



# Dig In!

Canyon County Horticulture News for Master Gardeners & Friends

Spring/Summer 2013 Volume VI Issue 1 [www.uidaho.edu/extension/canyon](http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/canyon)

## Grow Your Own

The trend isn't slowing a bit this year

BY ARIEL AGENBROAD



Around here we hadn't noticed any slowdown in interest related to home food gardening, but I was curious to know if the rest of the country was as excited to grow.

Turns out, they are! The National Garden Writer's Association survey for 2013 found that the number of folks growing edibles is expected to increase by 11.3% in the coming year. This is the biggest jump since 2008, when the economy was to blame. Sure, things aren't entirely rosy yet in that department, but I think the trend has more to do with the enjoyment we've rediscovered and the self-sufficiency we're experiencing as we produce more of our own food at home and in our communities.

Better Homes and Gardens predicts that "mini-homesteading" will continue as a major trend, along with interest in community gardening, heirloom seed saving and edible landscaping.

That is certainly the case in Canyon County, where we filled our Victory Garden class again this year, and are seeing more and more families get into raising chickens, growing gardens, and participating in community food production like never before. It's an exciting time to grow!

The Garden Media Group, which also tracks garden trends, cites three areas in which gardening interests



**Lettuce seedlings**, available at dozens of local markets, garden centers and farm supply stores, give gardeners a jump start.

are particularly strong. First, the "home pioneer" trend, which includes everything from fruit and vegetable production to beekeeping, cheesemaking, homebrewing, sausage making, and other artisan skills. Second, an increased focus on wellness means that we're even more concerned about where our food comes from. And third, we're more passionate than ever about naturalized landscapes and resource conservation.

As always, University of Idaho Extension is here for you. Whether in these pages, on our website, or in person at one of our classes or events, our job is to help you "grow" to your potential!

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# Why Pollinators Matter So Much

## Tiny creatures with huge impact

STORY BY CATHY FORD, ADVANCED MASTER GARDENER

Most native wildflowers depend on pollinators to promote plant reproduction and sustain plant populations.

About one-third of our worldwide agricultural production depends to some extent on bee pollination, however less than 10 percent of the 100 most productive crop species depend entirely on bee pollination.

If we want to continue eating foods like almonds, apples, avocados, berries, etc. we need to understand that bees and other pollinators can't keep up with the current growth in production of these foods.

### DECLINE OF NATIVE BEE POPULATIONS

Colony collapse disorder is blamed for large, inexplicable die-offs. The disorder, which causes adult bees to abandon their hives and fly off to die, is likely a combination of many causes, including parasites, viruses, bacteria, poor nutrition and pesticides.

Modern agricultural practices, landscape fragmentation and habitat degradation have negatively affected wild bee populations by eliminating resources needed for successful reproduction such as nesting sites and pollen and nectar sources.

The expansion of farmland reduces wild bees' nesting sites and also eliminates the wildflowers that



Butterflies, like this Tiger Swallowtail, appreciate the flat-topped, pink and orange blossoms of Zinnia and other late summer flowers.

the bees depend on when food crops aren't in blossom. The distance between crop fields and natural or semi-natural habitats containing suitable nesting sites reduce species richness and abundance of crop pollinators in America and Europe.

In most parts of the world, domestic bees provide pollination only locally and not necessarily where it is needed most. Domesticated bees mainly produce honey; any contribution they make to crop pollination is usually a secondary benefit.

Eventually, a growing shortage of pollinators will limit what foods farmers can produce.

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## FLOWERS AND POLLINATORS

The importance of bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, moths and other pollinators has become more prominent as honey bee hives are affected by 'colony collapse disorder' and other ailments.

Home gardeners can enhance habitat for native pollinators and lure them to the garden with plants whose color and shape attract bees, butterflies and birds.

Native bees including bumble bees, sweat bees, alkali bees and digger bees are not the same as docile honey bees, native to Europe, that live in hives and help produce large amounts of honey. Some native bees live only a year or less, either alone or in small groups, on the ground in hollow cavities in piles of sticks and twigs. Unlike the honey bee, many native bees do not fly great distances and need forage nearby.

Native bees that emerge and fly in early spring don't have the cornucopia of flowering plants that mid-summer bees can access.

Gardeners can help these early-season bees by growing native early-season flowering plants such as Oregon grape, barberries, willows, or other native plants that are attractive to bees.

## NATIVE BUMBLEBEES

Bumblebees are excellent pollinators of vegetables, flowers, and fruit trees and are essential to pollination and fruit set of commercial and home crops including many types of berries.

Each species of bumblebee has a different range of flowers that it pollinates, but the different species together are usually capable of pollinating many of the plants in a flower or vegetable garden.

Bumblebees are the only native bees that are social. That is, they live in colonies, usually of less than 100 individual bees, and different bees perform different tasks for the colony. Their social behavior is not as complex as honeybees; Most gardeners will find bumblebees in their gardens naturally.

Bumblebees are particularly attracted to native plants



such as lupine, mint, larkspur, aster, clover, salmonberry, Oregon grape and madrone.

## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Plant patches of flowers to create a foraging habitat for pollinators.
- Native plants are the best source of food for bees; however there are also some garden plants that are great for pollinators.
- Provide a range of plants that offer a succession of flowers, pollen and nectar through the whole growing season.
- Pollinators often choose the most rewarding flowers, and you can help direct them to your cucumbers and squash by growing their favorite flowers nearby.

## ADDING COLOR & VARIETY TO YOUR GARDEN

Hummingbirds tend to like red flowers with long, tubular shapes such as the scarlet gilia (or skyrocket) and penstemon species; most commercial hummingbird feeders are aptly shaped and colored.

- Bees prefer flowers that are blue, purple, white or yellow such as goldenrod, asters, plants in the mint family, etc.

Adult butterflies are attracted to red, yellow, orange, pink and purple blossoms that are flat-topped or clustered and have short flower tubes.

Moths, many of which fly at night, are attracted to pale flowers that reflect the moon. Flowers that have a single petal provide easy access to their pollen and nectar.

Good plants for supplying nectar in spring include Aubretia, Bluebell, Clover, Cuckooflower, Daisy, Dandelion, Forget-me-not, Honesty, Pansy, Primrose, Sweet Rocket and Wallflower.

For late summer and autumn nectar, plant Buddleia, French Marigold, Ice Plant, Knapweed, Lavender, Marjoram, Michaelmas Daisy, Mint, Red Valerian, Scabiosa, Thyme and Zinnia.

Ivy is especially good for autumn flying moths, as it flowers in October and November.

## CALENDAR

### April

27 Nampa Farmers Market Opens

### May

#### 4 Perennial Plant Class at

**Westpark:** Offered through Nampa Recreation Dept., 9 am—11:30. Call Nampa Rec. to register. \$12.

#### 6 Master Gardener Volunteer

**Plant Clinics** begin at the Extension office in Caldwell. Stop by or call Mondays and Wednesdays from 1 pm—4 pm or Fridays from 9 am—12.

#### 6 ISDA Pesticide Disposal Day at

Pickle Butte Landfill. Call Victor Mason (208) 332-8628 for more information.

#### 22 Caldwell Farmers' Market Opens

### June

#### 18 Our 4-H Junior Master

**Gardener** Kids Summer Day Camp, Nampa. Call our office to enroll.

### July

**10 Kids & Bugs Fun Day** at the Caldwell Public Library, 11:00 am—12. Free.

**13-14** Come visit the Master Gardener booth at the **Lakeside Lavender Festival** in Nampa.

#### 25-28 Canyon County Fair &

**Festival**, Caldwell. Come see the Master Gardener's Display in the Horticulture Exhibits.

### August

**3 Celebrate National Farmers' Market Week with Extension at Nampa Farmers' Market!** Gardening and Canning Demonstrations, kid's activities and more. Free. 9 am—1 pm.

*Many things grow in the garden that were never sown there.*

- Thomas Fuller (1732)

## Garden for the Greater Good

Plant sales offer great plants, great prices, and support local education and charity activities



**St. Paul's Plant Sale:** May 4, 8 am to 6 pm, St. Paul's Church: 510 W. Roosevelt in Nampa

**Trinity Community Gardens, Inc., Plant Sale:** May 11, 9 am to 2 pm, Trinity Lutheran Church: 8 S. Midland Blvd. in Nampa

**The Boy Scout Troop 255 Plant Sale:** Saturday, May 11, 8 am to 4 pm, in front of the Middleton United Methodist Church, 104 E. Main St. in Middleton.

Master Gardener Mary will have a huge variety of vegetables, and lots of annual and perennial flowers and herbs. Contact Mary Van De Bogart, 585-2741 for more information or to pre-order.

**The Nampa FFA Greenhouse** will be open weekdays from 1 to 5 and Saturdays 10 to 1 in May. It is located in the back of Columbia High School, next to the Pro Tech Building. Annuals, perennials, herbs veggies, color bowls and fabulous Hanging Baskets.

**Notus FFA Plant Sales** will run May 9th through 12th. Open Thursday- Saturday 8 am-6 pm and Sunday 8:30-12pm. Notus High School, 20250 Purple Sage Road, Notus.

**Nampa Garden Club** is holding a spring plant sale Saturday May 4, 2013 at 210 High Street here in Nampa, beginning at 9 am.



### GARDENING WITH PETS?

Skip these plants in areas where your furry family members might munch on them

American Yew, Baby's Breath, Black Walnut, Castor Bean, Coleus, Dahlia, Dracaena, Everlasting Pea, Foxglove, Geranium, Gladiola, Lantana, Lily of the Valley, Morning Glory.

Find a complete list at [www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control](http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control)

**Fruit News:** Stay tuned for details about this year's U-Idaho **Fruit Field Day** in Parma...usually scheduled for early September. Master Gardener Volunteers are always needed!





# Canyon County MASTER GARDENERS

**The Idaho Master Gardener Program** gives gardeners an opportunity not only to improve their horticultural knowledge and skills but also serve their communities.

## Project Highlights

### PLANT CLINICS

Master Gardener Volunteers will be staffing free Plant Health Clinics at the U-Idaho Extension Office (501 Main in Caldwell) now through September:

**Mondays: 1 pm—4 pm**

**Wednesdays: 1 pm—4 pm**

**Fridays: 9 am—12 pm**

### SCHOOL & COMMUNITY GARDENS

Master Gardener Volunteers are active in promoting, creating, and supporting community gardens in the area and serving as school garden mentors around the state. Trinity Community Gardens, Inc., founded by Advanced Master Gardeners, grow, glean and distribute over 50,000 pounds of food annually to the hungry in the Treasure Valley. Call us to find out how to join the effort.

### DEMONSTRATION GARDENS AND CIVIC BEAUTIFICATION

In Nampa, we are continuing to develop our raised boxes at West Park: look forward to more herbs, bulbs, and native plants. Our Caldwell garden, created by volunteers behind our office is filled with beautiful blooming xeric plants with minimal water. This spring, Master Gardener Volunteers also helped eradicate noxious weeds at the Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge in Nampa.

### JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER

We're reaching hundreds of kids and introducing them to bugs, botany and more through after school programs, 4-H Clubs and Camps, and Summer Reading. Know some kids who would enjoy this? Let us know!



**Advanced Master Gardener** Mary Van de Bogart shared seedlings and advice with youth at Farmway Village in Caldwell.

## How to Cut Back Ornamental Grasses



First, assemble your tools. This might include rope, gloves, pruners, pruning saw, or even electric hedge trimmers, if your grasses are very wide and tough.

Start by gathering the grass together and tying into a bundle. This makes for easier trimming and removal of the dried tops.

Then cut or saw a few inches from the base of the crown.

Shape, trim, clean up and you're done!

# Vegetable Garden Designs for Every Site

Whether you garden an acre or a patio, what will yours look like?

TIPS WRITTEN BY UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO EXTENSION HORTICULTURE FACULTY

## TRADITIONAL GARDEN DESIGNS

**Row Planting:** This arrangement consists of long, straight rows, usually two or more feet apart, with a single line of plants growing down each row.

**Broadcast Row Planting:** Broadcast planting usually involves placing seed in rows arranged as wide bands rather than single-width rows. Many crops, especially root crops such as carrots, radishes, and beets will produce higher quality vegetables when planted this way

**Hill Planting:** Larger vegetables, such as melons, squash, corn, and cucumbers, may be planted in hills. The hills can be arranged as extra wide rows to facilitate cultivation with distance between hills based on recommendations for individual crops.

## INTENSIVE GARDEN DESIGNS

Intensive garden designs require considerable effort to plan and install, but are thereafter relatively easy to maintain. Proven intensive garden designs include



raised beds and vertical gardens. When combined with production techniques that include interplanting, succession planting, relay planting, and edible landscaping, these garden designs will help maximize the use of limited space.

**Raised Beds:** The typical design of the “raised bed” garden includes a defined border filled with heavily amended soil to a level above the surrounding ground. Typical beds are raised six to eight inches but they may be as much as three feet above grade. Borders may be made from concrete, masonry, or wood. Wood landscape timbers are commonly used for borders and should be made of redwood or cedar to minimize deterioration due to constant exposure to moisture. Although there is no evidence that the new generation of treated timbers is toxic or harmful to plants or consumers, it may be wise to exercise caution and use only untreated wood.

Soil preparation is an important aspect of raised beds. The final soil mix commonly consists of one part native soil and one part compost or aged organic matter. Many other choices for soil components exist and include manures, peat, sand, vermiculite, or perlite added in various quantities. The simplest method for preparing the soil is to remove the top 12 inches of soil from the completed bed, place it in a pile, mix the pile with an equal amount of organic matter, and shovel it back into the bed

Plant arrangement within a raised bed should optimize the use of the limited space. The goal is to space plants equidistant from each other on all sides, so that, at maturity, plant leaves touch or slightly overlap. The use of dwarf or bush type varieties will help minimize space needed for producing many crops, such as beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, and squash.

**Vertical Gardening:** The use of trellises, nets, strings, cages, or poles to hold plants upright and limit horizontal spread constitutes vertical gardening. Vining and sprawling plants, such as cucumbers, tomatoes, melons, and pole beans, are obvious candidates for this type of gardening.

Structures for supporting plants can take advantage of existing structures, such as buildings or fences, or can stand as an isolated structure. The height of the support apparatus will depend on the crop being grown. Shorter plants such as tomatoes, cucumbers, and pole beans will grow to a height five to six feet. Squash may need fifteen to twenty feet of vertical space or a structure that will allow some horizontal growth at the top such as a high tunnel.

Vertical gardening saves considerable space but is labor-intensive. This is mostly due to the need for staking, tying, and pruning associated with the process of training new growth upward.

### **Container Gardens**

A window sill, patio, balcony, or doorstep can provide sufficient space for a productive container garden. Gardening in containers requires more attention to detail than any other gardening method. The plants have only a small amount soil available for root growth, meaning limited water and nutrient availability. Also, the plants are subject to heat and other stresses. As a result, care requirements are more stringent and often unique in comparison with a traditional garden.

**Choosing Containers:** Containers can be made of clay, wood, plastic, or metal. Most importantly, they should be the proper size and provide good drainage.

Selecting the proper container size is a balance between supplying adequate soil volume and making sure they can be moved in cases of inclement weather or for winter storage. Choose the largest containers you can feasibly manage. Container depth is important because most plants need at least 6 to 8 inches of soil for proper rooting.



**Choosing Soil Media:** The best soil media for container gardens are ironically are called ‘soiless mixes’. These contain combinations of peat moss, perlite, and sand. Some include wood chips or bark. Native garden soil alone does not make good potting soil because it does not provide adequate drainage or air exchange. Soiless mixes are sterile and contain few nutrients. Manufacturers usually add major plant nutrients to mixes they sell, but may not add trace elements that are necessary for good plant growth. This problem can be solved by using the soiless mix as a base and adding compost (about 25% by volume).

**Placing the Containers:** Position containers where plants will receive sun during the entirety of daytime hours. If this is not possible, choose crops that can withstand some shade. Generally leaf crops can tolerate some shade while vegetables grown for their roots or fruits need a minimum of 8 to 10 hours of full, direct sunlight each day. Available light can be concentrated somewhat by providing reflective materials around the plants (e.g., aluminum foil, white-painted surfaces, marble chips on the soil surface).

**Choosing Vegetable Crops and Varieties for Containers:** The best container crops are those that allow best use of the available space. This includes many herbs, carrots, radishes and lettuce, or crops that bear fruits over a period of time such as tomatoes, peppers, or cucumbers. Dwarf or miniature varieties of many crops are available.



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## University of Idaho Extension

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New ways to grow with you!



<http://www.facebook.com/UIExtGrowVandals>



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End the tyranny of tasteless tomatoes, one plant and plate at a time! The Treasure Valley Food Coalition started the **Tomato Independence Project** to create a tangible way for Idahoans to participate in growing more local food.

The goal is for as many people as possible to grow and/or eat local, fresh tomatoes in 2013. "TIP kits" contain seeds and growing instructions. Join the fun or learn more at: [treasurevalleyfoodcoalition.org](http://treasurevalleyfoodcoalition.org)

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