

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

March - April 2023

Volume 20, Issue 1

**MGVs on WTNS, FM 99.3**

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 10 and April 14. A huge “thank you” to WTNS!

**Extension Office Hours**

The Coshocton County-OSU Extension Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to noon and 1:00 to 5:00 pm. Please call the office at 740-622-2265 for more information. 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>

**Newsletter Changes**

Our apologies - we did not publish a January – February issue this year due to extenuating circumstances. Our newsletter will undoubtedly be changing over the next few months - we appreciate all our readers over the past several years!!

**2023 MGV Program Planning**

MGV activities are being planned for the 2023 season – watch for announcements in the future! Find us on Facebook at “Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteers”.

We plan to focus on promoting conservation in our own areas and backyards this year.

**What and Why Questionnaire - My Favorite Garden to Visit**

We asked our present and former Master Gardener Volunteers and some Extension staff for their “favorites” several months ago – here is a list of their favorite gardens. Our readers might enjoy researching some of them and making plans to visit!

1. Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens (Akron OH area) - as a kid, I liked pretending I grew up at Hywet. I also enjoy my friend Mary Ann’s garden (Mary Ann is a major rose gal) and the Bedford Historical Herb Garden.
2. Gibbs Garden at Ball Ground, Georgia - about 300 acres of woodland and Japanese Garden.
3. Morton Arboretum because of the art works; Stan Hywet’s English “hidden” gardens; and Franklin Park Conservatory’s Children’s Garden.
4. Dawes Arboretum, near Newark - you can slowly drive through it plus they have fantastic programs and a gift shop.
5. Clary Gardens - Cypress Gardens used to be my favorite.
6. One right in Roscoe, because it is close by and I can take a short walk.
7. The gardens of my friends and family, always fun to see what they are growing; and Schnormeier Gardens at Gambier OH.
8. My own - to pick vegetables and it is a place of relaxation. I also enjoy Holden Arboretum
9. My own - the perennials are old friends and the annuals are new experiences.
10. Love all of the ones that I have visited!
11. Too many to pick a favorite – Mount Vernon Estate; Monticello; Stan Hywet; Central Park – I love gardens with a variety of styles and purpose

**“AS WE LOOK TO THE NEW YEAR, HOLD ON TO WHAT IS GOOD. LET GO OF WHAT IS BAD. IT REALLY IS THAT SIMPLE.” ~ MANDY HALE**

# Be Aware of Oak Wilt!

By Gail Piper, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

You may have heard public service announcements recently regarding the pruning of oak trees while they are dormant. These PSAs are an attempt to raise awareness of oak wilt which can affect and quickly kill oak trees in the Midwest and Texas; it has been found in most Ohio counties. This disease is caused by a fungal pathogen, *Bretziella fagacearum*, which infects and clogs the vascular system of oak trees. To make matters worse, the tree itself reacts to the fungus and tries to stop the spread, in essence cutting off the flow of water and causing the tree to wilt. The tree often dies within one season and there is no viable treatment that is not extremely expensive at this time – it is best to try to prevent the spread of the fungus.

Why is the timing to prune oaks important? Or to avoid any wounds to them for that matter? Oak trees should not be pruned after they come out of dormancy and enter the growing season because that is when the insect that carries the fungus is also active. Sap beetles, also called ‘picnic beetles’ (*Coleoptera nitidulidae*), become active in spring and are attracted to fresh cuts on oak trees thereby spreading the fungus or spores from tree to tree. Once a tree is infected, the fungus can spread via its roots to other nearby oaks if their root systems meet underground. The recommended prevention of that type of spread is to trench or cut the roots between an infected tree and nearby trees; after that, the affected tree should be carefully removed.

In general, the best time to prune oak trees is before April 15 and after October 15 when the insects are not active; some sources recommend that time frame be extended to before early March and after mid-November. Keep in mind that an early spring or late fall could affect that plan. If pruning is necessary during the growing season, some sources recommend applying a coat of latex paint to the cut immediately.

For more information on oak wilt and pruning oak trees, go to: <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/plpath-tree-02> and <https://bygl.osu.edu/index.php/node/2081>

## Why Are Oak Trees Important?

Over 90 species of oak trees (*Quercus spp.*) are native to North America; several are native to Ohio and Coshocton County in particular. Beyond the fact that they provide wonderful shade and are a commercial asset, oak trees are extremely important in the web of life – many aspects of which go unnoticed by humans.

We all know that squirrels love acorns, but so do many other species of wildlife. According to Douglas W. Tallamy, a professor in the Department of Entomology at the University of Delaware and author of “The Nature of Oaks”, many animals rely on acorns. The list includes deer, rabbits, black bears, racoons, chipmunks, and other rodents. Several species of birds including blue jays, titmice, towhees, turkeys, ducks, some woodpeckers, and others also depend on the bounty from oak trees. The number of insects that rely on oak trees is enormous; many of them are easily overlooked because of their small size or the fact that they are active in the canopy high above the ground. Many bees depend on oak pollen in the spring to provide protein for their developing larva. Some insect stages feed on the catkins and young leaves of oaks. More than 500 species of butterflies and moths develop on oak trees. Consider also the fact that many oak-dependent insects make up an important part of the food chain. Birds and other animals, and even some other insects feed not only on adult insects, but on their protein-rich caterpillars. Many of those species then go on to be part of the food web for other animals.

The food that oaks provide is indeed important, but these trees also provide shelter. Birds and squirrels build nests in the branches; insects hibernate under the bark; gall wasps use acorns to house their larva; and still others shelter under the fallen leaves or make cocoons in live leaves. All these examples emphasize the importance of oak trees in our environment.

## Planting Time is Coming Soon!

By Gail Piper, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

The seed and nursery catalogs have arrived! If you are like most gardeners, you have been thinking about new plants and planning your gardens, whether it be for vegetables, flower beds, or general landscaping. Here are a few things to think about and to research as plans develop.

What plants have worked well for you in the past? It’s true that experience is a great teacher – think about the plants that performed as desired and the ones that were a disappointment.

Select perennials that are tolerant of our USDA hardiness zone. Most of Coshocton County is in zone 6a (average minimum extreme temperature of -10 to -5 degrees F); a small area in

(continued next page)

the northwest part of the county is in 5b (-15 to -10 degrees F). It is a good idea to select plants that are tolerant of colder zones in case of below average winter temperatures.

Consider your planting area; the right plant in the right place is very important! Is it a shady or sunny location? Dry or wet? Is there room for the plant to achieve the proper height and spread without growing into wires or a building foundation? Does the plant need protection from wind?

Consider the maturity dates on seed packages. Our “frost-free” date is about May 15 and our autumn frost date is around October 10. Starting seeds inside can extend the growing season, but the timeline still should be considered so that plants don’t get too big before they can be transplanted outside.

Is it time to rotate crops in your vegetable garden? It’s a good idea to change families of plants to a different area every couple of years to avoid a build-up of pests or pathogens in an area. Certain insect pests and pathogens can build up in the soil if the plants they like are grown in the same spot for a few years in a row.

Consider getting a soil test. The tests can be geared for vegetables, lawns, or field crops and the results will tell you many things such as pH or if any amendments are needed. In Coshocton County, testing can be done through our local Extension Office for about \$16; call them at (740) 622-2265 for more information.

It is a great idea to research new plants to learn about their preferences or idiosyncrasies. Information can be found online, at the library, by calling the local Extension Office, and many other sources.

## **Clivia – An Interesting and Unique Houseplant**

By Margaret Lowe, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer

It seems there is an association or society for just about everything in the plant and animal world: roses, irises, bluebirds, lepidoptera (butterflies), dahlias, herbs, hosta, bonsai, African violets, clivia and even more. Clivia - what is that? The name clivia is pronounced “kli-vee-ah” and it describes a genus of southern African plants that are named in honor of Lady Charlotte Florentia Clive.

Also known as kaffir lily or bush lily, the clivia originated in Africa where they grow wild with bright orange flowers. Clivia is not a small African violet-type plant; the leaves are strap-like and large. My plants have leaves that are 3-4 inches wide and 25 inches long and cover a large cedar chest. (It’s difficult to pick up and move my plants when I put them outside to enjoy the warm months!)

Clivias are tough plants that seem to thrive on neglect. They have three major needs; minimum temperatures, shade, and a drop in evening temperatures for about two months in the fall in order to produce flowers. Naturally, they need water; however, they seem to tolerate dry conditions. They can survive indirect sunlight, but the leaves and flowers will burn under direct sunlight. I would suggest clivia as a house plant that takes little care, little water, and is very enjoyable when it blooms.

This is a quote from a book on clivia: “There are few modern flowering plants that routinely change hands for hundreds or thousands of dollars per individual plant. Orchids are one such example. There is, however, only one group of plants where it is not unusual to pay as much as twenty dollars for a single seed or a thousand dollars for a choice division: the clivia. Fortunately, clivia plants and seeds are also available at much more reasonable prices and growing their seed is so easy that anyone can aspire to produce exciting new and valuable varieties.” Yellow-flowered varieties have become available, and breeders are pursuing pastels and picotees (petals with contrasting borders). New introductions may sell for hundreds of dollars. A friend gave me the clivia that I have. It has produced orange blossoms twice for me and the blooms then produced seed pods; I planted some seeds, but they are slow in growing.

Although you can buy clivia plants in Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, they are not sold in many places in the United States. Most of the sources are in California and sell mainly for wholesale purposes, although plants are becoming more easily found in a few box stores there.

South Africa has a clivia club that produces a newsletter (<https://cliviasociety.com/publications/>). Organizations can also be found in Australia, Japan, and the United Kingdom. There also are discussion groups or pages on the internet for web-based information. The International Bulb Society produces an annual publication and a quarterly which occasionally publish articles on clivias. A beautiful book, *Clivias*, by Harold Koopowitz, Professor of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology at the University of California, includes information on every aspect of growing clivias. It contains beautiful pictures, where to find them, and contact information.



*Photo from North Carolina  
State Extension*

## 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, rhododendron, forsythia etc.
- ✓ 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 10	The Real Dirt on WTNS 99.3	9:00 – 10:00 am
March 12	Daylight Saving Time begins – spring forward!	
March 17	Happy St. Patrick's Day!	
April 1	Lake Park Clean-up Day – MGVs on-site	9:00 to noon
April 9	Easter Sunday	
April 14	The Real Dirt on WTNS 99.3	9:00 – 10:00 am
April 22	Earth Day	
April 28	National Arbor Day	

**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**

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