

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2021



BARRON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS

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.

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Master Gardener Volunteer Week April 5-9, 2021

Join us in celebrating Master Gardener Volunteer Week, April 5-9, 2021.

The Wisconsin Master Gardener program will be celebrating Master gardener Volunteer Week April 5-9, 2021. Master Gardener Volunteers are an important part of University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Barron County. Volunteers make a positive difference in Barron County lives and communities by working and maintaining the Barron Community Garden, Barron Community Food Garden, Barron County Fair, Barron County Pioneer Museum, Rice Lake Farmer's Market and many more! They volunteer hours of community service by answering diagnostic questions, educating the public on horticultural topics, growing and donating food to local pantries, beautifying community spaces, conducting workshops, and more, these volunteers work tirelessly to make Wisconsin an incredible place to live.



**Wednesday, April 7, is
"Thank A Master Gardener
Volunteer Day."**

Extension wants to recognize all of our Master Gardener Volunteers for their dedication and contributions to Wisconsin. Join us by writing a note, or just saying "Thank You!" to a Master Gardener Volunteer. To thank your local master gardener volunteers, go to the Barron County Website barron/extension/wisc.edu website, click on the link, **"Thank a Barron County Master Gardener"** and write a short note and submit!!

If inclined, send a thank you card to the Barron County Extension Office at Barron County Government Center, 335 E. Monroe Avenue, Room 2206, Barron, WI 54812.

We will make sure the master gardeners receive your thank you card!



Heirloom or Hybrid: What's in My Seed Packet?

Selecting new seeds to buy each year is an exciting activity. Whether choosing vegetables or flowers, there is more to our selection process than falling for a pretty picture. Does it matter if the seed is an open-pollinated variety or a hybrid? Can you grow a hybrid variety from saved seed? To understand differences among types of seeds, you need to understand how the mother plant was pollinated. Here are a few things to think about when you purchase seeds.

Open-pollinated plants may be self-pollinated, like snap beans, or pollinated by natural means – insects, butterflies, hummingbirds, wind, etc. – and then produce seed that will grow into plants very similar to the mother plant. If you buy seeds for an open pollinated plant, then you will be able to save seeds from the plants you grow and you won't need to buy new seeds each year to grow the same great plants.

Hybrid plants are selectively bred to achieve desirable traits.

Heirloom vegetables are preserved through the decades and are often less uniform but better tasting.

An heirloom plant is a type of open-pollinated plant whose seeds have been saved and passed along for generations. Most heirlooms have been grown for at least 50 years, which indicates something about how desirable the plant's traits are to survive when so many new varieties are introduced each year.

Hybrid plants have been bred from two different types of parent plants to create a new plant that exhibits favorable traits that come from each parent. Hybrid plants often grow more vigorously than either parent. They also have other

valuable features that distinguish them from the non-hybrid varieties, such as disease or pest resistance, larger yields, tolerance of high humidity, or novel colors or flower forms. Disease resistance is a trait that is important to many home vegetable growers who face powdery mildew or other diseases in their gardens.

Hybrids do not "come true" from seed. If you plant seeds that you save from a hybrid plant, you may get a plant that has some traits from one parent and some from the other, but it is unlikely to have the set of traits that the hybrid exhibited. If you want to grow that particular plant again, you will need to purchase seeds for that hybrid again.

Do you want to save seed from the plants you grow this year? If so, you will want open-pollinated seeds. Are you most concerned about disease resistance or particular features like new flower colors? If so, you will want hybrid seeds. Either way, there are lots of seed options from which to choose and experiment. Happy growing!

By Janet Mackey, University of Maryland Master Gardener.



According to Seed Savers Exchange: focusing on heirloom varieties creates a historical connection to gardening and food production, building a more sustainable future by carrying on our garden heritage.

For the New Gardeners: Gardening – Year 2

By Carol Kettner

If 2020 was the first year you dove into gardening, you learned a great deal. In our October 2020 Newsletter, I wrote:

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.



The real question is: WHAT DID YOU LEARN? Here are some suggestions to help this year be successful.

Problem: It was more work than you thought it would be.

Solution: Plant only what your time and interest allow.

Problem: You did not do a soil test and your plants really did not do well.

Solution: Get a soil test if you skipped it last year. It is a very small investment and really pays off.

Problem: You planted early, and your peppers and tomatoes just sat there for weeks and weeks.

Solution: WAIT for the soil temperature to warm up enough for those plants, but get some radishes, lettuce, and peas in the ground as soon as you can work the soil.

Problem: Weeds, weeds, weeds!!

Solution: Don't wait for weeds to be overwhelming. Spend a few minutes every 2 or 3 days pulling weeds.

Problem: The animals ate your lunch and thanked you for the treats.

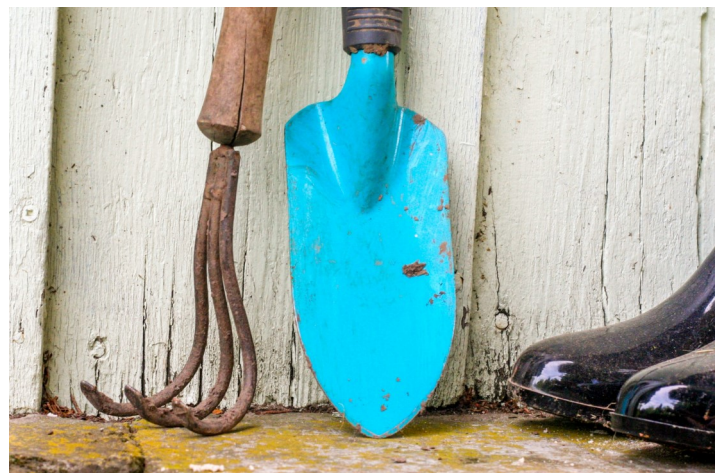
Solution: Plan ahead. A fence is your best defense.

Problem: You thought if a little fertilizer was good, then a lot must be great, and you really fed your plants well.

Solution: Follow the label. Organic fertilizers are more forgiving and adding plenty of compost will decrease your need for fertilizer.

Learn from your mistakes and think about the best thing that happened in your gardening adventures last year. Was it growing your own carrots for the first time, or enjoying some beautiful flowers? Maybe it was just the fun of getting your hands dirty or working with your children or grandchildren to get something growing.

A little planning and a small amount of time every day, can make just about anyone a successful gardener.



Gardening Terms 3—By Carol Kettner



The better you know your garden vocabulary, the easier it is to describe a problem to someone or ask for their help.

Balled and Burlapped – Trees and shrubs dug with soil around their roots; the roots are then wrapped in burlap and may be encased in a wire or similar basket.

Bare Root - Trees and shrubs generally dug from nurseries in the fall, held in climate-controlled coolers over the winter, and then sold bare, without soil, in the spring. (Often sold at a much cheaper price, and if planted properly, fare better than a balled and burlapped plant.)

Baby Greens - Young, leafy vegetables or herbs that are harvested at 2"–4" tall.

Cover Crop - Fast growing plants, usually grains, legumes, or grasses that are utilized for their soil-enhancing qualities. These crops are usually worked into the soil or removed before they produce seed.

Crop rotation—Growing crops of a specific family in different areas of the garden each year to avoid soil-borne diseases and nutrient depletion.

Disease Resistance - Exhibiting less susceptibility or an immunity against specific diseases as compared to other varieties.

Green manure—A cover crop that is turned into the soil before it flowers and is allowed to decay and enrich the soil.

Hardiness - The degree to which a plant can withstand cold temperatures.

Heirloom - Heirloom seeds come from open-pollinated plants that pass on similar characteristics and traits from the parent plant to the child plant. There is no concrete definition that every gardener uses to define heirloom plants. Some organizations consider plants that have been around for more than 50 years as heirloom

Hybrid - In breeding, hybrids are plants produced by the cross-breeding of two genetically different varieties or species. Plants are developed for size, flower, taste, disease resistance, increased fruit, or anything that may make it more desirable.

Latin Name/Scientific Name - The two or more part name that is unique to a specific species. Scientific names are consistent in any language, whereas a species may have several common names that may even vary by region.

Medium - For horticultural purposes, a medium is the material plants grow in.

Microgreen - Young, leafy vegetables or herbs that are harvested just above the soil line when the plants have their first pair of leaves, called cotyledons, and possibly the just-developing true leaves.

Open Pollinated - pollination occurs by insect, bird, wind, humans, or other natural mechanisms.

Self-sow - To drop viable seeds to the ground. In some varieties, often annuals, if seeds are allowed to drop, those seeds will germinate, perpetuating the variety. The subsequent seedlings are often referred to as "volunteers".

Successive sowing - Sowing at least once more after the initial sowing, which extends the harvest. People often use successive sowing to have baby greens throughout the summer.

Plan, Plant and Create a Beautiful Landscape this Spring!

By Melinda Meyers

Spring is the time of renewal that often includes rejuvenating existing landscapes with minor or major changes. It's also the time you may be inundated with questions from those planning to do their own renovations. Help them be successful, spend wisely and stay safe with a bit of planning before their first trip to the garden center.

Start with a plan. Make a sketch of the existing landscape including planting beds, permanent plants and structures. A plan helps save you time and money and avoid costly mistakes. Plus, it's much easier to move plants and structures drawn on paper than digging or disassembling them once placed in the landscape.

Gather ideas and get the whole family in the process. Identify spaces for the improvement and plantings you would like to make. Consider functional features as well as aesthetic improvements. Locate spaces for managing yard waste, play, entertaining, and storage. Mark these in your landscape sketch. Once you are happy with the placement of these and permanent features like patios, fire pits, and garden beds, look for areas that need added color at various times of the year,.

Make your landscape shine throughout the year with the help of plants suited to the growing conditions. Select plants that provide several seasons of beauty with flowers, fruit, fall color or form. Consider those that attract birds and butterflies for additional color and motion in your gardens. Don't forget about winter. Include ornamental

grasses with attractive seed heads that sway in the wind, perennials with seeds for the birds and trees and shrubs with colorful bark.

Evaluate the views you need to screen and those you want to preserve. Create privacy with hedges, tall perennials, vines trained on trellises, and structures. Leave openings so you can enjoy the pleasing views you want to preserve.



Place large permanent plants like trees and shrubs first, Making sure to allow sufficient space for the plants to reach mature size. Next add perennials and annual flowers.

These make great placeholders, providing color and greenery until the larger plants reach full size. As the trees and shrubs grow, you'll need fewer annual plants and can move perennials to a new garden bed.



Always call Diggers Hotline at 811 or file a request online at [DiggersHotline.com](https://diggershotline.com) at least 3 business days before putting the first shovel in the ground. And remind others to do the same. Diggers will contact all the appropriate companies who will mark the location of their underground utilities in the designated work area. It's a free service and reduces the risk and inconvenience of accidentally knocking out power, cable or other utilities while creating a beautiful landscape.

The important step is often overlooked so as a reminder April has been declared National Safe Digging month. A 2020 survey conducted by a third-party research firm for Common Ground Alliance (CGA) found only 50 percent of

Plan, Plant and Create a Beautiful Landscape this Spring Continued—

those planning a project involving digging were aware of this service. We need your help increasing awareness and use of Diggers Hotline month, during April Safe Digging Month and throughout the landscaping season.

Look up to check for overhead utilities and remind others to do the same. Avoid plants that can eventually grow into the wires or structures that may interfere with utilities and power transmission, creating a real hazard. Adjust designs to avoid conflict with both overhead and underground utilities.



Add color, sparkle, and personality to the landscape with containers, tabletop or wall mounted fountains, bird-baths, garden art and seasonal décor. You can change these out yearly or with each season as desired.

Make this a fun, productive, and safe start to the gardening season for you and those gardeners you advise. Starting with a plan and contacting Diggers Hotline before installing any landscape project, large or small, are the first steps to success.

Check your design and look

for ways to lower maintenance requirements. Design planting beds with gently curves, avoid narrow angles and allow easy access for mowing the surrounds lawn. Make sure you can easily reach all plants within the beds. Include steppers or pathways in larger beds, space between fences and back of plants and easy access between different spaces within the garden.

*Melinda Meyers is the author of numerous books, including *Small Space Gardening* and *Minnesota and Wisconsin Month-By-Month Gardening*. She hosts the Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the nationally syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment* TV and radio program. Myers web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.*

Resources—Where to find answers!

Factsheets—<https://pddc.wisc.edu/>

Fruit—fruit.wisc.edu

UWEX Publications—<https://learningstore.uwex.edu>

Insect Info—<http://labs.Russell.wisc.edu/insectlab/>

General Wisconsin horticulture info—<https://hort.uwex.edu>

Horticulture training and articles—<https://wimastergardener.org/articles>

Weed identification—<https://weedid.wisc.edu>

Wisconsin Pest Bulletin—<https://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/pb/>

Hardening Off Seedlings and Plants

Hardening is the process of exposing transplants gradually to outdoor conditions. It enables your transplants to withstand the changes in environmental conditions they will face when planted outside in the garden. It encourages a change from soft, succulent growth to a firmer, harder growth.

- Begin hardening transplants 1-2 weeks prior to setting out plants in your garden.
- The easiest way to harden transplants is to place them outside in a shaded, protected spot on warm days, bringing them in at night. Each day, increase the amount of sunlight the transplants receive.
- Don't put tender seedlings outdoors on windy days or when temperatures are below 45° F. Even cold-hardy plants will be hurt if exposed to freezing temperatures before they are hardened.
- Reduce the frequency of watering to slow plant growth, but don't allow plants to wilt.
- A cold frame provides an excellent environment for hardening off transplants.
- After proper hardening, tomato plants can usually tolerate light and unexpected frosts with minimum damage.

The hardening process is intended to slow plant growth. If carried to the extreme of actually stopping plant growth, significant damage can be done to certain crops. For example, cauliflower will produce thumb-sized heads and fail to develop further. Cucumbers and melons will stop growing if hardened too severely. They may be left outside overnight if the temperature will not fall below 50° F.

(University of Maryland Extension)

Hardening off is the process of exposing transplants, seedlings, or overwintered plants gradually to outdoor conditions.

If you have plants that have overwintered in the house or another heated building, they also need to be hardened off. Overwintering plants simply means pro-

tecting plants from the cold in a sheltered place, like your home, basement, garage, etc. Some plants can be taken in your house where they continue to grow as houseplants. Spider plants and geranium are good examples.

Giving them too much sunlight or cold nights, before they are properly prepared, can have some

unwanted consequences. Start by putting them in shade and out of the wind for an hour or two a day. Each day you can increase the time outside by one half to one hour, with a little more direct sun added each day. It should take about 2 weeks before they are outside day and night (and that means the nights are not getting below about 50 degrees).



Soil Temperature is an Important Aspect of Gardening

“One of the biggest mistakes people make is to plant too early. They get excited when it’s sunny for a few days, put plants in the ground and think they will grow. But the seeds either rot from damping off fungus or germinate very slowly. **At the very least, they’ll be stressed for the rest of the season and never catch up.**” (Horticulturalist Weston Miller, Oregon State University)

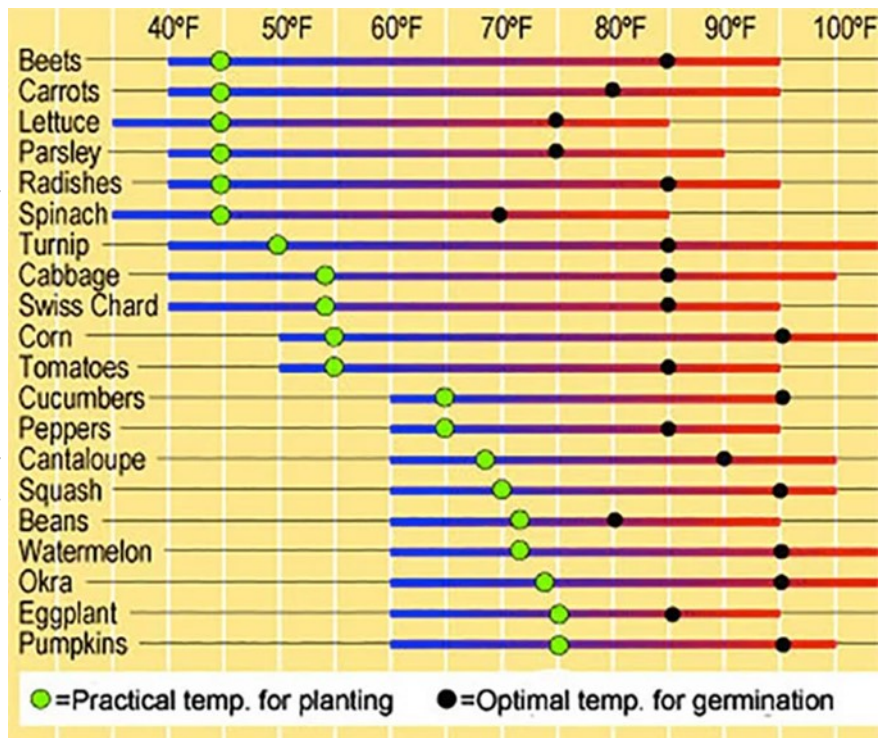
A soil thermometer helps keep planting time in perspective. For cool-season crops, 50 degrees is a good benchmark for soil temperatures. Common cool-season vegetables: asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, chives, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Swiss chard, kale, leek, lettuce, onion, parsnips, peas, radishes, spinach, and turnips.

For warm-season vegetables, the temperature of the soil needs to be above 60 degrees. Common warm-season vegetables: beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, peppers, zucchini and summer squash, pumpkin and winter squash, sweet potato, tomato, watermelon.

If you can’t resist the urge to plant warm-season vegetables, Miller recommended using some sort of protection from the chill like floating row cover, individual glass or plastic cloches or even milk jugs or soda bottles with the top cut out and turned upside down over plants.

“Gardening depends on the weather, which is unpredictable,” he said. “But it pays to wait.”

(Information from Oregon State University’s Extension Service, and Gardeners.com – research based resources from Gardeners’ Supply)



The chart above indicates the minimum and maximum germination temperature ranges for each vegetable crop. The location of the black dot indicates the optimum germination temperatures (according to the University of California at Davis). The green dot is the "realistic" soil temperatures that Dr. Parsons recommends to ensure good germination in the garden. For practical purposes, you can start planting as soon as the soil reaches this temperature.

Plants with cold feet do not do well! Be patient and plant at the proper soil temperature.



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
BARRON COUNTY



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GARDENER
VOLUNTEER**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION

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