

Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer Newsletter**KEEP IT GROWING!**

March - April 2021

Volume 18, Issue 2

Hear MGVs on WTNS

Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteers continue to present “The Real Dirt” on WTNS radio (FM 99.3) and <https://mywtnsradio.com/> on the second Friday of the month at 9:00 am! Tune in to hear gardening tips and discussions on March 12 and April 9. A huge “thank you” to WTNS for hosting us!

2021 Programming on Hold...

We have missed seeing you all! So many of our usual events have been canceled - but as coronavirus statistics continue to improve and restrictions are relaxed, MGVs hope to be able to have some outdoor programs when the weather is suitable. Tentative plans are in the works and we will of course announce events as we can.

Meanwhile, several educational webinars and Zoom sessions have been scheduled online; some have been recorded and may be viewed after the session date. Go to this link <https://mastergardener.osu.edu/lnlhh> to find scheduled

sessions. Recorded events can be found here:

<https://mastergardener.osu.edu/SpringWebinarSeries>

We often post links to other online sessions on our Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer page on Facebook.

If you have a suggestion for a programming topic, please let us know at the Extension Office! Call the office at (740) 622-2265 or e-mail David Marrison at marrison.2@osu.edu

Extension Office Accepting Appointments

While Coshocton County-OSU Extension employees are still doing some work from home via internet, in-person appointments can now be scheduled on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Please call the office at 740-622-2265 for assistance. In addition, e-mail addresses for each staff member can be found on the OSU-Coshocton County website at: <https://coshocton.osu.edu/about/staff>

Pruning

By Margaret Lowe, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

With spring approaching, many of us will think about pruning our trees and shrubs. As a rule of thumb, pruning should occur when the plant will recover the quickest – usually right before spring growth begins. However, there are exceptions. Spring-flowering shrubs should be pruned immediately after the blooms fade to avoid cutting off the buds that will develop for the next season. Summer-bloomers can be pruned in late winter or early spring before growth begins. While it likely will not damage the plant, untimely pruning may deprive you of a season’s flowers.

Where you prune a plant is just as important as when you prune; that is why it is important to understand basic cuts. Use thinning cuts to help retain the natural shape of a plant. Cutting off a stem results in a cluster of new growth. A heading cut removes the terminal bud, leaving a stub that contains dormant bud shoots. Prune to improve the health, safety, and appearance of the plant.

Prune off all dead, damaged, and diseased branches, stems and twigs. You may have to wait to prune until the buds begin to swell or until the plant is in full leaf to see the need for pruning. Remove crowded stems, branches, and those that cross each other. Crowding inhibits air circulation which can promote disease; branches that rub each other can open wounds which can lead to disease and pests.

The wisest point to pruning is to learn how to remove what is in need of pruning. Pruning is a big job; it requires knowledge and can be dangerous. You may be wise to hire an arborist and that also is an important decision.

Find more info here: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/HO/HO-4-W.pdf>

Scrub Oak or Black Jack Oak (*Quercus marilandica*)

By Teresa Donley, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

The original deed to my farm from the 1890's inspired me to share my unique interest in *Quercus marilandica* trees, otherwise known as “scrub” or “blackjack” oaks. The deed refers to “Jack oak” at a couple of the survey points on the property line. I wanted to know more because this was the second reference I found that tied this tree to Linton Township as well as to Military Lands. This oak tree was also mentioned in the Linton Township chapter of a historical reference book dated from 1881, History of Coshocton County, Ohio – an heirloom passed down from a great aunt. Each of these historical documents is very intriguing to me as I have three specimens of this tree at the edge of a grassy plain where the topography becomes low ground.

As written in 1881, the Plainfield and Wills Creek area was covered in tall prairie grass; shortly beyond the plain a thick growth of scrub oak or blackjack oak “kept possession of the soil till uprooted by the mattock and plow”.

Wikipedia references this tree species as a small oak, one in the red oak group. It is native to the eastern and central United States from Long Island to Florida and west as far as Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. There are reports of a few isolated populations in southern Michigan that appear to have been introduced.

Scrub or blackjack oaks grow in poor, thin, dry, rocky and sandy soils where few other woody plants can thrive, usually in low ground from sea level up to 2,800 ft. in altitude. Some say that the tree is “tough but ugly” and at times the tree has been eradicated.

A map of the native range can be found here: <https://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=guma3> and info about the tree can be found at: <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=280720&isprofile=0&>

Potato Chitting

By Margaret Lowe, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

Potatoes are native to the Andes Mountains of South America where they were grown 4,000 years ago. The Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro took them to Europe in the early 1500s. There are many varieties and colors.

Choose which potato variety you are going to plant so you can order the variety from a reliable source. Always purchase certified disease-free seed potatoes. Characteristics to consider when selecting your variety include disease resistance, maturity date, flavor, color, kitchen use, and suitability for storage.

Start them into growth by sprouting or chitting them for six weeks before planting. Set the seed potatoes on end in plant flats, cardboard boxes or egg cartons and place them in good light in a cool room. Most of the eyes are at one end of the potato known as the rose end; this end should be exposed to the light. The advantage of chitting seed potatoes is that it gets them into early growth ready for the season ahead. Each one will develop sturdy green shoots to give them a head start when planted. This may also make it easier to choose how to cut the potatoes into sections for planting.

If you have not tried planting potatoes in a bucket or large container, try it with just a few the first time. You will find it interesting and educational. It may be a way of planting potatoes you will like and it will save space in your garden for other vegetables or plants. Try a different variety or color - white, yellow, or even pink or blue to plant.

Find more info at: https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-413/426-413_pdf.pdf

Fertilizing

By Margaret Lowe, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

Any gardener would be wise to have a soil test before planting and fertilizing. Among other information, the results will indicate pH and whether there is a need for amendments. The Coshocton County Extension Office can arrange for soil testing services; call (740) 622-2265 for information.

You will likely see 3 numbers displayed on fertilizer – for example: 5-10-5. These numbers are the N-P-K rating and correspond with the standard test results section of a soil analysis. “N” stands for nitrogen which is important to plants in that it aids in the formation of chlorophyll and foliage. Chlorophyll makes plants green and enables them to process sunlight into nutrients. “P” stands for phosphorus, an element that is important for root development; flowering; and pollen, seed and fruit production. “K” stands for potassium which is important for plant health. The numbers on the label indicate the percentage of each element. For example, “5-10-5” means the fertilizer in that bag contains 5% nitrogen, 10% phosphorous, and 5% potassium. The remaining amount includes some trace elements and fillers that aid in application.

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Be sure to follow label directions and cautions when using any fertilizers or amendments. Apply fertilizer at the proper time so that the plant can take full advantage of the nutrients. It is important to note that too much fertilizer or untimely application can damage plants more than it helps. In addition, too much fertilizer can run off into streams, causing water pollution; the algae blooms in Lake Erie are a prime example.

For information on soil-testing: <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-1132>

For information on fertilizing: <https://extension.umn.edu/manage-soil-nutrients/quick-guide-fertilizing-plants>

Weeding

By Margaret Lowe, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

Into every life a little rain will fall. If you are a gardener, into your life weeds will grow and moles will visit. There are many kinds of weeds and many will try to grow in your garden; a rose can be a weed if it grows where you do not want it. Weeds are fast growing, resilient, steal nutrients, and can host pests and diseases. They can reproduce by seeds, roots, or stems and be carried by birds, animals, wind or even you. Some weeds can yield more than 40,000 seeds from one plant and some seeds can remain in the soil for years before germinating.

Get a head start by cultivating your garden in the fall to rid the soil of weeds; then cover or mulch with leaves, straw, or newspapers. I also cover mine with a tarp held down by the frames I use during summer. Do not leave soil bare for long or weeds will begin to grow and take over. When spring comes you are ready to plant.

If you weed by hand, make sure you remove all of the weed, particularly any taproots or other parts that can regenerate. Wear gloves and carry weeds off the area. It is easier to pull weeds when the root systems are moist. If using a hoe, use one that enables you to stand straight to avoid straining your back. Keep the blade sharp and glide it below the weedy surface.

Salt, vinegar and boiling water can be used around the edges of the garden, between sidewalk cracks and bricks, and along driveways. Keep in mind that salt can build up in the soil and prevent the growth of preferred plants. Vinegar is a nontoxic alternative to commercial weed killer. Mix a small amount of vinegar and liquid dishwashing soap with water in your sprayer; the soap helps the vinegar to adhere to the weed.

There are various tools and apparatus on the market to assist with pulling weeds. Before spending your money on these, really investigate and consider their value in your situation. Many gardeners find that hand-pulling often works the best. The main thing is continuous weeding; forget for a short period and you may become overwhelmed.

Find more info here: <https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/controlling-weeds-home-gardens>

Mulching

By Margaret Lowe, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

Mulch benefits the garden in many ways. It insulates the soil from temperature extremes, minimizes erosion, prevents moisture loss, inhibits weed growth, can enrich the soil, prevents heaving of plants, and makes earthworms happy while living beneath a blanket of mulch. It is also visually pleasing in planting beds.

Many materials make suitable mulch; it is important to consider what kind to use, when, how much, and for what purpose. Materials should cover the soil well and be healthy -that is, they should not have been exposed to toxic chemicals, insect pests or diseases. Mulch should allow water, air, and fertilizer to pass through to the soil. You can purchase mulch; however, do not forget about materials you may have such as leaves, grass, pine needles, chipped brush, or newspaper. Other materials can be obtained free or for a small sum including corncobs; saw dust or wood chips from a local mill; mash from a brewery; hay or straw; landscape fabric; and rolled paper. Black plastic can be used, but it does not allow air or water to penetrate; it may also get too hot in summer months. Take care when using a mulch of wood products: you do not want walnut, tree of heaven, or treated chips on your garden. You also do not want wood that may have or could invite termites, mice, or other pests.

The recommended depth of most mulch is one to three inches. Keep mulch a few inches away from plants so that it does not shelter pests, cut off air and water, or smother or cook your plants in summer – **NO** volcano mulching! Consider matching your mulch to your plants; for example, acid-loving plants benefit from an acidic mulch such as pine needles. If you plan to use mulch, learn how to use it to your garden's advantage.

More info can be found at: <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/mulches-for-home-grounds-7-214/>

“Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.” ~Frank Lloyd Wright

March Garden Check List:

- ✓ Order seeds! Sow seeds indoors for annuals and warm-season vegetables.
- ✓ Prune shade trees.
- ✓ Wait for buds to break on roses before pruning. Cut out dead wood, trim to shape. For climbing types, only cut out dead wood.
- ✓ Don't be too hasty in removing winter protection.
- ✓ Cut back ornamental grasses and any dead tops of perennials and clean up beds.
- ✓ Apply a weed preventer as directed to prevent weeds in landscape beds.
- ✓ Trim or thin evergreen and deciduous shrubs toward the end of the month *except* spring-bloomers like lilac and forsythia.
- ✓ Plant bare root trees, shrubs and small fruits as soon as the ground is workable. March to early April planting will start the plants "rooting in" before bud break.
- ✓ Plant onion sets, peas, lettuce seed, asparagus and rhubarb as soon as the ground is workable.
- ✓ Soil test lawn and garden so that you may add amendments *before* the growing season.
- ✓ Apply crabgrass preventer & feed your lawn when the forsythia blooms.

April Garden Check List:

- ✓ Pot new seedlings.
- ✓ Cut the lawn when the grass blades are at least 2 inches tall.
- ✓ Prune hydrangea, rose of Sharon, buddleia and abelia.
- ✓ Feed roses, check for aphids on them.
- ✓ Keep an eye out for tent caterpillars.
- ✓ Last call to start tomato seeds indoors.
- ✓ Finish any clean up, trimming, edging, fertilizing and apply weed preventer if desired.
- ✓ Apply a balanced fertilizer to spring flowering bulbs early to promote health and bloom.
- ✓ Apply dormant oils to trees and shrubs when temperatures are above freezing.
- ✓ Divide and transplant perennial flowers as new growth begins or just before.
- ✓ Plant cold weather flowers such as pansy, primrose and violas for some early spring color.
- ✓ Plant needle-leaved evergreens.
- ✓ Resume feeding indoor plants every two to three weeks with half-strength liquid fertilizer.



Upcoming Events

March 12	The Real Dirt on WTNS 99.3	9:00 – 10:00 am
April 9	The Real Dirt on WTNS 99.3	9:00 – 10:00 am
April 10	Lake Park Clean-up Day	9:00 – Noon

Watch for more programming announcements in the future!

Watch for FREE copies of "Keep It Growing" bi-monthly at: OSU Extension Office, Coshocton Public Library, West Lafayette Library, Sprout Garden Center, Garden Patch Greenhouse, Auer Ace Hardware, Tractor Supply, Clary Gardens, Buehler's, and Warsaw ShopWise. Available FREE via e-mail or the OSU-Coshocton County Extension website <https://coshocton.osu.edu/>. Subscribe for home delivery via USPS for \$5.00 per year.

Have a suggestion or question for "Keep It Growing"? Contact Margaret Lowe and Gail Piper, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteers, in care of the Coshocton County Extension Office.

Coshocton County Extension

724 South 7th Street, Room 110, Coshocton, OH 43812

Phone: (740) 622-2265

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