

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

JULY/AUGUST 2022



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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 FARMERS MARKETS

- **Lexington Farmers Market**, behind the Southern Inn, Weds., 8am – 12:30pm
 - **Rockbridge Baths Farmers Market**, Rockbridge Baths Fire Station, Sat., 9am – 11am
 - **Glasgow Farmers Market**, corner of 10th St. and Kanawha, Fri, 10am – 2pm and Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Kerrs Creek Community Market**, 27766 West Midland Trail, Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Fairfield Farmers Market**, 5613 North Lee Highway, Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Seasons' Yield Farm Market**, 165 Oakland Circle, Raphine, 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 10am – 2pm
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****Gardeners know that plants like people can fall ill but diagnosing and treating plant diseases can be tricky. Do you have questions or concerns about what is ailing your plants? Tune into the question-and-answer Rockbridge Master Gardeners Association virtual Plant Clinic on July 16, 2022 at 11:00am -12noon to talk with three experts on common diseases of vegetables, ornamentals and trees. To register go [RAMGA.org](https://www.ramga.org)**

SUMMER GARDEN TASKS

- Watering is essential in the hot months of July and August. Don't neglect your containers. They often need to be watered daily.
 - Deadhead your flowering plants to promote more bloom. Pop the seed heads off your ever-blooming daylilies such as 'Stella d'Oro's. This will allow the plant to put its energy into more blooms rather than seeds.
 - Pinch back lanky annuals
 - Harvest vegetables as soon as they are ripe to encourage further production.
 - Weed, weed, weed.
 - Continue to apply mulch to shade plant roots and retain moisture.
 - Iris may be divided now through September
 - Monitor your tomato plants for disease. Better yet, plant tomatoes that are resistant to late blight. Last year I discovered 'Galahad' tomatoes, a determinate variety that is resistant to the blight. The plants provided me with loads of softball-shaped beautiful red tomatoes right up until almost the first frost.
 - A second crop of summer squash started in July often deters the dreaded squash beetles
 - Start seeds of cool season vegetables for a fall harvest.
 - Avoid pruning trees and shrubs now, except for dead or diseased branches.
 - Sow cover crops such as annual crimson clover once areas become empty (more on this in the next issue of The Garden Gate)
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PEST ALERT: SPOTTED LANTERN FLY

Update on the Latest Winged Invader: Spotted Lanternfly

By Karen Lyons

Last summer we featured an article on the Spotted Lanternfly as a potentially invasive insect. Since then, the presence of this insect has been confirmed in Rockbridge County and, effective this July, our locality will be designated part of the quarantined area by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (see map below). The quarantine primarily affects businesses that travel or transport potentially contaminated materials out of the designated areas, but gardeners are also in a position to help slow the spread of this pest.

In review, the 2021 article discussed identification:

Spotted Lantern Fly (*Lycoma delicatula*) is the latest in a series of non-native insects to become a troublesome pest in Virginia. This planthopper was first discovered in Pennsylvania in 2014, believed to originate in China and likely arrived in shipping materials. It was first detected in Virginia in January 2018 and has already spread to at least 7 counties. Although the preferred host plant is another non-native invasive, the Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), several agricultural crops such as grapes, hops and fruit trees are subject to potential damage.

Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) feeds on the sap of young stems and leaves. The insect excretes sugar-rich fluid known as honeydew, covering plant parts as well as the ground underneath. This favors the growth of sooty mold and attracts other insects such as yellow jackets, hornets, and flies. Both the direct damage by feeding and the sooty mold decrease photosynthesis and weakens the host plant. Fermenting of the honeydew produces an unpleasant vinegar odor, and the ooze and mold an unsightly mess.

SLF overwinters in egg masses. In Virginia, these hatch in early May producing nymphs that undergo several instars or stages before developing into adults by late July. Egg laying begins in September and extends through November. Stages frequently overlap.

It is important to recognize SLF in its various stages. The egg masses are 1-1.5 inches long by ½-¾ inches wide, initially appearing shiny gray then turning a dull brownish gray. They are usually found on tree trunks, rocks, and smooth surfaces.

Young nymphs are wingless, black with white spots, measuring up to 3/8 inch. More mature nymphs maintain their spotted appearance but have additional red patches and measure up to 7/8 inch.

Adult SLF have black head and legs and a yellow abdomen with black bands. Forewings are tan with black spots and tips have very fine black rectangular blocks. The hind wings are characteristically red with black spots and the tips are black with a white stripe. The insect is usually spotted resting with its forewings folded over the body like a tent.

What you can do:

- Examine your property and plants periodically for the presence of egg masses, nymphs, and adults.
- If you identify SLF egg masses, scrape them off into a ziplock bag filled with hand sanitizer, secure and dispose of the bag. Dormant oil can also be applied in late winter through early spring, but before bud break.
- Control for nymphs and adult SLF includes applying sticky band traps to trunks, using approved contact insecticides/organic sprays/biological controls, or applying a systemic insecticide via soil drench. For detailed recommendations see publication: https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/ENTO/ento-322/ENTO-322.pdf
- Eliminate Tree of Heaven (TOH) from your landscape since this is believed to be a preferred host for SLF. For information regarding recognition of TOH and its elimination see: <https://blueridgeprism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Ailanthus-Fact-Sheet-VDOF-5-30-17-w-vdof-Box-FINAL.pdf>

For questions about Spotted Lantern Fly contact your local extension agent: Tom Stanley, (540) 463-4734 or the RAMGA Help Desk at the same number. You can also email the Help Desk at: helpline@ramga.org

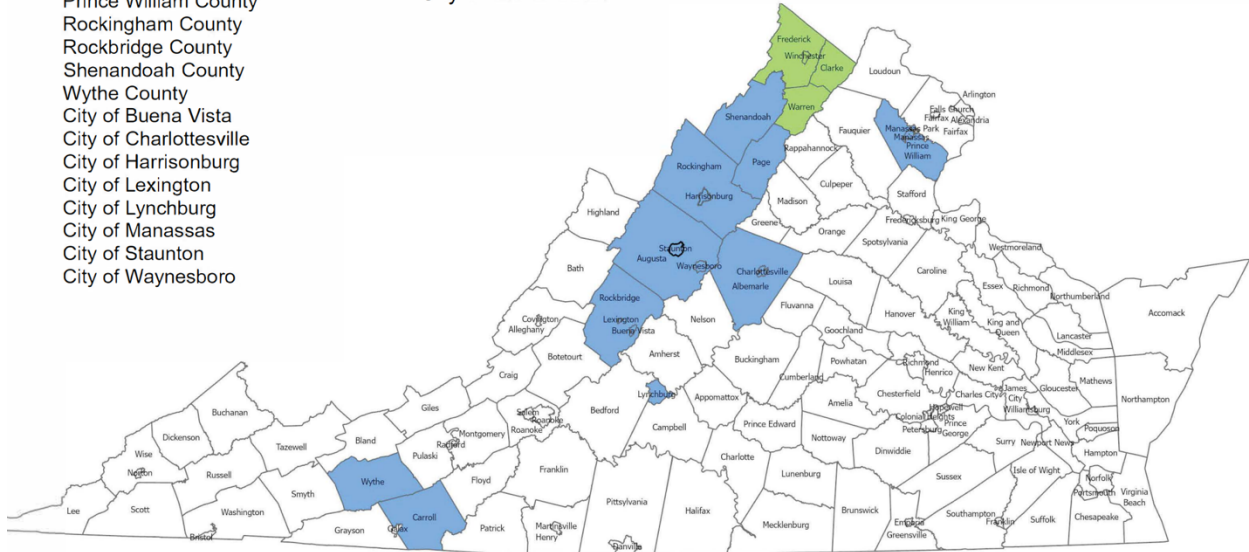
Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine

Expanded Localities - ■

Albemarle County
Augusta County
Carroll County
Page County
Prince William County
Rockingham County
Rockbridge County
Shenandoah County
Wythe County
City of Buena Vista
City of Charlottesville
City of Harrisonburg
City of Lexington
City of Lynchburg
City of Manassas
City of Staunton
City of Waynesboro

Current Quarantine - ■

Clarke County
Frederick County
Warren County
City of Winchester



Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Office of Plant Industry Services

Effective July 2022



Clockwise from top left: Adult showing hind wings; adult with folded wings; early black and white nymphs; full grown nymphs showing red; and egg masses.

Photo courtesy of Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication ENTO-265NP (ENTO-291NP)

WEED OF THE MONTH - PURSLANE

This summer the most prevalent annual weed in my vegetable garden has been purslane, often known as little hogweed (*Portulaca oleracea*). It belongs to the same family as the annual portulaca you may be planting in your ornamental garden, Portulacaceae.

Purslane has succulent green glossy leaves with red fleshy stems with over 90% water content. It grows in the hottest months of the year due to its ability to store water. Small yellow flowers at the end of the stems turn into tiny, black, glossy, oval-shaped seeds that can remain viable in the soil for up to 40 years. The plant lies flat on the ground. Its mat like tendency helps hold the moisture in the soil, so one could consider it a living mulch. Supposedly, it is a good companion plant for corn whose relatively shallow roots follow the deeper roots of purslane through the soil making soil nutrients that were previously unobtainable ('Ecological facilitation'). Purslane has the 2nd highest concentration of iron in the edible plant world. Till it back into the soil where it will decompose and lend its mineral contents to next year's crops.



Or eat it. This weed is edible and has been used as a food crop for humans and animals for thousands of years. Purslane was present in Pre-Columbian American and in Italy during the Roman age. The succulent leaves can be eaten fresh, boiled, or even pickled. When cooked, purslane becomes mucilaginous (like okra) and will thicken soups and stews. The leaves have a salty lemony taste and has been documented to be a rich source of vitamins A and C. It has the highest omega-3 fatty acids of any leafy vegetable and is also high in magnesium, calcium, potassium, and bioflavonoids.

It sounds like I shouldn't have been pulling it. But, to my credit, it does go straight into the compost pile. Who knew such a lowly weed had so many benefits!

Gardening at that Certain Age

By Karen Carlton

I must admit I'm a tolerant gardener. It doesn't mean I'm not working in my garden. It's just I'm a person who lets her garden do its own thing, within reason. I am also aware as I grow older, I won't have the physical abilities for gardening that I have now. So, I'll give you a few tools and resources that might help make your garden chores a little easier.

Tools:

The first tool I want to mention is Grandpa's weeder. Now, don't get me wrong! It's not just for Grandpas. It is a wonderful tool to get rid of weeds without bending to pull them out of the ground. There is a nice video at www.grandpasweeder.com.



The second tool is a garden kneeler-seat bench that can be found at many garden centers. This piece of equipment in one position can be used as a seat and then flipped to be a kneel pad with hand holds to get up and down from the ground. It can be a very helpful tool for doing this task of gardening.

The third tool I was told about but haven't used is a Hori Hori knife. It is a versatile tool for the garden. Although I haven't seen this knife, you can get it at www.amleo.com.

The fourth tool is a hoe with a flat triangular head, instead of the traditional square head at the end of a hoe. You can find it at www.Roguehoe.com. I have been told it is better than a traditional hoe.

There are other sites on the internet that have ergonomic gardening tools. www.seedsandspades.com has a garden tool called Gardener's Friend, which is a Ratchet Pruning Shears. ProPlugger is a 5 in 1 lawn and garden tool.

The last item is not really a garden tool, but I think with the weather getting hotter and humid this is an item that you might want. I briefly tried one and it is in my opinion a little slice of heaven. It's called the Portable Neck Fan at www.amazon.com.

A few resources I'll mention on how to set up your garden as you get older. The first is www.suddenlysenior.com that has wonderful tips on how to garden as one grows older and still enjoys gardening. The second resource is a book titled, *Gardening for A Lifetime* by Sydney Eddison. It is a wonderful book on how to set up your garden when certain jobs or tasks are just too hard for you to continue. It provides the tools and resources to think of how to still garden but not exhaust yourself.

Growing older doesn't mean we have to give up what we love, it just means we need to think of how we do it differently.

Note from Faith: Many Master Gardeners swear by the ergonomic Root Slayer shovel by Radius. This shovel is more pointed than traditional shovels and is serrated along the edges. It can be a shovel, root hatchet, and root saw all in one.

A Giant Rudbeckia...

The most striking plant in my garden from late June through July is Large Coneflower (*Rudbeckia maxima*), native to Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas. Although the common name is coneflower, the plant looks more like a black-eyed susan on steroids. 2-3" flowers with tall brown cones and thin yellow petals top long bare stems rising from a basal rosette of large bluish paddle-shaped leaves. I recently read that another common name for this plant is "Dumbo Ears" – and that is a pretty good description of the large leaves.

In my garden, the plants are usually at least 6' tall and 3' wide. You may get a second flush of smaller bloom if you cut the plant back after blooming, but I usually leave some of the seed heads for the goldfinches.

I often contribute some of this plant to the RAMGA plant sale as it spreads nicely and clumps are easy to lift, so it may be that surprise plant in your garden this year.



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