

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

June 2023



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Area Happenings, p. 2
June Garden Chores, p. 2 - 4
Summer Squash, p. 4 - 6
Tale of a Garden Warrior, p. 6 - 7
The Chelsea Chop: Perennial Pruning,
p. 7 - 8

*Rockbridge Master Gardeners at work
at the Arbor Day tree giveaway at
College Square*

Welcome, everyone, to the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners community newsletter. Each month we will be bringing you relevant seasonal horticultural information for Rockbridge County. If you enjoy this newsletter, please pass it on. Subscription information is on the last page of this newsletter.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Saturday, June 10, 10:30am – 11:30am. Annette Green will speak on Boxerwood's CoreWorks program. Westfel Room. Lexington Presbyterian Church, Main St., Lexington.

FYI: Lowe's Lexington will accept black plastic pots for recycling, but not the flimsy 4 or 6 packs. There is a rack just to the left, inside the door to the garden center checkout area by the employee access gate to the outside.

AREA HAPPENINGS...

Saturday, June 10, 10:30am – 11:30am. Annette Green will speak on Boxerwood’s CoreWorks program. Westfel Room. Lexington Presbyterian Church, Main St., Lexington.

Saturday, June 10, 9:30am – 1:30pm. New River Chapter of the VA Native Plant Society Fifth Annual Native Plant Sale. SEEDS Nature Center, 107 Wharton St., SE, Blacksburg

Saturday, June 17, 2:00pm – 4:00pm. Piedmont Master Gardeners present “Simple to Sensational Summer Containers”. Trinity Episcopal Church, 1118 Preston Ave., Charlottesville.

Tuesday, June 20, 5:30pm-7:30pm. National Pollinator Week Garden Tour and Presentation at Belvedere Center, 540 Belvedere Boulevard, Charlottesville.

The New Perennialist website has several interesting free webinars by well-known landscape designers.

<https://thenewperennialist.com/new-perennialist-talks/>

JUNE GARDEN CHORES

General

- Continually pull weeds from beds
- Work organic material such as chopped leaves or compost into garden beds
- Continue to mulch garden beds 2 to 3 inches deep with an organic material. This will keep moisture in the soil and will also help keep the weeds down
- Newly planted perennials, trees and shrubs will generally need 1 inch of water each week – either from rain or irrigation
- Don’t bag your grass cuttings. Instead let them fall back onto the lawn where they will add organic matter and nitrogen to the soil

Insects:

- Keep an eye out for Japanese Beetles. We usually see them the end of June here in Rockbridge County. If you are going to use traps, be sure and place them far away from the plants you want to protect
- Watch for squash bugs on your squash. Monitor for eggs on the undersides of leaves and scrape them off
- Bagworms hatch in late May to early June, especially on arborvitae. Insecticides work from mid to late June and handpick after that

Fruits and Vegetables:

An excellent and useful VCE publication organized by climate zone (Rockbridge, for the most part is zone 6B heading towards 7) is “Virginia’s Home Garden Vegetable Planting Guide: Recommended Planting Dates and Amounts to Plant”, <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-331/426-331.html>

The Piedmont Master Gardeners have a very good, very thorough guide to tomato diseases with lots of photos: <https://piedmontmastergardeners.org/article/tomato-diseases/>

Stop cutting asparagus by mid to late June. Don’t cut the foliage until the fall as the fronds feed the asparagus roots during the summer.

The following vegetables can still be planted as a first crop or a second crop until the following dates. I’ll include the dates for planting fall crops in the July/August newsletter.

- pole beans until June 20
- lima beans until July 15.
- cucumbers until June 20
- eggplant until July 10
- peppers until July 1
- pumpkins until July 1
- winter squash until July 1
- summer squash until June 20 (a second crop of summer squash often evades squash bugs)
- sweet corn until July 1
- sweet potatoes until July 1
- watermelon until July 1



Don’t pull your fall-planted garlic yet. In Rockbridge, it is usually ready to be pulled in the first week of July. But do cut the scapes and use/saute them as you would use a spicy scallion.

Flowers:

- Deadhead perennials and annuals to keep them blooming.
- The first couple weeks in June are a good time to prune your fall perennials. More on this on p. 7
- Don’t remove spent daffodil foliage until it is completely withered. That foliage is feeding the bulbs. Remove it too soon and you may not get any flowers next year.
- Do succession plantings of zinnias or other annuals quick to germinate so you will have some extended blooms in the fall.

Trees and Shrubs:

If you are planting new trees and shrubs, remember to consider hardiness, light requirements, soil drainage, wind tolerance, mature size, insect or disease problems, maintenance levels, etc. when choosing your plant. Remember the “right plant, right place” rule. Here is another good Tech publication, “How to Plant a Tree”, <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/SPES/SPES-226/SPES-226.html>

- Prune roses to an outward facing bud

Pruning:

- Prune spring flowering shrubs after flowering is completed.

VEGETABLE OF THE MONTH – SUMMER SQUASH

Summer Squash = Squash Bugs and Squash Vine Borers

By Faith Vosburgh

What would summer be without yellow squash or zucchini? These are the first summer vegetables that ripen in my garden. Both are relatively easy to grow – except of course for the fact that squash bugs and borers love them. If you find a squash plant that is collapsed on the ground, it is usually caused by squash bugs or/both squash vine borers.

Squash Bugs

These large insects are about 5/8” long and dark grey to dark brown. The females start laying eggs in June and lay through mid-summer. Their eggs, found on the undersides of squash leaves especially between the veins where they form a V, are yellow to bronze. The nymphs, hatching from the eggs in about ten days, are tiny, about 1/10 – 1/2” long and go through five stages called instars. They mature in four to six weeks.

Squash bugs have sucking mouthparts that suck the sap out of the leaves. This causes yellow spots that will turn brown. Excessive feeding affects the flow of water to the plant and can cause wilting.



Prevention: Keep your plants healthy. Pick the eggs and bugs off plants early. Scrape the eggs off the bottom of the leaves. Here's a tip I found while scrolling on the internet: buy a set of fingertip grips used in office for sorting paper. The grips have tiny bumps on the make it easier to scrape off the eggs and also keep your fingertips clean. I haven't tried this yet, but you can bet I will. Handpick the bugs, although they do move quickly and throw them in a pail of soapy water. Trap bugs by laying out boards or piece of newspaper. The bugs will group together in the night for cover, and you can catch them in the morning. Clean up plant matter in the fall so there is no place for the bugs to overwinter. I find that if I put in a separate crop of squash in July, I very seldom have trouble with squash bugs.

Squash Vine Borer

Adult squash vine borers are ½" long moths with an orange abdomen with black dots. The first pair of wings are metallic green while the back wings are clear. The eggs, laid at the base of the squash plant, are flat and brown, about 1/25" long. The larvae (the actual borers) look a bit like maggots with cream or brown-colored heads and grow to about an inch. They bore into the vines, feeding on the vine center, blocking the flow of water through the plant, causing wilting. You will be able to see the holes with rotting vegetation at the base of the plant. The larvae feed for four to six weeks, then exit the stem and burrow into the ground to pupate where they will remain until the following summer.



Prevention: You can trap the moths in a yellow container filled with soapy water. They are attracted to yellow and will fly into the container and drown. Place traps in mid-June and check daily. Destroy damaged plants. Again, keep the plants free of any weeds or debris. If you do see a hole, insert a sharp wire up the stem to kill the grub or slit the vine along its length to find and remove the borer. After the grub has been removed, heap soil over the stem joints to allow the plant to form new roots.

Sources:

"Squash Vine Borer", Wisconsin Vegetable Entomology. <https://vegento.russell.wisc.edu/pests/squash-vine-borer/>

"Squash Vine Borers", "Squash Bugs", University of Minnesota Extension, <https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/squash-vine-borers#physical-controls-3091762>
<https://extension.umn.edu/fruit-and-vegetable-insects/squash-bugs>

Moroni, Ralph. "Eleven Common Garden Pests: Identification and Management." Piedmont Master Gardeners. <https://piedmontmastergardeners.org/article/eleven-common-garden-pests-identification-and-management/>

This is my family's favorite squash recipe (adapted from *Sara Foster's Southern Kitchen*, Random House, 2011)

Summer Squash Casserole (4 servings or so)

8 slices thick-cut bacon
2 Tablespoons unsalted butter
2 pounds yellow summer squash, chopped
1 large onion, chopped
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mayonnaise
1 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese
2 large eggs
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh breadcrumbs or cornbread crumbs
6 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced
Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 2 qt. casserole.

Fry the bacon in a large skillet until crispy. Remove and drain. Add the chopped squash and onions and sauté for about 10 minutes, until soft and lightly browned. Remove from heat and cool slightly.

Combine the mayonnaise, cheese, and eggs and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the breadcrumbs in a large bowl and whisk to combine. Add the squash mixture, bacon and basil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir to mix.

Spoon the mixture into the casserole, sprinkle with the remaining breadcrumbs. Bake for about 40 minutes until bubbling around the edges and puffy. Remove from the oven and let sit for about 5 minutes before serving warm.

The Tale of a Gardening Warrior

By Karen Carlton

Why is it that I feel like I'm going to war when I go out to tend my garden? Is it because I have to slather on sunscreen or make sure I spray every inch of my skin and clothing with OFF bug spray? I have a straw hat that claims to keep 50% of the sun off my face and neck there by basically, carrying my shade with me as I work. I also have found that I have to wear long pants when I garden. The last time I wore shorts and even with the bug spray, my legs were not a pretty sight. I still don't know where I got all those scratches and bruises, ARUGH! A good pair of sturdy shoes such as hiking boots have also been in my gardening armor.

The next on my list are good gardening tools. I can't stress enough how important it is to have the right gardening tools in one's arsenal. My mainstay tools for gardening are right

on my belt, near at hand. I have a sheath that carries my soil knife and bypass pruners. These two tools have been my best friends when I attack the weeds and the pruning that needs to be done in my gardening chores. I have to mention that hedge clippers also come in handy when bigger shrubs need a “hair” cut to have them look nice and neat. For really big jobs like hedges, I have electric hedge clippers. Believe me, it is so much better than doing it by hand, which I have done in the past. It’s a good workout for the arms but was I sore afterward doing it. The other useful tools I use on occasion are a trowel, a small hand soil rake, and a weeder. When needed, I will use a long-handled shovel, a rake, and a wheel barrel. I’m sure other gardeners can mention some of their favorite tools to help them win the war on weeds and pests.

Which brings up the last bit of my tale, the pests that seem intent on making sure we don’t have the garden we would like. I have tried not to use chemical means to deter pests. My go to deterrent is companion planting and sometimes it works, other times not. I also have taken the philosophy that the wildlife needs to eat, so I have learned to live with the deer eating my echinacea and the birds gobbling my red-hot pokers. Many chemical deterrents as well as homemade remedies can be used in one’s arsenal to combat the hordes that want to destroy your garden. I have taken the position of “do enough to keep me happy and sane, let the pests just have enough but not the whole garden”. It seems to be working for both of us for now.

The war is never ending but after fighting the good fight is worth it. When you see your garden in bloom, then all is right in your little corner of the world. Stay safe out there!

Resources:

www.amleo.com for horticultural tools

The Chelsea Chop – Perennial Pruning

By Faith Vosburgh

The first week in June is when I usually give my fall-blooming perennials the Chelsea Chop. Tracey DiSabato-Aust’s book, ***The Well-Tended Perennial Garden: Planting and Pruning Techniques*** (a must for any gardener’s reference shelf – and there is a new edition) introduced me to this technique. Basically, the chop refers to pruning perennials to control the flowering season or to reduce the size of the plant. Do your asters and goldenrod bloom in the fall with an unsightly leggy stretch of dead leaves at the bottom 6-8” of the stem? The chop is a way to prevent that from happening. Or you can cut them back in uneven chops if you want a staggered season of bloom. Pinching chrysanthemums throughout the summer to maintain a tight growth is another form of the chop. The chop makes the plants bushier with more flowers.



So why ‘Chelsea’? Chelsea refers to a famous garden show in England in late May which corresponds to when plants should

be pruned in England. Late May or early June is best for the chop here in Rockbridge County. This year has had a crazy spring with temperatures up and down. I will be pruning my plants a bit later this year because our crazy up and down spring temperatures have delayed the growth on many of my fall bloomers. The deer and the rabbits have already pruned many of them. I'll cut the goldenrod and asters back by about a third. My summer blooming balloon flowers tend to flop, so I'll cut them back by about a third, too. Depending on how tall my Maximillian sunflowers are – and they look quite tall right now – I'll cut them in half. The 'Gateway' Joe Pye weed will get a third lopped off. Phlox, Beebalm, Yarrow, Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan's, Sneezeweed, Catmint and Shasta Daisies are other perennials that can benefit from a chop. There really is not that much of a delay in flowering if one cuts back now. The plants recover quickly. To extend the season of bloom rather than delay it, another option is cutting only half the stems back.

Your garden will look neater later in the season and your compost bin will benefit from all the fresh cuttings, so chop away.



Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

The Garden Gate, a monthly newsletter by the
Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners, www.ramga.org

Editor: Faith Vosburgh, fvosburgh@gmail.com

To subscribe to this newsletter, click on
<https://www.ramga.org/what-s-happening>