

THE GARDENER

Newsletter of the Bowie-Crofton Garden Club



The aims of the Bowie-Crofton Garden Club shall be to promote interest in and develop skills in gardening through cooperation, joint efforts, and good fellowship.

August 2009

Next Monthly Meeting By *Neil Potash*

Please join us on August 25th at Bowie City Hall at 7:30 p.m. We have a firm commitment from Mr. Akey Hung from the Prince George's Community College, who teaches Bonsai {Japanese} and Pen Jing {Chinese} at the Bowie Senior Center. The goal of this gardening art is to create the tranquility and serenity of an old tree or forest. He will speak using slides and some objects of the art. His hope is to someday evolve bonsai into a unique style of American Bonsai. There has been a lot of interest in this subject and a Friday Bonsai Club has formed. We think that you will be intrigued by this demonstration.

Presidents Comments by *Jesse Terres*

If your determinant tomato plants aren't dead or dying you probably don't have a determinant variety. I've pulled up all of my determinant types except for one called Keepsake, but it won't be around much longer. The disease resistant Keepsake is one of the long keeping varieties and it seems to take forever to ripen. The tomatoes are medium to fairly large and taste pretty good. I definitely will grow this one again next year. Although I don't intend to grow any of the Roma types, one sort of egg shaped tomato I do intend to grow is Health Kick, another disease resistant hybrid with 50% more lycopene than other tomatoes, an antioxidant that is proving helpful in preventing cancer and other diseases. My favorites are still the beefsteaks and heirlooms with Burpee Delicious and German Johnson at the top of the list.

If you've been thinking about composting now is the time of the year to get started. The leaves will soon begin to fall and we have a lot of garden residue to get rid of. There are several ways to compost, most of which are hard and a couple of which are easy. Recently I read an article defining one of the not only hard ways, but also one of the expensive ways. It involves the purchase of a compost tumbler that can cost in excess of \$400.00, requires a lot of shoveling and cranking, and is time consuming. Anything that requires more than a minimal amount of time to my mind is labor intensive and that takes the fun out of it for me. There are other things I'd rather do than crank a tumbler for a few minutes every day for 14 days to get finished compost when there are other ways to get finished compost in only two weeks. You can also purchase tumbling barrels, barrels that you roll, etc., all requiring a considerable amount of energy.

My favorite technique is piling up all the leaves and garden refuse in an inconspicuous area and forgetting about it until needed. I also like to use leaf mulch around trees and shrubbery. A few years ago we

had a large White Pine tree in our side yard under which was a great hiding place. I made a deal with a fellow down the street to dump all the grass clippings and leaves he would gather with his riding mower and I'd slip him a couple of bucks. But he moved and then my tree died and I was exposed. About the same time a friend gave me a series of three 4' by 4' by 4' compost bins mounted on a 12' skid. I reduced it to one bin and hid it behind a greenhouse. About every three or four years I empty it and start over again, but I still miss my tree.

Meeting Minutes, July 28, 2009

The Tuesday July 28th meeting of the Bowie Crofton Garden Club was held at the Bowie City Hall. Jesse Terres, President, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

The June Minutes were unanimously approved.

Program: The speaker did not show. Program Chair, Neil Potash did not provide any explanation.

Hospitality: The Christmas party will be held on December 6 at St. Matthew's. Since no one volunteered to serve as Hospitality Chair, a Hospitality Committee was formed. Gaye Williams volunteered to serve as the lead. Her committee members include Jean Magram, Karen Woolfley and Bertha Houchens. Our past Hospitality Chair, Eleanor Leshinsky wrote a handbook describing the Club's social activities and duties & responsibilities for each event.

Budget: Our treasurer Karin Banta provided the treasurer's report. Her report is found in this month's newsletter.

Newsletter: Jesse thought it may be a good idea to limit the pages of the newsletter to control the price. However, it was decided not to do this since everyone seems to enjoy reading the newsletter.

Raffle: Jesse donated a potting bench that he made for the garden club. Raffle tickets were sold at \$1.00 each. Mary Anne Stearns won the potting bench. At the August meeting, Jesse will do a "show and tell" on how to build a potting bench.

Old Stage Community Judging: Karen Maggert thanked the Garden Club for willing to serve as judges in their annual community landscaping contest. Since only one homeowner entered, the contest was cancelled.

Flower Power: Gaye Williams presented an opportunity for the Club to participate in the Flower Power Fundraiser. However, many Club members were disappointed with the company's garden bulbs, so it was voted against.

Tomato Late Blight: Jesse shared his information on the tomato late blight fungus that is hitting Maryland much earlier in the season and destroying tomato crops. Jesse found a fungicide that will fight this fungal disease. It is Chlorothalonil that can be found in the product Daconil that he purchased at Lowe's.

Clean up at Bowie Post Office: There are plans to help with the garden clean up at the Bowie Post Office on Rt. 197. A boulder was donated by the BCGC and it was suggested that a plaque be added to the boulder to recognize the Club's donation.

Donations: During our Treasurer's report, Karin Banta surveyed the interest of the Nursing Homes that receive the Birds and Blooms subscriptions. Her survey showed that we will continue the subscriptions to

Larkin Chase and Crofton Convalescent but will drop the subscriptions to Heartland and Woodward since the residents show no interest in reading them.

New member: Rich Pepple signed up as a new member at the meeting.

Door prizes were awarded and plants were shared.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted, *Kathleen Beres*, Secretary

Rain Barrels

Contributed by *Gaye Williams*.

Did you know that the Bowie Lions are selling rain barrels each Sunday at the Bowie Farmer's Market, next to Bowie High School? They offer 55-gallon in blue or white for \$65, some smaller [blue]-when available-price variable. AND, for a limited time only, the "Big Bertha"- a lean, clean, 240 gallon rain-collecting machine, for \$150. For the serious water hoarder, it is a beauty to behold. Seriously, folks, these are mosquito-proof, durable, recycled food-grade poly w/ brass hardware and are easy to install. You can paint or decorate to fit any decor or leave natural for a bold "green" statement. The collected water will come in handy during summer, fall and winter dry spells. I've already been using to rescue my poor joe-pye weed.

Treasurer's Report August, 2009

By *Karin Banta*

Starting Balance/Checkbook	\$3,515.34
Expenses	
Crofton Printing/ July Newsletter	\$28.52
Birds & Blooms Subscriptions	\$32.00
Rose Arslanian/Stamps for Newsletter	\$41.80
TOTAL	\$102.32
Deposits	
Membership/Cash	\$42.00
Membership/Checks	\$80.00
Raffle/Potting Bench	\$39.00
TOTAL	\$161.00
Checkbook Balance	\$3,574.02
AVAILABLE FUNDS	\$3,574.02

Bowie Gardens for Wildlife

By *Janelle Dietrich*

I have now joined the Bowie Gardens for Wildlife Committee in the City of Bowie. One of our goals is to certify at least 150 yards within the city limits of Bowie as a wildlife habitat with the National Wildlife Federation. The procedure is extremely simple and most of the garden club members already have a wildlife habitat but just need to fill out the paperwork to be certified. I have applications and would be more than happy to assist you in this procedure.

Our committee is trying to verify certified habitat information within the city but we are having difficulty. If you are currently a certified wildlife habitat within the City of Bowie, please email or call me to verify your information. I need the name as listed on the certificate, the address of the property certified and if possible, the certification number which should be on your certificate. This information would be very valuable to us as a committee.

Please email me at luvwales@comcast.net or call at 301-249-7155. We appreciate your input. If you know of someone who would like to certify their property but is not in the garden club, please notify me also.

Thanks
Janelle Dietrich

The Myth of Staking:

"Newly planted trees should be staked firmly and securely"

**Linda Chalker-Scott, Ph.D., Extension Horticulturist and Associate Professor,
Puyallup Research and Extension Center, Washington State University**

The Myth

When I moved back to Washington State in 1997, I was appalled to see tree bondage rampant in many urban landscapes. The oozing, swollen wounds around staking wires are just too much for me to bear and I will admit to playing tree liberator on more than one occasion.

Tree staking is another example of what I've come to label as "enabling" behavior. Like planting hole amendment, tree staking is done with the best of intentions but without regard to long-term tree health.

Rather than helping a tree develop root and trunk growth that allow it to stand independently, improper tree staking replaces a supportive trunk and root system. This artificial support causes the tree to put its resources into growing taller but not growing wider. When the stakes are removed (if they ever are), the lack of trunk and root development makes these trees prime candidates for breakage or blow-down. A comparative example is what is seen when forests are cleared for housing development. A few trees near the center of the stand are left on the lots; these trees are tall and skinny with well-developed crowns. But in the first good windstorm, down these trees come. They have lost the supportive protection of the surrounding trees and are unable to stand alone.

If it is necessary to stake a tree, there are acceptable methods that allow proper trunk and root development while providing temporary support and protection. In urban areas, this is especially true because of poor, shallow soils that hinder root development and the potential of mechanical injury from people and vehicles. (In fact, properly installed tree guards made of decorative grillwork are an excellent way of protecting street trees permanently from mechanical damage. These tree guards are not attached to the trees but stand alone and should be upsized as the tree grows.)

It's interesting (and comforting) to find that nearly all current books and reputable web pages are correct in their assessment of staking. Then why are there so many incorrectly staked trees in the landscape? I believe there are several contributing factors:

- 1) Containerized nursery materials are often staked for stability, and many consumers don't understand that the staking material needs to be removed upon transplanting.
- 2) Oral and written information from some retail nursery centers instruct their customers to stake their trees regardless of the need for doing so. These instructions are sometimes incorrect in addition to being unnecessary.
- 3) Some landscape architect specs describe outdated staking procedures, and these are followed by the landscape installation company.
- 4) There is little to no aftercare for many tree installation sites. Without a management plan as part of an installation agreement, staking materials will not be removed at the appropriate time (if ever).

The first two practices are probably responsible for most incorrect staking in home landscapes, while the last two factors are probably responsible for most incorrect staking in public and commercial landscapes.

The Reality

The three cardinal sins of tree staking are:

- Staking too high
- Staking too tightly
- Staking too long

Trees that are staked improperly will:

- Grow taller, but with decreased trunk caliper
- Develop less trunk taper (or even a reverse trunk taper)
- Develop xylem unevenly
- Develop a smaller root system
- Suffer rubbing and girdling injuries from stakes and ties
- Be more likely to snap in a high wind after stakes are removed
- Often be unable to remain upright after stakes are removed

The Bottom Line

- Most containerized and correctly dug B&B materials do not need staking; bare root trees often do.
- If trees must be staked, place stakes as low as possible but no higher than 2/3 the height of the tree.
- Materials used to tie the tree to the stake should be flexible and allow for movement all the way down to the ground so that trunk taper develops correctly.
- Remove all staking material after roots have established. This can be as early as a few months, but should be no longer than one growing season.
- Materials used for permanent tree protection should never be attached to the tree.

For more information, please visit Dr. Chalker-Scott's web page at <http://www.theinformedgardener.com>.

New Gardeners can learn from Masters

At the Tuesday night's Garden Club Meeting, the question was asked about how often to water our Summer Vegetables. With all of the rain we had earlier this season, followed by nearly "Drought Conditions," that is an excellent question. This recent article by Adrian Higgins in the Washington Post provides an excellent answer and deserves to be passed along in the August B-CGC Gardener newsletter. *Rich Dodson*

By Adrian Higgins, Washington Post Staff Writer, Wednesday, July 15, 2009

As a horticultural extension agent, Bobby Wilson is often approached by beginning vegetable gardeners who want to know whether they should water daily.

“You don’t need to water every day,” he said.

“I tell them to water Monday, Wednesday and Friday.”

What he’s really telling them is that they should soak the soil and water again only when the top three inches have dried out, determined by using that most accurate of probes, your finger.

“That’s the proper way to do it, but people need a number,” said Wilson, who works in Atlanta and is also president of the American Community Gardening Association.

Like a lot of us in the gardening world, Wilson has been astonished by the sudden interest in vegetable gardening

Seed producers have reported sales increases in the range of 30 percent over the past year, itself a banner year. In an April survey by the Pew Research Center, 21 percent of those polled said they were planning to grow vegetables this year because of the recession.

Where does a new gardener find guidance? The optimum scenario would be to find a plot in an established community garden surrounded by old hands who could offer practical advice. But established community gardens are tough to get into these days, with long waiting lists.

Fortunately, there is an infrastructure to help. Most jurisdictions have extension agents such as Wilson who work with a cadre of trained volunteers called Master Gardeners.

Mario Fonseca, State Master Gardener Coordinator and Extension Horticulturist, said each county in Georgia has an urban gardening program.

“The idea is to grow not only vegetables, but flowers and other plants in housing or public facilities, backyards and churches,” he said.

Individuals or organizations can reach out to their extension offices — there is one per county except in DeKalb and Fulton counties, which each have three — for information on everything from diet and nutrition to growing vegetables and herbs in containers.

“Here [gardens] haven’t been a big movement in the community yet even though they have been increasing every year,” Fonseca said.

Reaching new vegetable gardeners has become a priority in the extension agent community, said Rick Gibson, an extension agent in Casa Grande, Ariz.

“It’s perplexing also,” he said, “because at a time when the needs are growing, we are in the midst of budget cuts that are limiting in many states the resources to develop programs to disseminate that information.”

The other, longer-term issue is that “there are a lot of people out there who don’t know who we are,” Gibson said.

Find this article at: <http://www.ajhomefinder.com/gardening/new-gardeners-can-learn-92208.html>

Harvest Hints

By Harold Moline

While on vacation, I was discussing gardening with a friend when he complained that he and his wife were disappointed with the quality of peaches they’d been buying for canning. It seems that by the time they waited for the fruit to ripen enough to can, a large portion of it had spoiled. A fungal disease called brown rot is responsible for this rapid deterioration of ripening peaches. A colleague of mine developed a non-

chemical method to control this disease more than 30 years ago. All you have to do is dip the fruit in water heated to 120 F for 2-2 ½ minutes. I don't even use a thermometer because 120 F is about as hot as I can keep my hands in. This treatment kills the fungus on the fruit surface without harming the fruit. You have to be careful not to get the water too hot because you can damage the fruit surface at temperatures above 125 F. The method didn't prove successful on a commercial basis because there is no effective way to keep the water clean when treating tons of peaches each day, and if the fruit is exposed to the fungus again after being treated, it will rot. This is not a problem for the average homeowner who will treat at most 1 or 2 bushels of fruit at any one time. We don't have the high concentration of brown rot fungal spores in our homes that might contaminate fruit either.

If you are bothered by excessive spoilage of your peaches, try this technique. I usually treat from 8-12 fruit at a time in a large kettle in the sink, but you could also use a pail. You'll need to be careful to keep the fruit agitated a little during the 2-minute treatment (I stir them a little with my hands) and dry them on the counter top when finished. Once treated, the fruit can be ripened and refrigerated without fear of excessive loss due to decay. The important thing to remember is to treat them as soon as you get them home; any delay allows the mold to grow and reduces the effectiveness of the treatment.

The technique was initially developed to prevent decay of chestnuts; however, a temperature of 130 F or more was required to sanitize the nuts effectively because of their thick shells. I recently read that cantaloupe can be stored for 2 weeks in the refrigerator if you first sanitize them by dipping them in water heated to 125 F for 2 minutes and then store them in sealed plastic bags. There are several other highly perishable fruits that can also be treated with hot water, but I think for the homeowner, the peach, nectarine, and plum are the best candidates. The very positive side effect of the treatment is that it doesn't add chemicals to the fruit; on the contrary, you are effectively washing your fruit when you are treating it.

A Letter From the Flower Spokeslady

Dear Bowie Garden Club Members:

Thank you for allowing me to place my letter to you in your newsletter. I was elected spokesman for all the flowers and I thought I might be able to reach more of you through a letter than trying ESP. As you are aware, our main job is to make your yard look beautiful and to attract all those lovely butterflies, bees, and birds. (You have no idea how much butterfly feet tickle when they walk around on your blossom.) In order for us to grow properly and to look the best we can, we need to ask you for a couple of favors.

It has been real hot down here in the flowerbed this summer. With all this heat and no rain, please don't forget to keep us watered and if you have any more mulch hiding in the shed, please add some around our feet. Most of you do a real great job on mulching, but some of it has packed down or been blown or shoved aside. That mulch keeps us cool and we don't need as much water.

After we have bloomed, could you please pull off those dried up blossoms? Some of us would love to give you a second or third showing of flowers, but with the old blossoms still on our stalks, we waste too much energy creating seedpods. Just do a little deadheading, and either we will grow larger next year or put out more blossoms.

One more thing you can do to help is to get rid of those nasty weeds that have moved into our beds. They suck up a lot of moisture and steal the nutrients in our soil. Unfortunately, they also attract all sorts of ugly bugs. You planted us because you like to see beautiful flowers and most weeds are just ugly.

If you will work with us, we will do our job and make your yard the envy of the neighborhood. Oh, yes, if you are ever lonely, just come out and talk to us – the neighbors might think you are goofy, but we will love you for it.

Sincerely, Gracie Gazania

Executive Committee			From the Editor Donald Sminkey All members of the Garden Club are welcome to write an article on a gardening-related subject. Please send via e-mail to: gardener@bcgardenclub.org. Include "B-CGC" or "Garden Club" in the subject heading; or mail to: Donald Sminkey, 508 Otway Road, Wake Forest, NC 27587 Deadline, September issue: Sept. 8, 2009
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