be purchased at larger garden centers or from



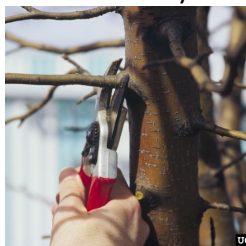
Broccoli plants covered with floating row cover stretched over bent PVC pipes.



Gardening Tips

Sharon Morrissey, Consumer Horticulture Agent, University of Wisconsin-Extension in Milwaukee Co.

- ◆ On your marks, get set, grow. In April, the race is on. It seems like we deserve this month more this year than in other years. We have earned it throughout this long, hard winter. So now, enjoy it.
- ◆ Finish the pruning, rake and aerate the lawn, and hope the sun and wind dry out the soil enough to sow seeds in the vegetable garden by the end of the month.
- ◆ Do not get too zealous about cleaning up beds with perennial flowers. That leafy debris around the bottom of the stems serves to protect the emerging, tender shoots from the inevitable frosty episodes yet to come this month.
- ◆ You can dig and divide perennials now as long as the soil is dry enough to work without being sticky. Working soil when it is wet will create concrete-like chunks that will plague you for months to come. Maybe even for a couple of growing seasons. And it won't do your plants any good either.
- ◆ Also control the urge to plant tender flowers no matter how springy it seems. The average frost free date in southeastern Wisconsin is not until the first week of May and even later in the remainder of the state. That means there is still a fifty percent chance there will be more freezing temperatures after that.
- ◆ Instead, clean out the shed, sharpen the tools and get the compost pile going again. And don't forget to stop and smell the hyacinths.
- ◆ The numbers following some of the calendar entries can be used to access Info Source factsheets from the internet at infosource.uwex.edu.
- ◆ UWEX publications on these and many other gardening topics can be obtained from the website at learningstore.uwex.edu.



- ◆ Finish up your pruning chores this month. Pruned branches of spring flowering trees and shrubs like forsythia, pussywillow, apple, crabapple, cherry, plum, and flowering almond can be brought indoors to force into bloom.
- ◆ Prune oak trees before April 15th. Trees pruned later are more likely to contract oak wilt disease from infected beetles feeding on the sap of fresh wounds. If you have an oak tree that died of oak wilt last season, have it removed and the wood processed (burned, chipped, or at least the bark stripped) before April 15th.
- ◆ Keep Easter lilies well watered. Cut out the bottom of the decorative foil and set the pot onto an inverted saucer or jar lid inside of another saucer to catch the drainage water. As buds continue to open, remove yellow pollen sacs from the stamens before the dusty pollen drops. It not only stains tablecloths and clothes but removal prolongs the flowers.
- ◆ If you haven't already done so, sow seeds indoors of broccoli, early cabbage, cauliflower, celery, eggplant, and head lettuce. Peppers may be sown from seed indoors now, too. Wait a week or so for the tomatoes.
- ◆ Plant a pot of pansies and put them outside. Pansies can tolerate frost, freezing temperatures and even some snow (heaven forbid). If they are greenhouse grown, expose them to the cold a little at a time.
- ◆ Regularly check rose cones and other heavily mulched or protected plants, such as chrysanthemums. Temperatures can get quite high around these plants on sunny, warm days but it is still cold enough at



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Gardening Tips

Sharon Morrissey, Consumer Horticulture Agent, University of Wisconsin-Extension in Milwaukee Co.

night to damage new growth. Remove or vent cones only during the day and replace them before the sun goes down.

- ◆ Open cold frames on sunny days but be sure to close them again before sundown.
- ◆ Treat pine needle scale on mugo, Scot's, Austrian, white, and red pines with dormant oil. Dormant oil should be used before bud break but when temperatures will be above freezing for at least 8 hours.



- ◆ Collect soil samples for testing. Sample vegetable gardens, flower gardens, lawns, and shrub beds separately. Each sample should consist of soil taken from 5 different spots within a particular area. Obtain soil sample mailers from your county UW-Extension office or do it online at uwlabs.soils.wisc.edu/madison



- ◆ Begin the process of hardening-off seedlings that will be transplanted outside later this month. This includes broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, head lettuce, onions, and parsley. At first, place flats in a shaded place protected from the wind. Gradually increase their daily exposure to sun and wind. Bring them indoors each night until just a few days before planting.
- ◆ Repair bare spots in the lawn. Work up the soil well in these areas incorporating some granular fertilizer, too. Sprinkle on a good seed mix of bluegrass and fescue. Rake lightly to mix seed with soil. Tamp to assure seed-soil contact.

Mulch lightly with straw. Keep well watered for 2 weeks until all the seed has germinated.

- ◆ Longer days and higher light intensity means indoor plants will begin growing faster. Start fertilizing again using a half strength solution every other watering.
- ◆ Prune hard now to stimulate new, bushier growth.



- ◆ Fertilize grapes, raspberries, and blueberries before growth resumes in the spring. UW-Extension bulletin #A2307 specifies rates.



- ◆ Cole crops, head lettuce, and parsley may be transplanted outdoors.
- ◆ Start tomatoes from seed indoors.
- ◆ Sow seeds outdoors for the following crops: asparagus, beets, carrots, chard, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, mustard, onion sets, parsnips, peas, potatoes, radish, spinach, and turnip.
- ◆ Prepare for apple tree pest control program. If insecticides and fungicides are going to be used, begin treatments as soon as buds begin to expand and grow. A few well-timed sprays early in the season may be all the chemical control necessary. Details are provided in UWEX publications A3565 "Growing Apples In Wisconsin" and A2179 "Apple Pest Management for Home Gardeners".



- ◆ Establish new plantings of grapes, strawberries, raspberries, asparagus, and rhubarb as soon as the ground can be worked. Proper preparation of the site including pre-plant weed control and the addition of organic matter and fertilizer will assure years of good growth for these perennial crops.
- ◆ Check upright junipers and red cedars for the brown galls of cedar-hawthorn/apple rust. They will be mingled with the leaves and resemble brown golf balls. Warm spring rains cause them to ooze orange gelatinous "horns" which spread spores to apple, crabapple, and hawthorn. Remove these galls before they erupt to limit the spread of spores.



Upcoming Events - Cont.



Timberdoodle Tumble
April 10 | 7:30 until 9 pm |
Wise Nature Center

\$5 for Friends Adult, \$3 for
Friends Child, \$8 for
Nonmember Adult, \$4 for
Nonmember Child
11 spots available.

Join former BCR Director Rick Koziel to enjoy the spectacular courtship performance of the American woodcock. After a short presentation at the Nature Center, we will visit nearby singing grounds to observe the bird that, in Aldo Leopold's words, "flutters skyward in a series of wide spirals, emitting a musical twitter...then, without warning, tumbles like a crippled plane, giving voice in a soft liquid warble that a March bluebird might envy."

Registration and full payment required by April 8.



Frog Fest
April 22 | 7 until 8:30 pm |
Wise Nature Center

\$5 for Friends Adult, \$3 for
Friends Child, \$15 for Friends
Family, \$8 Adults for
Nonmembers, \$4 Child for
Nonmembers, \$20 for
Nonmembers Family
32 spots available.

Frog Fest 2014 is an annual event not only at Beaver Creek but also throughout Wisconsin each spring as the ponds begin to thaw. The Wisconsin Frog Fest circuit hosts 11 frog performers and 1 toad. Join Reserve naturalist Ruth Forsgren as she helps you to identify by sight and sound our local performers.

Weather and trail conditions permitting, the evening will end with a hike down to Beaver Creek's own frog chorus marsh. Dress appropriately for cool evening weather and possible muddy terrain. A flashlight may also prove helpful.

Registration and full payment required by April 18.

Beaver Creek Reserve

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GREEN PAGES

A newsletter for people interested in horticulture and natural resources in Western Wisconsin.

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