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Eau Claire County

**February  
2014**

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# Green Pages



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

## FROM THE DESK OF THE HORTICULTURE EDUCATOR

Happy February!

As I write this snow is rapidly falling giving the Eau Claire area another four to seven inches of snow. I wonder how all the gardens will fair after this year's winter. At this time, last year, my 50 foot red pine tree in my backyard had already turned completely brown. The fall drought of 2012 created a great deal of mortality on trees, shrubs, and perennials alike. No sign of any trees dying through this winter, yet.

The good news about the length of this winter and amount of days at freezing temperatures is that most likely it will knock back pest populations for the spring and summer. The temperatures we've been experiencing is puts a lot of pressure on insect and diseases populations and they to struggle to survive using the energy storage they put away during the summer and fall. Hopefully the snow fall we've had is keeping our plants insulated from the cold temperatures. Sometimes the weight of the snow isn't helpful either.

We can only wait and see what happened under all that snow. And aren't we ready to see that! Russel Groves, Associate Professor in the Dept. of Entomology gives a three minute update about impact of arctic temperatures on insects. You can read the text or listen to the audio. [Click here.](#)

*Erin Latawiec*

## EAB and Effects of the Winter

Recently there's been speculation that these cold temperatures may harm the Emerald Ash Borer population. Though, Mark Shour, Entomologist from Iowa State University thinks otherwise.

Does Extreme Cold Weather Kill the Emerald Ash Borer? This article was published originally on 1/17/2014

[ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/2014/01-17/eab\\_supercooling.html](http://ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/2014/01-17/eab_supercooling.html)

Iowa's recent experience with the Polar Vortex and extremely cold temperatures and wind chills has caused some people to ask, "Will this cold freeze out the EAB population in Iowa?" The short answer: Probably not...

Cold hardiness research done in Minnesota by Robert C. Venette and Mark Abrahamson (2010) revealed that larvae that acclimated to winter



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## Hosta of the Year 2014 by Susan Mahr



Hosta are a very popular perennial for shady areas, with hundreds of varieties readily available. Each year the American Hosta Growers Association selects its Hosta of the Year to recognize hosta plants that are good garden

plants in all regions of the country, are widely available, and retail for no more than \$15 in the year of selection. Since 1996 they have chosen great varieties that have exceptionally decorative foliage, showy or fragrant flowers, and perform well throughout USDA hardiness zones 3-9. Their choice for 2014 is 'Abiqua Drinking Gourd' (pronounced ab-ih-kwa). The unusual shape and cool tones of



'Abiqua Drinking Gourd' make it a good accent plant in any setting.

This medium-sided cultivar is a cross between *Hosta* 'Tokudama' and *Hosta sieboldiana* released by Walden West in 1989. It is

relatively slow growing, reaching up to 18 inches tall and spreading 2-3 feet wide, and makes a great specimen or addition to a bed with other hostas and shade-loving perennials. With its medium texture, this hosta combines well with plants with fine texture (such as maidenhair fern), bigger leaves (such as 'Sum and Substance' hosta), or more upright growth (such as astilbes or ligularias).

## EAB and the Effects of the Winter (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

temperatures over 3 months were able to survive lower temperatures (-13°F / -25°C) than larvae subjected to cold conditions in a short time (0°F / 17.8°C). This is referred to as supercooling. The supercooling point is a temperature far below freezing that insects can withstand through physical and chemical changes

in their bodies. Survival varied from 5% in non-acclimated larvae to 90% acclimated larvae. Referring to northern Minnesota winter conditions, the authors stated, "cold temperatures may not completely eliminate the insect...may help to keep populations from building up quickly and may give ash trees some time to recover from initial attacks."

A key consideration in insect survival

overwinter is how cold for how long.

As an example, the northern 'expansion' of the bagworm, *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*, is limited by freezing temperatures. When the temperature falls to 1°F (-17°C) and stays there for 24 hours, more than 75% of the eggs in the bag can be killed.

The brunt of central Iowa's extreme cold occurred on January 6 and January 7, 2014. Thirty-six hours of subfreezing temperatures (as low as -16°F/-27°C) probably weren't long enough to cause significant mortality to emerald ash borer larvae or native upper Midwestern insects. But, on a positive note, bagworm populations will probably be lower in 2014.

# Title

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The cultivar name comes from the large, oval to nearly round, cup-shaped leaves that are sort of reminiscent of gourd dippers of old. The leaves, up to 8 inches long and 3 inches deep, fill with small pools after rain or overhead watering (but can also hold small debris which may be a bit unsightly). The blue-green leaves with a dull glaucous bloom are extremely thick and puckered, appearing like seersucker fabric.

The stems and leaves twist slightly to provide even more visual interest in almost a sculptural way. The foliage maintains its shape and rich color even in the hottest weather.



In mid- to late-summer flower spikes rise just above the foliage to produce white tubular flowers. Because the leaves are held more upright, and the leaves are relatively thick, this cultivar is less likely to be damaged by slugs than more spreading and tender-leaved types.

## Additional Information:

- ♦ American Hosta Society – aims to promote, encourage, and foster the development, improvement, and enjoyment of the genus Hosta with information for everyone

from beginners to long-time hosta-philes. at [www.hosta.org](http://www.hosta.org)

- ♦ The Hosta Library – a reference library, with photos, discussion forums, and lots of links related to the genus at [www.hostalibrary.org](http://www.hostalibrary.org)
- ♦ The Hosta Network – offers 150 hosta varieties through Bishop's Farms, but also has links to numerous societies, books and more at [www.hosta.net](http://www.hosta.net)
- ♦ The Hosta Forum on Garden Web – offers an opportunity to connect with other hosta lovers. At [forums.gardenweb.com/forums/hosta](http://forums.gardenweb.com/forums/hosta)
- ♦ Ten Top Hostas – by Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor, University of Vermont at [pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/tentop.html](http://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/tentop.html)







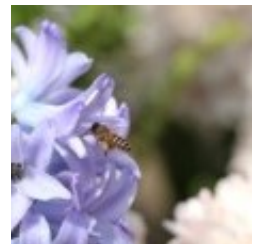
## Gardening Tips

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

- ★ Snow and ice are still a reality. Use sand or cat litter rather than salt to melt ice along sidewalks and driveways to prevent soil and plant damage. Do not use granular fertilizer either because excessive amounts of it, too, can damage plants. It also pollutes lakes and rivers as it runs off paved surfaces and frozen ground. For this reason never fertilize on frozen ground or over the snow.
- ★ Plan this year's vegetable and flower gardens especially now if you intend to start anything from seed. Order seeds early for the newest introductions since supplies are usually limited.
- ★ Prepare for starting seeds indoors by gathering supplies and equipment. The three most crucial elements for successful seed starting are using sterile media, arranging for supplemental light and providing bottom heat of about 70 degrees. Be sure fluorescent fixtures and bulbs are compatible since the newer low-wattage tubes will overheat in old fixtures. Lights should be adjustable so they may be moved to keep them within 4 - 6 inches of the tops of the seedlings as they grow.
- ★ Plan to get your children into the garden this year. Start with projects indoors like a pan of grass for their Easter baskets or oats for the cat. Start a sweet potato or an avocado pit. If you have supplemental lighting, plant a tub of lettuces and garlic cloves and herbs.



- ★ On nice days, get outdoors to survey your trees and shrubs looking for evidence of feeding of rabbits, mice, and deer. Check snow covered leaf litter and untrimmed grass at the base of young fruit trees and ornamentals. It is not too late to use spray repellents or to install tree guards or chicken wire cages around your plants.
- ★ With two weeks left until Valentine's Day, its time to start forcing those spring flowering bulbs you've been keeping chilled. The little bulbs like crocus, hyacinth, and scilla should have received 8 weeks of chilling whereas tulips and daffodils need 12 - 14. If you chilled your bulbs without potting them up, do so now. Then keep them at 55 - 60 degrees in a dark place for 2 weeks to allow roots to form. Then bring them out into a warmer, brighter location to start growth and flowering. If rooting and/or sprouting have already begun, simply pot them up, water them and place them in a sunny location.
- ★ Visit your local library to begin researching that backyard pond you have been longing for.
- ★ Remove built-up dust and grime from the leaves of houseplants with a shower. Plants with large leaves can be wiped clean by hand with a cloth or a pair of clean, soft gloves. Use one hand on the upper surface and one below. Water works just fine to clean and shine leaves. Some leaf polish products contain oils which will clog leaf pores.






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## Gardening Tips



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

- ★ Indoor foliage plants are still said to be "resting" because light levels are low, day length is short and temperatures are cool. Plants do not use as much water or fertilizer under these conditions so be careful not to over water. 
- ★ Turning the compost pile can be done whenever it isn't frozen solid. Snow provides some moisture and the composting process can continue, although slowly, all winter long.
- ★ Check stored cannas, dahlias, tuberous begonias, and gladiolus. Pot up ones that have sprouted and grown a couple of inches or find a cooler spot to hold them a little longer. Buy new tubers and roots now to start indoors for planting once the danger of frost has passed. 
- ★ Start seeds for the very first vegetable crop now - onions. Keep the foliage cutback to about 4" until time to transplant outdoors in April. Use what you clip off in salads to add some zip.
- ★ Cloves of garlic can be planted in pots indoors to sprout for zesty seasoning.
- ★ Sow seeds indoors for impatiens, begonias, petunias, nemesia, dusty miller, and snapdragons.
- ★ Fresh cut Valentine's bouquets should be placed in warm water with floral preservative after having the stem ends recut. 

Wash vases with soap and water every time you replace the water.

Remove any foliage that is below water level to prevent rot and clogging of stems. Place vase in a cool location (down to 35 degrees) for at least one hour or overnight so that they can rehydrate before bringing into room temperature.



- ★ Drooping roses can be revived by laying them, completely submerged in warm water and recutting the stem ends under water. Leave them in the water to rehydrate for a half hour before returning them to the vase.
- ★ Keep feeding the birds until spring bloom since they have come to depend upon you for food. Even greater success at attracting birds to your property can be assured by providing a fresh source of water at all times. This must be kept free of ice and available until spring thaw. Stake up a discarded Christmas tree near a feeder for protective cover but far enough away that dogs and cats can't hide there to ambush your feathered friends at the feeder. 
- ★ Being the end of the dormant season, now is the best time to prune most woody landscape plants and fruit trees. You can delay pruning birch, maple, black walnut, and elm since these tend to "bleed" when sap starts to move again due to snow melt and thawing soil. The dripping sap does not harm the trees, however. 

## Upcoming Events - Cont.



### **Tree and Shrub ID in Winter -- Session One**

February 22 | 9:30 am until 12 pm  
| Wise Nature Center, \$5 for  
Friends, \$8 for Nonmembers  
*18 spots available.*

Leaves are one of the biggest clues for tree and shrub identification. So what do you do when there are no leaves? Winter offers a special time to appreciate trees and shrubs in a totally different way. This program points out unique bud and bark characteristics of many of our native trees and shrubs, making identification possible even in winter!

A PowerPoint presentation and hands-on session inside will be followed by an outdoor hike around the Reserve to apply what we learned. Some easy tips and a simple winter tree and bark key will be provided for participants to take home. Bring warm clothes and boots for the outdoor portion of the program.

\*If you can't make it for this session, there's another session being offered on February 26, 2014 at 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

\*Registration and full payment required by Feb. 19, 2014



### **Tree and Shrub ID in Winter -- Session Two**

February 26 | 9:30 am until 12 pm  
| Wise Nature Center, \$5 for  
Friends, \$8 for Nonmembers  
*20 spots available.*

Leaves are one of the biggest clues for tree and shrub identification. So what do you do when there are no leaves? Winter offers a special time to appreciate trees and shrubs in a totally different way. This program points out unique bud and bark characteristics of many of our native trees and shrubs, making identification possible even in winter!

A PowerPoint presentation and hands-on session inside will be followed by an outdoor hike around the Reserve to apply what we learned. Some easy tips and a simple winter tree and bark key will be provided for participants to take home. Bring warm clothes and boots for the outdoor portion of the program.

\*Registration and full payment required by Feb. 24, 2014

### **Beaver Creek Reserve**

S1 County Road K | Fall Creek, WI 54742  
715.877.2212 | [bcr@beavercreekreserve.org](mailto:bcr@beavercreekreserve.org)

**Eau Claire County  
UW-Cooperative Extension**

227 First Street W  
Altoona, WI 54720

Phone: 715.839.4712

Fax: 715.839-6277

E-mail: [Erin.LaFaive@co.eau-claire.wi.us](mailto:Erin.LaFaive@co.eau-claire.wi.us)

Office Hours: M-F 8 AM - 5 PM

Website: [www.yourcountyextensionoffice.org](http://www.yourcountyextensionoffice.org)

## GREEN PAGES

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FREE online at: [eauclaire.uwex.edu/horticulture-2](http://eauclaire.uwex.edu/horticulture-2)

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Eau Claire County  
Extension Office  
227 First Street West  
Altoona WI 54720