Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON
BARRON COUNTY

MASTER GARDENER
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION

## Our Mission Statement

Encourage, foster, support, and promote horticulture for all Master Gardener Volunteers and residents of Barron County and to promote the UW-Extension from which we are founded.

***Inside this issue:***



FALL NEWSLETTER 2020

# What's Wrong With the Lilacs?

Throughout Barron County, old fashioned lilacs are a common plant in many yards. This year, several people called the Extension office saying it looked like their lilacs were dying or the leaves looked odd. Here are some of the most common issues that affect lilacs.

DISEASES

Powdery Mildew appears as a white powder on the leaves and develops rapidly during hot, humid weather. This is an unsightly fungal disease and may cause leaf loss, but it won't kill the plant. Prevention is the best treatment. Select sites that receive full sun and provide adequate spacing between plants to allow good air circulation. Remove and destroy infected plant debris to reduce the amount of inoculum present the following year. Fungicides may be used to treat the disease, but they are not recommended because powdery mildew is strictly a cosmetic problem.

Bacterial Blight is a common and serious disease of all lilacs, although white-flowered varieties seem to be more susceptible. During cool, wet spring weather, brown spots with yellow halos appear on leaves and petioles. If the disease occurs before leaves are fully expanded, they will become distorted as they mature. Bacterial blight can also cause black streaking and dieback of twigs. Prune diseased branches 10-12 inches below visibly infected areas. Disinfect pruners between each cut and destroy the plant debris (do not compost). On plants that have a history of bacterial blight, bactericide treatments in early spring may be necessary.


*How many of you took a jar of lilacs to your teacher on the last day of school? Just their aroma can trigger many memories.*

Lilac Witches' Broom or Decline causes to produce tufts of short, spindly branches and yellow, distorted foliage. Infected branches often die, with the disease spreading to kill the entire plant. The pathogen is a phytoplasma, a bacterium-like organism that lives in the phloem (the food-conducting tissue) of infected plants. Phytoplasmas are typically spread by leafhoppers. There is no known cure – fungicides will not help. The best strategy is to remove infected plants as soon as symptoms appear.

# What's Wrong with the Lilacs continued . . .

Verticillium Wilt leads to a sudden wilting and dieback of branches and is caused by a soil-borne fungus. Often, wilting branches first appear on one side of the shrub, but eventually the entire shrub will wilt and die. There is no treatment. If Verticillium wilt has been a problem at a particular site avoid planting lilacs or other susceptible trees and shrubs there.

INSECTS

Lilac Borer is the chief insect pest of lilacs. During the immature stage, these small white larvae tunnel into the base of larger branches where they eat the wood. The branches weaken and eventually die, and affected shrubs will produce few if any flowers. The best control for this pest is to routinely prune out one-third of the largest diameter and weak branches back to the base of the plant. The insecticide permethrin can be applied around mid-June to kill the adults as they lay eggs.

Oystershell Scale also attacks lilac stems. For most of its life, this pest is motionless beneath a hard waxy shield that resembles a tiny mussel shell. Scales are difficult to control because the covering effectively protects both the adult and the egg masses. In the spring, the eggs hatch and the nymphs (immature scale) emerge to find a place to feed. They settle down to begin sucking plant sap and within 1-3 weeks develop their own protective covering. Feeding damage causes leaves to turn yellow and become distorted. For heavy infestations, the best control is to remove and destroy the plant. For lighter infestations, dormant oil sprayed onto the stems and trunk of lilacs during the dormant season will smother the scale insect.

For many people, lilacs have been successful as hedges or single showy shrubs. They evoke memories of large groups of showy color on farms. There are now many different cultivars that come in a variety of colors and sizes and are more resistant to diseases and insects.

The information in this article is from *The Learning Store* publication titled Lilacs for Cold Climates. The publication explains how to select and care for lilacs. It can be downloaded at https://learningstore.extension.wisc.edu/products/lilacs-for-cold-climates-p1176. If you do not have access to the online version, your local library can help you make a copy for a small copying fee.

**WHY DOESN'T MY LILAC FLOWER?**

**There are several reasons why a lilac plant may not flower:**

1. **Plants aren't receiving enough sunlight. Lilacs require at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day to produce flower buds.**
2. **Too much nitrogen (N) can lead to lush, green foliage at the expense of flower bud production. Lawn fertilizers are often high in nitrogen; avoid using them around the base of your lilac.**
3. **For the first few years after transplanting, the plant is putting its energy into establishing a root system rather than into leaf and flower development. Water routinely to encourage healthy plant establishment.**
4. **Pruning lilacs in summer will remove flower buds. Prune immediately after flowering to avoid this problem. Pruning during the dormant season is the best time to prune, but be aware that some flower buds will be removed.**

# Putting Your Gardens to Bed

This is the time of year to put the gardens to bed and do some preparation for next year. Barron County has already experienced light frosts that have killed tender annuals such as impatiens, begonias, basil, tomatoes and peppers unless they are covered. And some areas have even experienced a killing frost.

The month of October is not only the time to put items away and clean up the gardens, but also a time to take stock of what you did this year, and prepare for next year.

According to Sharon Morrisey, consumer horticulture agent at Milwaukee County UW-Extension, here are some important things to take care of during the next few weeks.

Wait to dig and store summer blooming bulbs like dahlias, cannas, tuberous begonias, caladiums and gladiolas until they have died back.

If you plan to store winter squashes and gourds for later use, protect them from hard frost. If they have already been out in the frost, use them soon.

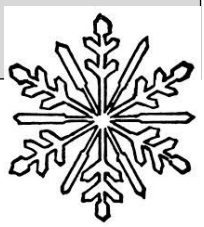
It is also time to drain the hoses and empty the bird baths before a hard frost. Put away ceramic pots, or at least empty and clean them. If left full of soil, they will crack when the water inside the soil freezes and expands.

Remove and destroy any plant debris that might have been infected with powdery mildew, tomato leaf spot diseases, scab or any other disease. When the frost kills everything else, chop it up and add it to the compost pile. Diseased plant debris in your compost will just add to problems next year.

Frost will actually improve the flavor of the cabbage family vegetables such as Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, kale, cabbage, collards, turnips, parsnips, radishes and Chinese cabbage. Don't pull these and pile them on the compost heap until winter leaves you no choice.

**Is it a Light Frost or a Killing Frost?**

In gardening terms, a "light freeze" or "light frost" happens when the temps dip just below freezing for a few hours. Some hardy plants may not be damaged. A "hard frost" or "killing frost" comes when the temperature drops below 28 degrees, for a longer time. It will kill the top growth of most perennials and root crops.



Garlic is a bulb, too, that can be planted now for harvest next July. If ou check the weather and think your can still get 2-3 weeks of time for new root growth, plant garlic right now. Cloves purchased at a farmers market for growing will produce better than the garlic bought in the grocery store. Individual “toes” should be planted 3 inches deep and 6 inches apart. Water and fertilize. Mulch after the ground freezes.

If you haven't already done so, buy and plant those spring flowering bulbs. Technically, bulbs can be planted all the way up until the soil is frozen but getting an early start will allow good root development yet this fall. (Hint: most animals avoid daffodils and alliums but treat tulips like candy.)

Dig and divide spring and summer flowering perennials now. Late summer and fall flowering ones can be done in the spring. Cut foliage back, fertilize and water well. Wait until the ground has frozen to add new mulch for winter protection during their first winter. If you have healthy perennials with seeds, such as purple coneflowers and varieties of rudbeckia, leave them uncut for winter interest and watch the birds snack on them above the snow. If they appear diseased cut them back and destroy the stems and leaves.

Geraniums can be saved for next year by taking 2 to 4" cuttings to root and grow indoors. Or dig and pot the entire plant. Once rooted, cut them back to form bushier growth. Some people dig their geraniums, clean all soil off the roots, and hang them upside down in the basement. Most modern basements are too hot

# Putting your Gardens to Bed continued . . .

and dry for this to be successful unless soaked monthly in a basin of water or misted regularly.

If you have chrysanthemums that have done well as perennials, don't cut the stems back until spring. After chrysanthemum flowers have turned brown from hard frost, mound up soil over the bottom of the plant. After the ground has frozen, add an additional couple of inches of mulch.

Collect soil samples now for testing to prepare for next year's fertilization of the lawn, the vegetable garden, the shrub border and flower beds. Submit separate samples for distinct areas used to grow different types of plants and where growing conditions are different for the same plants. A shady lawn area on a slope should be a different sample than a sunny lawn area.

See a complete description of sampling and submitting soils for analysis elsewhere in this newsletter. Samples are sent to Marshfield and results are generally returned within about a week. A basic test costs $15. The form can be downloaded at https://uwlab.soils.wisc.edu/soil-samples/lawn-garden/ or you can request a copy of the form from the Barron County UW-Extension office.

Why Test Your Soil?

- To determine nutrient levels
- To be able to use fertilizer correctly
- To save money by only applying amendments that are needed
- To avoid adding things to your lawn or garden that may cause more harm than benefit

# Some Notes on Local Invasive Plants—by Sue Crisp

Invasive Plants, by definition, are plant species that are non-native to an eco-system and whose introduction causes or may cause harm to the economy, environment, or human health. They have been introduced either accidentally or intentionally. They either displace or replace native plants.

Some invasive plants were brought here as ornamental plants, including Japanese barberry, common tansy, purple loosestrife, Eurasian bush honeysuckles, Oriental bittersweet, and wild chervil. Because these plants come from foreign lands and do not have the natural controls that native plants have, they soon take over the garden. They are then spread by the wind, birds, or deep-set runners to grasslands, forests, and waterways.

Picture of Dame's Rocket

Some invasive species were brought here for food, such as garlic mustard and wild parsnip. Garlic mustard was brought to North America in the 1800s as an edible herb that is high in vitamins A and C. The seeds are easily spread by animals and humans. The seeds can live 6-10 years. Stands of garlic mustard can double every four years. Once established, it displaces native flowers, such as trilliums and trout lilies. It also threatens several species of native flowers, including nodding trillium and white wood aster.

Picture of Wild Parsnip

Wild parsnip was introduced as a garden food crop and is in the carrot family. It poses a health hazard that some people may not be aware of. It causes a condition called "phytophotodermatitis" when skin touches the plant. After exposure, the skin will blister and weep when exposed to the sun. In severe cases, there is a burning and scalding type of pain. The condition can last for several months and possibly as much as two years.

Invasive plants can attract or be host plants for butterflies. Wild parsnip is the host plant for the Black Swallowtail caterpillar. Painted lady butterflies are attracted to thistles. However, when planning a butterfly garden, use species native to your area and avoid invasive plants such as Dame's rocket, Queen Anne's lace, honeysuckles, and thistles.

Some invasive plants are poisonous. Leafy spurge can cause blistering to the mouth or throat of animals. This poisonous plant has laxative properties. All parts of the Poison hemlock plant are toxic to animals and humans if ingested. Porcelain berries have low toxicity if eaten. Therefore, do not eat the berries.

Some invasive plants have been used for herbal or folk remedies. Common tansy was used, with poor results, because the plant contains a toxic oil called Tanacetum. Grecian Foxglove (Digitalis lanata) was one of the herbal remedies used by the ancient Romans. All parts of the plant are toxic. Ingestion of even small amounts may be fatal to humans, and the toxicity is cumulative.

Many invasive plants are ecological threats. An example of this is the common buckthorn, which may alter the nitrogen level and may cause the elimination of leaf litter. Another example is wild chervil, which invades fields and pastures, shading out surrounding vegetation. It is host to the yellow fleck virus, which infests carrots, celery, and parsnips.

If we all do our part, we can minimize the harmful impacts of invasive species. Plant native species, carefully control and remove invasive species from your property, volunteer with other organizations that control invasive plants, and provide information to others about the impact of invasive plants on health, economic loss, and ecological impact.

LCIP is the Lower Chippewa Invasives

Partnership, Inc., an organization that reaches goals towards invasive species awareness and control by using Civic Governance as a new approach to educate and organize the civic infrastructure needed to produce a basis to govern for the common good and sustain democracy as a just system. The mission statement of the partnership is to control invasive plants by fostering partner cooperation and community action.

# Chrysanthemums

*(Information from Laura Spencer, Master Gardener, Penn State Extension, and UW-Extension publication Mums For Fall Beauty.)*

Mums are one of the great show stopping plants for fall beauty. They can be purchased in many stores and garden centers. People frequently ask whether these can just be planted in the ground and treated as any other perennial.

Unfortunately, mums need a period of time to establish roots, so the optimal time is to plant them in spring, or at least six weeks before the first frost.

The garden mum, Dendranthema x grandiflora, has long been known as the "Queen of Autumn". It provides flowers of various sizes and shapes and in many shades of yellow, orange, red, purple, bronze, pink, and white. The chrysanthemum was cultivated in China more than 2,000 years ago. It has been the national flower of Japan for several hundred years. In America, the chrysanthemum has been hybridized extensively. The result has been the popular and reliable cultivars of garden types and florists forcing mums of today.

Top of Form

Hundreds of varieties of chrysanthemums provide a multitude of options for height, color, flower size, and time of bloom. You can pick and choose to fit your needs when you visit your garden center. Choose one or two colors to get a maximum effect far away. Or, arrange a gradual transition of related colors. If you decorate with pumpkins and gourds, chose orange, yellow and creamy white mums. For a yard that has a lot of green foliage, try bright pinks, lavenders, whites, or reds.

Mums can be started as seeds, from cuttings and dividing, or can be purchased at a garden center in sizes ranging from bedding plants to gallon-size containers. Chrysanthemums grow best and produce the most flowers if they are planted in full sunshine and receive plenty of food and moisture.

Ideally, chrysanthemums should be planted in early spring after all danger of freezing has passed. They can really be planted almost any time, as long as they have time to establish their root system, at least six weeks before the extremes of either hot or freezing weather. Mums purchased at this time of year will not survive the winter. Their roots need time to establish.

Chrysanthemums should be planted in well-prepared, fertile, loamy or sandy soil where they get full early morning sun, at least five to six hours daily. Dig a hole at least twice the size of the root ball and incorporate organic matter such as compost or peat to help with drainage. Mums are pretty tough and can thrive on their own, but they benefit from light and frequent feedings with a balanced fertilizer during the growing season. Fertilize when the plants are ready for blooming and discontinue fertilizing after flower buds are formed.

Chrysanthemums are susceptible to aphids and mildew, so keeping plants dry is a priority. Mums need plenty of air circulation and water drainage. The faded blooms should be removed regularly as it helps prolong flowering.

Divide chrysanthemums in the spring when new growth appears every three to five years to avoid overcrowding and promote maximum flowering. When the new shoots are 1 to 3 inches tall in early spring, dig entire clumps and separate the plants with a sharp,

# Chrysanthemums continued . . .

clean knife or spade. Remove all dead and diseased plant parts. Replant the divisions in a loose, well drained, rich fertile soil and discard the half-dead woody parts. Young divisions will grow much faster and provide a better plant than crowded old clumps.

Pinching – both new and established chrysanthemum plants can be pinched in June to get compact bushy plants instead of tall plants. Remove the tips of young shoots when they are 7-9 inches long. Also pinch back any new shoots resulting from this first pinch when they are 7-9 inches long. Continue this pinching until mid-June for most early flowering varieties, late June for late September varieties, and early July for early October varieties. Late pinching delays blooming and may even prevent it if there is frost. Very high summer temperatures also may delay flowering.

Winter Care – Freezing and thawing throughout the winter often destroys a large part of the plant's root system, but you can prevent this by mulching and mounding plants. After the flowers and most of the leaves have browned from frost, mound up soil 8 inches high around the base of the plants. Simply place a few shovelfuls of soil over the center of each plant. Then cut the branches back to 10 inches above the mounded soil.

As soon as the soil surface freezes, apply 2-4 inches of mulch such as clean straw, evergreen branches, or corn stalks. (Leaves are not the best choice because they pack solid when wet.)

Some people have had success with keeping chrysanthemums in pots over winter. After the flowers fade, move the mums to a cool but well-lighted location. Remove foil or other coverings from the pot. Be sure to keep your plants watered, but don't overwater. When the potting soil dries to a depth of two to three inches, water them well so that water runs out of the hole in the bottom of the pot. By keeping the mums in a cool, brightly lighted location, you can keep the plants alive until the worst of winter is over and can plant them outdoors. If there is no new growth, you can plant while freezing temperatures are expected at night. If there is new growth, wait until frost has past to plant outside. Gradually acclimatize the mums as you bring them to life in the spring. Place them in a protected part of the garden, with partial shade during the day, and in your coolest room at night. As there is less variance between day and night temperatures, you can leave them outside. When frost danger has passed, give them some bloom fertilizer.

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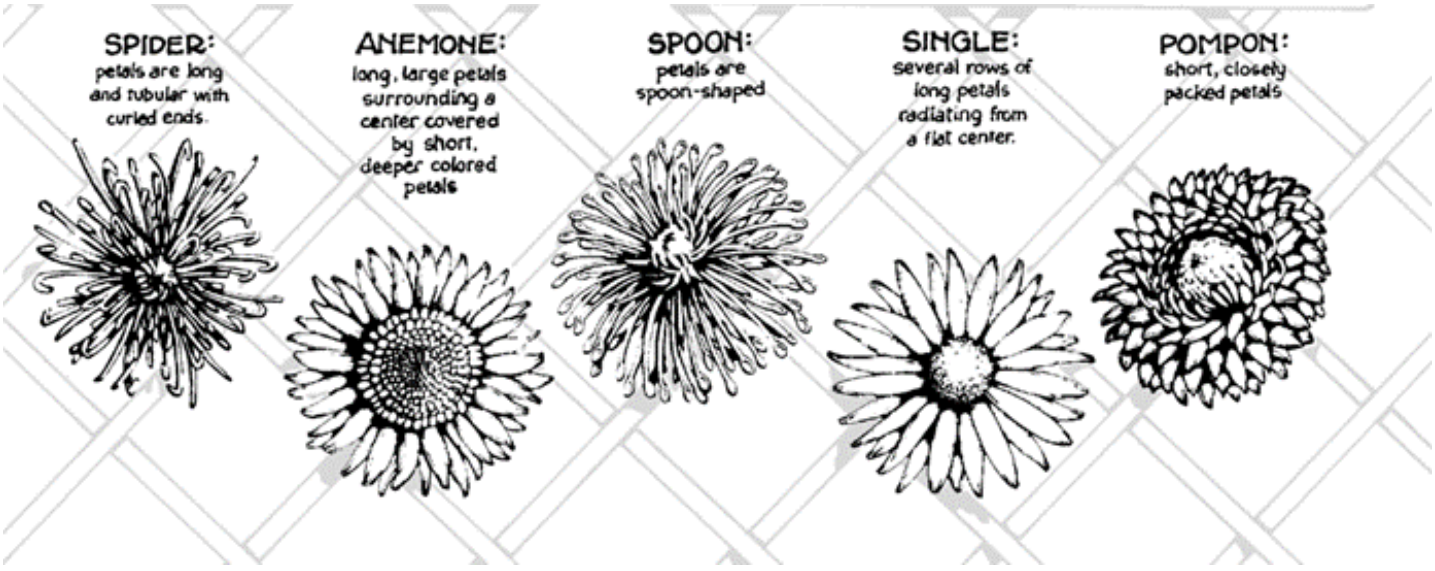


# Sampling Lawn & Garden Soils for Analysis

## Why Analyze soil?

Soil should be analyzed to determine nutrient levels and fertilizer recommendations, and the presence of elevated lead levels in soil.

Gardening magazines and handbooks and fertilizer product labels make general recommendations for applying fertilizer and other amendments to gardens and lawns. The recommended amounts often are in excess of what is necessary for plant health. Soil nutrient analysis will give you precise scientific information on your soils ability to supply nutrients to your plants. Since soil analysis is equally useful for telling you what needs to be added and what does not, this knowledge will allow you to develop a tailored plan to maximize potential plant growth and minimize unnecessary costs. You can save money and limit potential water pollution by applying only the nutrients your plants can use.

For people living in housing built prior to 1979 or living near major roadways, soil analysis can also show if yard or garden areas have elevated levels of lead. Lead is naturally occurring in all soils and found at high levels almost everywhere people live due to its widespread use in paint and gasoline until the early 1980'S. Since lead does not move around readily in soil, knowing if parts of your yard or garden have elevated lead levels will help you plan where to garden and how to minimize any possible soil lead exposure to you and your family. UW-Extension publication A4089, Lead in Home Garden Soil, discusses soil lead issues more thoroughly, and publication A4088, Reducing Exposure to Lead in Your Soil, will help you plan steps to reduce exposure to lead in your soil. Both publications will be helpful if you choose not to analyze for lead, but want to take precautions, In addition, university of county Extension staff and the public health departments can help explain your results.

## What will you get with a Soil Test?

- Soil nutrient content (organic matter, phosphorous and potassium) and pH
- Recommendation of type and amount of fertilizer to add.

## When to sample?

You can sample the soil anytime as long as it is not frozen. IT is recommended to sample in early spring or late fall to assure that you will have the test results before you need to amend your soil. It generally takes two weeks for the laboratory to complete the soil analysis. It is important to avoid sampling soon after applying fertilizer—this would only tell you how much you just added, not what your soil really needs! Soil nutrient levels do not vary widely from year to year so checking every three to five years is sufficient.

Since soil lead amounts do not change over time, screening only needs to occur once unless large amounts of soil and compost are added. Adding soil or compost will lover the total amount of lead by diluting it.

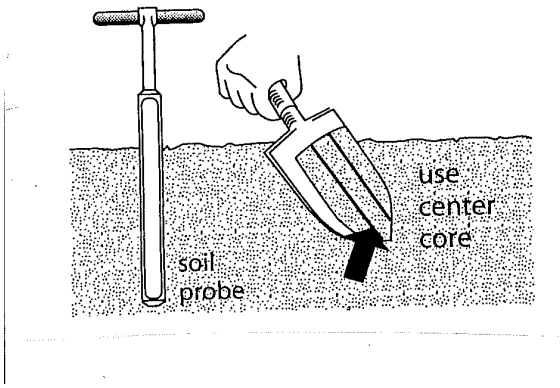
## Where and How to Sample?

The samples you collect need to be from areas that have been managed similarly in the past or recommendations will not be correct. In practice e this means to sample gardens and lawns separately. If you have lawn areas where the grass grows differently (i.e. front versus back yard) it may be worthwhile to sample each of these areas separately. Soil around homes can vary. Soil is moved around during construction, and some soil is brought in as fill or topsoil. Because of this, different parts of your yard may have distinct fertilizer needs.

## Established Gardens and Lawns:

1. From each area to be sampled separately, remove any overlying mulch, compost or sod. Soil samples should be collected from the top 5-7 inches of soil. Collect approximately one cup of soil with a clean trowel or shovel at four random locations and ten random locations if using a soil probe. (see Figure 1)
2. Place the four or ten soil samples collected from a distinct sampling area into a clean plastic container and mix those samples together thoroughly.

**FIGURE 1. Sampling tools**



# Sampling Lawn & Garden Soil continued . . .

Samples from different areas should not be mixed together. Remember , t he sample should only contain soil and no organic matter (you want to test the soil, not the mulch or sod).

3. One cup of soil from each area to be analyzed should be placed in a heaty-duty plastic or soil sample bag for analysis.
4. Label the bag with your name and contact information and send it to a soil lab.
5. Repeat this procedure for each distinct sampling area of our yard or garden.

New Gardens in Neighborhoods developed before 1979:

If you live in an area developed before 1979 and are starting a new garden please consult UW-Extension publication A4089, Lead in Home Garden Soil, for guidance on garden site selection. Studies have shown that high soil lead levels are frequently found in soil next to painted structures (houses, garages, etc). It is strongly recommended that gardens not be placed within 20 feet of any painted structure built before 1979. UW-Extension publication A4088, Reducing Exposure to Lead in Your Soil, details a variety of options you can take if you prefer not to analyze your soil for lead.

Ideally, at each new garden sampling location, samples should be collected at the surface (removing any surface vegetation) and at a depth of 10 inches. This would reveal the extent of contamination through the root depth of most garden plants. In urban areas, frequent soil relocation through landscaping, repurposing of sites and aerial deposition over time has contributed to lead being found up to two feet below the surface. Surface samples alone are not sufficient to determine if a site can be considered hazard free.

Once you identify where you want to garden;

1. Mark off the borders (using stakes and string for example)
2. Collect samples from a grid of sites starting one foot from the inside corner of your garden and additional samples separated by about five feet in each direction inside the garden. (see Figure 2.)
3. After removing surface vegetation or mulch, collect about one measuring of soil from just below the vegetation layer and from 10" below the soil surface with a clean trowel or shovel. Place each of these samples into individual clean plastic or soil sampling bags.
4. Label the bags so that you know where in your yard they were collected. Then if the lead levels are high in a particular sample, you will know which part of your yard to avoid when building a garden.

Where Can I Get my Samples Analyzed?

Both the University of Wisconsin and Milwaukee Health Department have laboratories available to analyze your soil and will be most convenient for gardeners and homeowners. County Extension office have contact information for private soil testing laboratories. Outside of Wisconsin, contact your state extension office for a list of labs.

## Analytical Laboratories:

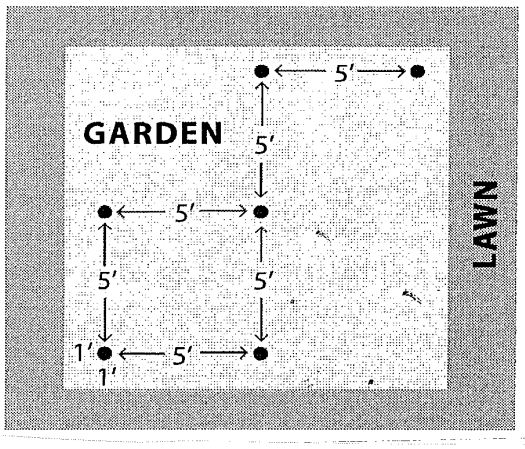
The University of Wisconsin Soil and Forage Analysis Lab
2611 Yellowstone Drive
Marshfield, WI 54449
Phone: (715) 387-2523
Website: uwlab.soils.wisc.edu

Samples sent to the UW Lab will be analyzed for soil nutrients. Lead analysis is available at additional cost.

Milwaukee Health Department Laboratory
841 N. Broadway, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3653
Phone: (414) 286-3526
Website: www.milwaukee.gov/healthlab

Samples sent to the Milwaukee Health Department will be analyzed for both soil nutrients and lead.

**FIGURE 2. Example Garden Site**



# Gardening in a Covid Year—by Carol Kettner & John Peter

No one would argue that this has been an unusual year, to say the least. From the perspective of gardening, there are people who kept on gardening like they always have. Maybe they looked at the positive side – working from home or not at all meant more time to spend on the lawn, the flowers, or the vegetables and fruit. Maybe they even were able to get their children involved more than in the past.

For others, it brought a renewal of activities they hadn't done for years, maybe because they wanted to grow more of their own food, or perhaps they just looked at it as a productive way to spend time outside when they couldn't participate in their normal social activities.

Then there is the third group – those who dove in for the first time, either in a small way, or they went all out and planted a huge vegetable garden. If you are one of those people, maybe you had some success and will continue to grow some of your own food or plant more pollinators next year. At the very least, you tried something different.

If being a gardener for the first time brought many frustrations for you, don't be discouraged. All gardeners experience issues with disease, insects, and growing conditions that are less than perfect.

Gardening, whether it is to have a better looking yard, to help the pollinators, or to feed yourself and your family, is not something you become an expert in, in just one try. You keep learning every year.

One of the best things you can do is write down what you experienced.

Write down every frustration and mistake, every bug that made you swear, and the number of times you said, "I will never do this again." Then write down something great that happened, such as watching the butterflies and bumblebees on a new flower, tasting that first carrot fresh out of the garden, or picking a fresh leaf of parsley and munching on it.

It does not need to be a formal journal. It can be a simple note about what you would never do again, and what you definitely want to repeat next year.

*This old fashioned wattle fence kept rabbits and chickens out of the cabin garden at the Pioneer Village Museum.*

**What Was I thinking?**

Did you plant tomatoes for the first time this year, thinking you would have a few to enjoy throughout the summer? And then those 8 plants suddenly produced a bushel of tomatoes all within what seemed like just a few days?

That was a lesson in the difference between **determinate** vs. **indeterminate tomatoes.** Determinate tomatoes grow to about 4 feet and are sometimes referred to as bush tomatoes. They grow one crop that ripens near the same time so are good for preserving.

Indeterminate tomatoes grow taller and are sometimes called vining tomatoes. These require staking and grow multiple crops throughout the season. Most Heirloom tomatoes are indeterminate and are great for someone who wants a fresh tomato every day or two for a long season.

# Is Fall A Good Time to Prune Trees and Shrubs

The best time to prune most trees and shrubs is the late dormant season (late winter to early spring), so look for an article on *"Winter Pruning"* in our winter newsletter. In the meantime, here are some facts to know about pruning trees and shrubs in general.*

### Why Prune?

- Pruning changes the form and growth of a plant.
- Pruning can also be considered preventive maintenance for both insect and disease damage.
- Many problems may be prevented by pruning correctly during the formative years for a tree or shrub.
- The late dormant season is the best time for most pruning.

Trees and shrubs that bloom early in the growing season on last year's growth should be pruned immediately after they finish blooming: Apricot, Azalea, Chokeberry, Chokecherry, Clove currant, Flowering plum, Flowering cherry, Forsythia, Juneberry, Lilac, Magnolia, Early blooming spirea.

Shrubs grown primarily for their foliage rather than showy flowers should be pruned in spring, before growth begins: Alpine currant, Barberry, Buffaloberry, Dogwood, Ninebark, Purpleleaf sandcherry, Smokebush, Sumac.

Shrubs that bloom on new growth may be pruned in spring before growth begins. Clematis and shrub roses can be pruned back to live wood. Hardier shrubs such as late blooming spireas and smooth (snowball) hydrangeas should be pruned to the first pair of buds above the ground.

### Pruning Hedges

- After the initial pruning at planting, hedges need to be pruned often.
- Once the hedge reaches the desired height, prune new growth back whenever it grows another 6 to 8 inches.
- Prune to within 2 inches of the last pruning.
- Hedges may be pruned twice a year, in spring and again in mid-summer, to keep them dense and attractive.
- Prune hedges so they're wider at the base than at the top, to allow all parts to receive sunlight and prevent legginess.

### Rejuvenation for older or overgrown shrubs

Deciduous shrubs that have multiple stems (cane-growth habit), and that have become very overgrown or neglected can be rejuvenated by cutting all canes back as close to the ground as possible in early spring.

That season's flowers may be sacrificed but the benefits from bringing the plants back to their normal size and shape outweigh this temporary collateral damage.

This pruning technique works best for shrubs such as overgrown spirea, forsythia, cane-growth viburnums, honeysuckle and any other multiple stemmed shrubs that are otherwise healthy. Within one growing season, these shrubs will look like new plantings, full and natural shaped.

(*Information from *Pruning trees and shrubs*, University of Minnesota Extension.)

Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON
BARRON COUNTY

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION

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