

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

November 2021



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Welcome, everyone, to the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners brand-new 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.

Don't miss the next Zoom RAMGA Plant Clinic...

Saturday, November 20, 11am – noon

This month's topic; "Winter Fun: Hunting for Invasive Plants" The discussion will be **HOW** to ID invasive plants, **WHY** it is important to do so, and **WAYS** to remove them safely. Participants are encouraged to ask questions. To register for the Zoom Plant Clinic please go to www.ramga.org

NOVEMBER GARDENING EVENTS

There is never much going on in-person from November – February, but there is a plethora of webinars and zoom presentations online. Here are a few sites to check out:

Mt. Cuba Center is the foremost native plant garden in the Piedmont area. They have a number of great classes online, usually at a cost of \$15. www.mtcubacenter.org

The Smithsonian “Let’s Talk Gardens” series is consistently excellent and free. <https://gardens.si.edu/learn/lets-talk-gardens/> .

And the VCE Master Gardener website has a number of great webinars and videos available. <https://mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/ce/>

Saturday, November 20, 11am – noon. Virtual RAMGA Fall Plant Clinic. This month's topic; “Winter Fun: Hunting for Invasive Plants” The discussion will be HOW to ID invasive plants, WHY it is important to do so, and WAYS to remove them safely. Participants are encouraged to ask questions. To register for the Zoom Plant Clinic please go to www.ramga.org

Saturday, November 30, 9:00am – 9:45am. Tour of the proposed Botanical Garden of the Piedmont in Charlottesville’s McIntire Park. RSVP to 434-953-0060 or rsvp@piedmontgarden.org

NOVEMBER GARDEN CHORES

- Take a stroll through your garden and assess areas that need additional planting. Photographs and notes will help you remember.
- Continue to plant spring bulbs. Bulbs usually need 3-4 months of cold to bloom, so December 1st is a good cutoff date.
- Prune late-flowering shrubs and trees once dormant.
- Shred or chop fallen leaves and compost them to use next year on the garden.
- Don’t mulch until after the soil freezes, usually in November or December.
- Save seeds from annuals and perennials.
- After a killing frost, do one last weeding, pull dead annuals and cut back some perennial foliage, but leave seed heads and some stems for the birds and overwintering insects.

- Male deer scrape their horns in the fall along the bark of young trees to rub the summer velvet off their horns and to mark their territory. Wrap the trunks with plastic tree guards, chicken wire or plastic mesh to prevent deer damage and remove in the spring.
- Check trees and shrubs for bagworms.
- Drain and store your hoses.
- Bring tools in for the winter. The cold months are great for sharpening, cleaning, and oiling tools.
- Clean up under fruit trees – or maybe the deer have already done that for you!
- Start a pot of paperwhites for that Christmassy spice smell in a month or so.
- Save yourself some trouble in the spring and remove those winter annual weeds that pop up now – lots of henbit and chickweed – before they go to seed.

Henbit seedling about the size of a penny

Source: MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources – Michigan State University



COMMON NON-NATIVE INVASIVES AND HOW TO CONTROL THEM

By Donna Campanga

Most of our non-native invasives come from other countries and as a result there are no natural enemies here to keep them in check. This allows them to grow unchecked and to take over an area quite quickly. There are several non-native invasive plant species that are common in our area. I will break them down below.

- Grasses: Japanese Stiltgrass, Wavyleaf Grass
- Herbs: Garlic Mustard
- Vines: Japanese Honeysuckle, Porcelain-berry, Oriental Bittersweet, Kudzu, Mile-a-Minute

- Shrubs: Multiflora Rose, Autumn Olive, Chinese Privet, Japanese Barberry
- Trees: Tree of Heaven

Most of these plants come from Asia and some are sold at local nurseries, such as Japanese Barberry. When purchasing plants, trees, and shrubs do your research and learn their needs and spreading habits before purchasing especially if they are not native to our area. If you purchase a plant that has a tendency to become invasive either don't buy it or make plans to make sure you follow up on it's invasive habits so it doesn't take over your property. Plants that spread by seeds are hard to control because birds tend to disperse them, and you have no control. Plants that spread by sending out shoots are a little easier to control but you will have to stay on top of them. In any case there are other ways to control, remove or kill non-native invasive plants by using herbicides, manual, mechanical or biological methods.



The ubiquitous Autumn Olive in flower

HERBICIDES

Treating with herbicides is often the most effective and quickest way to rid your land of invasive plants and may also be the least expensive. How you apply the herbicide depends on which invasive you are treating, how many invasives you have and the time of year. Herbicides can be applied in several ways. They are:

- **Foliar Spray: sprayed onto green leaves**

Using a backpack sprayer to apply herbicides to leaves is the most frequently used way to control invasive plants. You can adjust the sprayer to apply it to individual plants or broadcast larger infestations.

- **Wick/Sponge: wiped onto green leaves**

A wick can be mounted to an arm attached to an ATV or tractor and is used to kill tall invasive plants in a native meadow, pasture or hayfield. The wick contains the foliar spray and the treatment is wiped onto the tallest plants as the ATV or tractor moves up and down the field. If invasives grow near native plants that you don't want to damage, you may have to apply the herbicide by hand using a sponge or wick mounted on a long handle. Paint or stain sticks make handy wick applications. Make sure to protect yourself by wearing waterproof gloves and goggles.

- **Cut Stump: sprayed and painted into cut stem or trunk**

Cutting the invasive tree or shrub to the ground may get rid of the plant but only temporarily. It will eventually send up suckers from its roots and you may have a bigger problem. Re-sprouting can be prevented by applying herbicide within a few minutes to the cut stump's outer edges, the living part of the stump, so that the herbicide is sucked into the root system, killing it.

- **Basal Bark: sprayed or painted onto lower trunk**

This is an easy one. All you must do is spray or paint the herbicide directly onto the invasive tree's bark. This works best for young trees because their bark is thinner and will absorb it better. It will also work for large shrubs, but their trunks can be hard to get to.

- **Hack and Squirt: squirted into cuts in trunk**

This method is used to kill mature trees with large trunks. You can use a machete or a hatchet to hack 3" deep pockets at a 30-degree angle spaced 2" apart around the tree. The pockets should be around chest high. You will have to immediately squirt the herbicide into the cuts, using a hand-held squirt bottle or syringe.

MANUAL AND BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

There are many other ways to remove invasives from your property beside the use of herbicides. They are hand pulling, digging, mowing, cutting, grazing with goats and with the use of insect pests or diseases. Which method is best for your situation will depend on the following conditions:

- Severity of infestation
- Amount of time the invasive has been there
- Time of year that's best to treat it
- Health of desirable vegetation around the invasive
- What other invasive need to be treated at the same time

MANUAL

Hand-pulling or digging work best with small plants and if the infestation is a small area or a new infestation. The goal is to remove all the roots and that is easier to do when the soil is moist.

You can also remove invasives by cutting, weed whacking and mowing. This method works best on annual invasives such as mile-a-minute vine, stilt grass, etc. These can be exhausted by repeat cutting. A weed-whacker works best on shrubs. If the plant is woody, it will require a steel blade. If you are concerned about harming other desirable plants you may want to stick with clippers, folding handsaws or a chainsaw. Mowing is only practical in areas where there are not a lot of trees, and you have room to maneuver.

There is another method to pulling up smaller trees and shrubs and that's with the use of a tool called a Honeysuckle Popper or Uprooter. These tools can be a little heavy to cart around but that weight is what helps pull the roots out of the ground. I have one of those tools and it works really well.

BIOLOGICAL

Since these plants come from other countries the insect pests or disease pathogens that keep them in check in their native homes must be imported to North America. However there are several important criteria that must be met before bio-controls can be used. They must significantly check the growth and spread, be highly specific to the host plant as to not harm native plants, and survive and reproduce from year to year.

GOAT GRAZING

Native wildlife generally does not eat non-native plants. However, goats usually eat anything if they are hungry enough. They can be grazed to clear invasive plants but must be trained and managed so that

they eat the invasives first. They may go for the high protein invasives first such as multiflora rose and Japanese honeysuckle. Goats do not eat roots, so resprouts of woody plants are likely. You can either purchase your own goats or hire goats for about \$1000 per acre. It's important to provide for their needs whether they are yours or belong to someone else and they will need to be protected from predators.

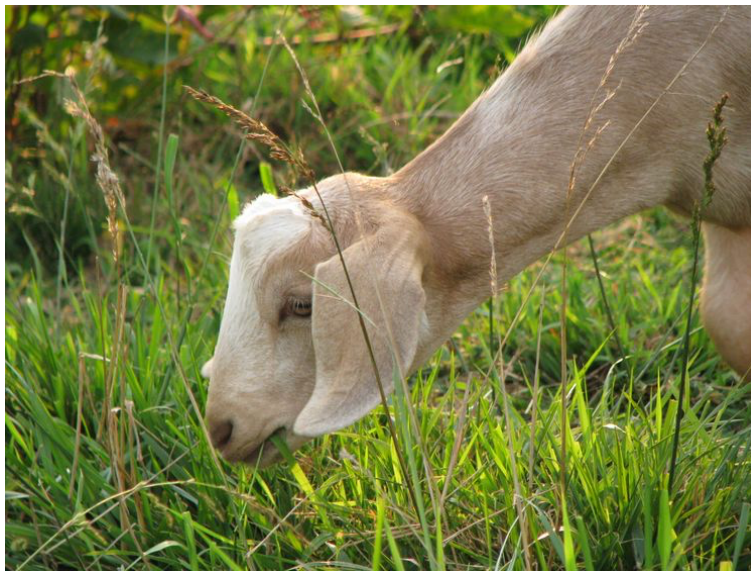


Photo credit: MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

The above is just general information. There are many other considerations to take into account when

trying to remove or kill invasives on your property. Whether to remove them by hand and how to go about it, using herbicides and following all the directions for safe usage, what kind of herbicide works best for your particular invasive, what time of year is best, etc. A wonderful resource for finding the answers to those questions is Blue Ridge Prism. Unfortunately, they only cover Rockingham, Augusta, Nelson, Albemarle, Green, Madison, Page, Warren, and Clarke counties but are willing to share what information they have to help landowners throughout Virginia. They have many factsheets available about invasive species and they are a wonderful resource. They can be reached at info@blueridgeprism.org or 434-218-9139. Their website is www.blueridgeprism.org.

Note: Many plants (trees, shrubs, perennials, etc.) sold at commercial nurseries are considered invasive and should be avoided. There are plenty of native plants that make good substitutes for these invaders. The Virginia Native Plant Society website has a great list of those nursery plants to avoid, https://vnps.org/wp-content/uploads/filebase/vnps/vnps_reference/LndscplInvasiveList.pdf

FROM THE HELP DESK

Stay on Top of those Winter Annuals

By Katherine Smith

Finally, we've had a killing frost. We gardeners are busy cleaning up after the 2021 gardening year, whether this be flower beds, vegetable patches, or combinations thereof. Now is the time to begin

planning for the 2022 garden year. A garden year is a random year- one of the gardener's choosing. For purposes of this article, we'll skip winter, and move on to February.

We are now in the season of winter annuals, most of which are weeds. And the way to begin is with a definition of the SOIL SEED BANK. Yes, there is a natural bank for seeds. Without knowing it, we've added to our own version throughout the year. A SOIL SEED BANK is a "natural seed repository of storing- mostly- dormant seeds". The concept has been with us since Darwin - but little explored formally until methods of studying it became formalized, late 1800's is the usual date.

And this brings us to the present season of winter (mostly) annuals. My source for this article is one of my favorite reference books- WEEDS OF THE NORTHEAST (1997, Cornell University Press). One of the authors was at NC State at the time, so we know Virginia is - for this publication- in the northeast.



Chickweed Photo credit: Utah State University Ext.

The first winter annual to consider is *Stellaria media*. We call it CHICKWEED, truly a weed for all environments. It particularly loves nutrient rich, cool, moist soil, but will take up residence in a lawn, too.

The second is a group of plants whose botanical names all begin with VERONICA, corn speedwell for short. Once again, these are day-length specialists responding to the natural light, shortening now as it will continue to do until Solstice (more or less). Its growth pattern is different from that of chickweed, in that it produces an elongated flowering stem, on which one or 2 blossoms develop.

And the final category is represented by QUEEN ANNE'S LACE. *Daucus carota* - a wildling member of the large family to which carrots belong. It is usually a biennial here, with a ferny winter rosette. This will produce one or more stems in mid-summer, which are lovely in a wildflower meadow.

Back to that SOIL SEED BANK now. What all of these have in common is lots of very small seeds. There is no way any gardener can keep from replenishing the soil seed bank by just yanking a few here and there. November, therefore, is the time to think creatively about your plant of attack. Use these alone, or in combination:

- Cover the emergents up. Wet newspapers plus a method of holding these in place all winter (I use landscape fabric) will prevent more germination in 2022.
- Use a pre-emergent whenever you turn this area of soil. There are several on the market now- I use one based on corn gluten.
- Rotate any planting bed for 2022, keeping in mind the necessity of removing weeds in that area.
- Finally, agree to deep-till only when overwhelmed. This will bring up more seeds from the soil seed bank, and which time you will need to practice stale-bed technologies for a season.

Back to that book. What a treasure, with fold-out charts, a good index, and at the top of each page, following the name in (), is a series of capital letters. For henbit, not covered above, but noxious winter annual all the same, it is (LAMAM). The Weed Association has begun a system which should help cut the time to look up particulars.

How Green and Growing Plants Benefit our Overall Health

By Karen Carlton

I was reading an article in the *New York Times* that was an opinion piece about how green plants, trees and trash pickup reduced violence. The article was written by Eugenia C. South, who is a faculty director for the Urban Health Lab and an assistant professor of emergency medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. In the article she talked about how the physical spaces of a neighborhood can be improved by green infrastructure. Her research found that if there were green spaces that were part of the neighborhood, ie: a vacant lot that had been made into a community garden, it was shown to reduce gun violence as well as other crimes committed in the area. One resident of the area she was studying stated how the look of the area affected a person's mood and thoughts. A vacant lot vs. a green and growing area in a neighborhood would affect those that live there.

A quote from healthline.com: Psychological Benefits of Plants.

"Besides instantly boasting a home's esthetic, studies show that being surrounded by greenery can help with cleaning the surrounding air, creating a sense of well-being, and enhancing your life. "(4)

Since cold weather season is coming, I thought it would be a good time to talk about which house plants help create a healthy environment. I will start off with the plants that are known to be good air purifiers but can be toxic to children and pets.

- The first is the Peace Lily. However, even NASA said it is the most effective plant to filter harmful toxins and pollutants from the air.
- The second is the Aloe Vera plant. Not only is it a great healer for a minor burn, but it is also an effective plant to filter your air. It is why you see a lot of them in kitchens.
- The third is the Snake Plant. It is very easy to grow, doesn't need a lot of sunlight, and it will handle some neglect in terms of water and care.
- The fourth is the English Ivy. It is stated that it is particularly useful for those suffering from allergies such as asthma. It is also said to promote a good night's sleep.
- The fifth is the Rainbow Plant. It is part of the Dracaenas family of plants. It is easy to grow, just don't water it too much. It helps clear the inside air of your home.

Now I have told you about some of the toxic indoor plants that can clean the air in your home. I will tell you about some non-toxic plants that are good at cleaning the air in your home and will provide a green and pleasant atmosphere as well.

- The first is my favorite - the Lavender plant. It has a very pleasant scent, and it has many uses, such as putting the dried leaves into sachets or for cooking.
- The second plant is the Spider Plant. It is very easy to grow and even if your cat chews on it, don't worry. The cat won't be harmed by the plant.
- The third is the Christmas Cactus. The plant has showy blooms that usually come in during the holidays.
- The fourth is African Violets. This plant was one I remember my grandmother growing in her home.
- The fifth is Hens and Chicks. This plant comes in a variety of colors and I'm told it is easy to grow.



I hope I have given you some ideas to start some indoor gardening to clean the air and to bring some healing to your mind from life's daily stresses.

*Resources: The New York Times, Sunday October 10, 2021 Page 2 in the Sunday Review
[www. Hellomagazine.com/](http://www.Hellomagazine.com/) 8 best houseplants for stress and depression
tedsgardens.com/ 15 non-toxic- houseplants -that-are-safe- for-kids and pets
[healthline.com/health/best air-purifying plants](http://healthline.com/health/best-air-purifying-plants)
medium.com/@sucstu/5 houseplants toxic to children and pets.*

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Intimidated by baking an apple pie from scratch? Impress your Thanksgiving guests and add a bit of Gallic flair with an apple galette. Galettes are much easier than a double crust pie and involve rolling out just one round piece of pastry crust and no pie pan or crimping.

APPLE GALETTE (A tweaked Ina Garten recipe)

My standard pie crust:

8 tablespoons cold unsalted butter (1 stick), cut into tablespoons
 ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
 2 Tablespoons sugar
 1 1/3 cups unbleached flour
 ¼ cup ice water
 (Optional: 1 teaspoon cinnamon)

I usually cheat and use a food processor. Combine the sugar, salt, and flour and cinnamon, if using. Pulse until ingredients are blended. Add butter and pulse until the butter is the size of small peas. Dribble in the water and pulse until the mixture looks like large curds. You may not need all the water. Dump onto the counter and press together into a disk. Slip the disc into a used plastic grocery bag and refrigerate for at least an hour.

Apple filling

3-4 apples, depending on size, peeled and sliced ½" thick

¼ cup flour

¼ cup light brown sugar

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

½ teaspoon cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ginger

4 Tablespoons cold unsalted butter, diced

1 egg yolk mixed with 1 Tablespoon of water

Demerara sugar (a crunchy brown sugar), turbinado, or sanding sugar

Heat oven to 400 degrees.

Filling: Combine the dry ingredients in the food processor, pulse to blend. Add the butter and pulse until crumbly.

Galette: Flour your work surface and roll out the pie disc to about a 12" circle. It doesn't have to be perfect. You are going for that rustic look. Spread the apples on top, leaving a 1 ½" border. Sprinkle the buttery crumbs on top of the apples. Fold the edges of the crust over the apples, pleating as you go. Brush the crust with the egg yolk mixture and sprinkle with the demerara sugar. Bake for 45-50 minutes until the crust is golden and the apples are tender.

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