

THE GARDENER



Newsletter of the Bowie-Crofton Garden Club

<http://www.bcgardenclub.org>

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.

July 2010

Next Monthly Meeting

By *Neil Potash*

The next Garden Club meeting will take place in the multi-purpose room of the Bowie City Hall, 2614 Kenhill Drive, Bowie, MD 20715 on Tuesday, July 27, 2010 at 7:30 PM. Dr. Grande, a chiropractor, will teach us how to spare our muscles and limbs while gardening.

Note: We've been cancelled at City Hall for the September 28th meeting. The meeting for September 28th will now be held at the Community Center from 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM.

President's Comments

by *Jesse Terres*

I was telling a friend about some of the items we discussed at the June meeting, one of which had to do with organic fruits and vegetables. I told him I had a hard time believing all of the fruits and vegetables sold in grocery stores as organic were truly organically grown, either from our own country or from another country. Then he told me about a couple he knew in upstate New York that had opened a Mom and Pop grocery store. One of the requirements was to have their water checked that they did and failed to pass the test. The inspectors left them with a vial to ship to them a new sample in later for testing once their water was clear. What they did was go to the local grocery store, buy a bottle of drinking water, filled the vial with the bottled water, sent it in for testing and passed, and they had the nerve to brag about it.

Of a different venue, but interesting, a friend of his in his 80s noticed what appeared to be needles coming out the ends of his fingers and went to the doctors. The doctor said, "You must be from upstate New York." "How do you know that?" said our friend. The doctor said, "Because that's strychnine coming out of your system. The wells up there are loaded with it. Tell your wife if she decides to do you in not to bother using strychnine. You're immune to it."

Another subject that was discussed to some depth was the use of pesticides. Thanks to the recent siege of hot weather the population of spider mites has flourished and all my dahlias and tomato plants became infested with them to the point where some of the plants died. I use a pesticide called KELTHANE to get rid of them. The reason I use KELTHANE is because it is specific. As stated in the labeling, "KELTHANE miticide gives high initial kill against most species of agricultural mite including European red, two spotted

(red spider), six-spotted, Pacific, privet, Schoene, yellow (carpini), McDaniel, Willamette, spruce, desert and tropical mites. KELTHANE is a specific miticide and is harmless to predacious and other beneficial insects.”

Meeting Minutes, June 29, 2010

President Jesse Terres called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

No guest speaker was scheduled but a question and answer session was planned.

There was a motion and second to accept the minutes of the May 25, 2010 meeting.

Committee Reports:

Membership—there are currently 60 individual and 28 family members. One guest joined as a member tonight.

Hospitality—Gaye thanked everyone for their support of the picnic. She is requesting a refund for the facilities as they were dirty and needed to be cleaned before use.

Treasurer—A report was given by Joan Walker

Programs—No report

Field trips—No report

Garden tours—There were three tours that took place within the last month.

Newsletter—Please send in articles before the deadline.

Sunshine—Please let Barbara Eberstein know of anyone that needs to be sent a card. One card was sent out within the last month.

Plant Exchange/Door Prize—A sign-up sheet was passed around for the upcoming year to sign up to donate a door prize.

Old Business—None

New Business—Barbara raised the question as to why we are called the Bowie Crofton Garden Club when we are located in Bowie. There was a discussion and it was brought up that if our name was changed, all t-shirts, checks, etc would need to be changed at a high cost. Barbara withdrew her question.

Announcements—There will be a daylily festival at Greenspring Park in Arlington, VA in the near future. Details are in the newsletter.

Question and Answer Session

1. Question posed about the problem of spider mites on plants.
2. Question asked about why new strawberry plant was producing small strawberries.
3. Question asked about how to get rid of aphids on butterfly weed plant.

Gaye fielded many questions during this time and gave many excellent answers. You had to be there!!!!
Gaye brought in many plant samples and explained problems encountered with these plants and how to solve the problem.

Gaye announced there are daylily startings for sale. Also, two informational handouts were distributed and free t-shirts were available, compliments of Gaye. (Handouts—IPM: A Common Sense Approach to Managing Problems in Your Landscape and Regional Pest Alert)

Mary Ann Sterns won the door prize.

Many plants were available for the plant exchange.

At 9:09 p.m. there was a motion and second to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted, *Janelle Dietrich*, Secretary

Treasurer's Report June 2010

By *Joan Walker*

Starting Balance/Checkbook	\$3,780.98
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<u>Expenses</u>	
Crofton Printing	\$36.25
Brian Swetnam/stamps	\$26.40
TOTAL	\$62.65

<u>Deposits</u>	
Membership	\$10.00
TOTAL	\$10.00
Checkbook Balance	\$3,728.33
AVAILABLE FUNDS	\$3,728.33

Garden To Do List For July

Rich Dodson, Master Gardener

The dog days of summer bring **"HOT"** weather. June 2010 set a record as the first June in history to average above 80° and for the most days above 90°. Between now and mid-August everything slows down in the garden, so we can spend less time doing and more time enjoying. But for those of you needing to keep busy, there are always a few things to do to keep your yard and garden looking well groomed. Whenever it's hot, schedule these tasks for morning or early afternoon.

We live in USDA Zone 7. Spring usually starts in March and Fall extends through November. The Summers are long and hot. The following tips are applicable to all USDA Zones during some period of time. However, given microclimates and weather extremes timing can vary. Observe the conditions in your garden and apply them accordingly.

General Items:

- As the weather turns dry, avoid fertilizing plants. It will further stress your plants to put energy into new growth during periods of drought.



- Container plantings will need watering more often. Some potted plants may need daily watering. Small pots, hanging baskets and window boxes in sunny locations may even need to be watered twice a day. If the top few inches of the soil are dry or the stems are wilting, it's time to water.
- Morning glories don't like soil that's too rich. In fact, if it's too rich they will produce lots of vine and not many flowers, so be easy on the fertilizer.



Morning Glory

- As gourds begin to form use a nail to scratch a pattern into the shell. The pattern will expand as the gourd matures.
- Use phone books as flower presses to preserve summer blossoms. Choose flowers with flat or small centers so they will compress easily. Arrange the flowers on a piece of cardboard and hold them in place with clear tape. Label each and write something about where it was growing, then add weight on top of the phone book. Check frequently. Once dried, the flowers can be glued onto cards or to embellish photos and letters.

Cleanup and Maintenance

- Work outdoors in the cool of the morning.
- Add extra mulch to keep plant roots cool.
- Provide water for birds and butterflies.
- Refresh water in fountains and bird baths to attract birds to your garden. Bird baths should be shallow with a rough surface for the birds to stand on. Place the bath at least 4 to 5 feet away from feeders to prevent droppings and seed debris from contaminating the water.
- Keep hummingbird feeders cleaned/refilled.
- Start a compost pile, or turn existing one.
- Clean the filter in your water features.
- Water plants deeply at the root zone.
- Remove Japanese beetles and other pests.
- Order bulbs and seeds for fall planting.
- Take cuttings for rooting or drying indoors.
- Attack poison ivy the moment you spot it!
- Pull those blooming weeds first, especially those that spread by reseeding. If you get rid of them

now before they go to seed and you'll have less work next year.

Specific Tasks:

Houseplants• Put houseplants outdoors in the shade.

- Water houseplants regularly.
- Feed houseplants every couple of weeks.
- Repot pot-bound houseplants.

Trees and Shrubs

- Prune dead and damaged branches.
- Remove suckers by yanking downward.
- Stop pruning flowering shrubs until spring.
- Trim non-blooming hedges, as needed.
- Deadhead roses for continued blooming.
- Apply chelated iron to deficient plants.
- Stop fertilizing trees and shrubs.
- Still plant trees & shrubs, but water well.
- Apply extra mulch to hold in moisture
- Avoid disturbing the roots of shallow plants.
- Take softwood cuttings of shrubs.
- Water trees infrequently, but deeply.

Annuals and Containers

- Water containers daily.
- Add a balanced fertilizer every few weeks.
- Deadhead faded blossoms for more blooms.
- Pinch leggy stems to encourage branching.
- Start seeds for pansies and other winter annuals.

Perennials and Bulbs

- Shear/Pinch chrysanthemums & asters until mid month. If you've been pinching mums to encourage a compact shape, it's time to stop and allow them to set flower buds.
- Lightly trim bushy or leggy perennials.
- Stop deadheading if you want seeds.
- Make one more planting of gladiolus.
- Support vines and tall plants with trellises.
- Cut flowers in the early morning.
- Take rose cuttings, choosing stems the diameter of a pencil. Make cuts at an angle just above a leaf node. Cuttings are at least 4 to 5 in. long and have a couple sets of leaves.
- Divide and transplant Oriental poppies.
- Order 'Colchicum autumnale' bulbs for planting in Aug. and Sept. Also known as autumn crocus, these petite pale pink to lavender blooms will appear in fall.
- Order spring-blooming bulbs now.

Lawns

- Plant warm-season grasses and keep watered; Give your lawn one inch of water per week.
- Consider allowing fescue or bluegrass lawn to go dormant for the summer.
- When you do cut, keep mower blades sharp. Raise the blade on your lawn mower to the highest setting for your lawn type (3"- 4" for cool-season grasses, 2" - 3" for warm-season grasses). The taller grass will keep roots cool and conserve moisture – a must during the hot, dry July weather.
- Mulch your grass clippings.
- Edge plant beds with string trimmer or edger.
- Stop fertilizing lawns in midsummer.

Vegetables and Herbs

- Remove garlic scapes (flower heads).
- Order garlic bulbs for fall planting.
- Feed vegetables with compost/organic fertilizer.
- Harvest veggies; give away any you can't use.
- Remove plants that have finished producing.
- Keep weeding, watering, & removing insects
- Start seeds for cool-season fall vegetables.
- Give herbs a haircut, and use the cuttings.
- Harvest herbs just as the flower buds appear.
- Mulch sprawling and vining vegetables.
- Harvest berries before birds/squirrels get them.
- Harvest melons when they slip easily from vine.
- Remove and discard fallen fruits & vegetables.
- Give your tomatoes TLC in temps over 90° F.
- Tomato horn worms are large with green & white stripes and a red "horn" near the end. Hand picking is the best control. However, if you see one covered in tiny, upright eggs leave it be. These are cocoons of the braconid wasp, a tomato horn worm predator.
- It's time to plan your Fall vegetable garden. For plants grown from seed, make sure they have enough time to mature before the first autumn freeze. Check seed packets to find the number of days until harvest to determine when to plant.

Sources:

<http://www.pallensmith.com/articles/garden-to-do-list-july>

<http://www.dannylipford.com>

Wood Chip Mulch: Landscape Boon or Bane?

By Linda Chalker-Scott, Ph.D. MasterGardener



Landscape mulches are increasingly recognized as pivotal components of environmentally sustainable gardens and green spaces. Select the right mulch and you reap the benefits of healthier soils and plants. Choose the wrong mulch and the only plants that thrive are the weeds.

Before selecting a landscape mulch material, it's important to reflect on the purpose of the landscape in question. For instance, production agriculture generally requires short term, intensive management of a crop, while the philosophy behind landscape horticulture is the long term, sustainable management of a system. Therefore, those mulches that work best for crop production (including vegetable gardens) are often not the best choices for woody ornamental landscapes, and vice versa.

Direct benefits

The potential, direct benefits of any landscape mulch material can be grouped into four general categories:

Soil benefits

- improve structure
- enhance gas transfer
- enhance water infiltration and retention
- prevent erosion and compaction
- moderate temperature

Plant benefits

- provide nutrients

System benefits

- suppress pathogens and pests
- enhance beneficial organisms
- increase biodiversity
- neutralize pollutants

Human benefits

- economic
- aesthetic
- ease of application

An exhaustive review of the science behind landscape mulches is beyond the scope of this column (though I have just completed such a review for upcoming publication in a scientific journal). Instead, I'm going to address the documented benefits and drawbacks behind the use of arborist wood chips as a landscape mulch.

Perfect choice

In areas where trees are a dominant feature of the landscape, arborist wood chips represent one of the best mulch choices for trees and shrubs. A 1990 study evaluated the landscape mulch potential of 15 organic

materials, including grass clippings, leaves, composts, yard wastes, bark, and wood chips. Wood chips were one of the best performers in terms of moisture retention, temperature moderation, weed control, and sustainability. In many urban areas, arborist wood chips are available for free, representing one of the most economically practical choices.

Unlike the uniform nature of sawdust and bark mulches, wood chips include bark, wood, and often leaves. The chemical and physical diversity of these materials resists the tendency towards compaction seen in sawdust and bark. Additionally, the materials vary in their size and decomposition rate, creating a more diverse environment that is subsequently colonized by a diverse soil biota. A biologically diverse soil biota is more resistant to environmental disturbance and will in turn support a diverse and healthy plant population.

Wood chips are considered to be slow decomposers, as their tissues are rich in lignin, suberin, tannins, and other decomposition-resistant, natural compounds. Thus, wood chips supply nutrients slowly to the system; at the same time they absorb significant amounts of water that is slowly released to the soil. It is not surprising that wood chips have been cited as superior mulches for *enhanced plant productivity*. Wood chips have been especially effective

in helping establish trees and native plants in urban and disturbed environments.

Arborist wood chips provide incredible weed control in ornamental landscapes. The mechanism(s) by which wood chips prevent weed growth are not fully understood, but probably include light reduction (preventing germination of some seeds and reducing photosynthetic ability of buried leaves), allelopathy (inhibiting seed germination), and reduced nitrogen levels at the soil-mulch interface (reducing seedling survival).

While there are imported wood mulches available for purchase at nurseries and home improvement centers, they are not as cost-effective as locally produced wood chips, which are often free. In a society where using locally produced materials is increasingly popular as a measure of sustainability, arborist wood chips are a natural choice. Finally, the reuse of plant materials as mulches keeps them out of the landfill—a benefit with both economic and environmental attributes.

Drawbacks of wood chips— mulch ado about nothing

There are a number of concerns surrounding the use of arborist wood chips as a landscape mulch. I have constructed a quick summary here. Relevant references can be found on the Web site listed in “More Information.” Overall, the commonly expressed concerns about woody mulches are not borne out in research trials.

Concern: Woody mulches will acidify soils.

Evidence: None. In field situations it is difficult to significantly alter soil pH without addition of chemicals. Transient changes in pH may be found in the decomposing mulch layer itself, but these have little effect on underlying soils.

Concern: Woody mulches, such as cedar, leach allelopathic chemicals that kill other plants.

Evidence: Many plant materials contain allelopathic chemicals, which can prevent seeds from germinating or kill young seedlings. Most compounds have no effect upon established plants. Only a few woody materials have been found to contain allelopathic chemicals (e.g. *Juglans nigra*, black walnut). Cedars (*Thuja* spp.) have not been found to have this ability.

Concern: Mulches made from chipping diseased trees can infect healthy trees.

Evidence: Most studies indicate that diseased mulch cannot transmit pathogens to the roots of healthy trees. Under no circumstances should wood mulch be used as backfill. Not only is this a poor installation practice, but a potential mechanism for disease transfer as well. Fungal communities found in wood chip mulches are generally decomposers, not pathogens. Under healthy soil conditions, beneficial and harmless fungi can out-compete pathogens for space on plant roots. Furthermore, healthy plants are not susceptible to opportunistic pathogens such as *Armillaria* and *Phytophthora*, which are often ubiquitous but inactive in well-managed soils.

Concern: Wood chips could be a fire hazard, particularly when they are used on landscapes around structures.

Evidence: Coarse textured organic mulches, like wood chips, are the least flammable of the organic mulches. Fine textured mulches are more likely to combust, and rubber mulch is the most hazardous of all tested landscape mulches.

Concern: Wood chip mulches will tie up nitrogen and cause deficiencies in plants.

Evidence: Actually, many studies have demonstrated that woody mulch materials increase nutrient levels in soils and/or associated plant foliage. My hypothesis is that a zone of nitrogen deficiency exists at the mulch/soil interface, inhibiting weed seed germination while having no influence

upon established plant roots below the soil surface. For this reason, it is inadvisable to use high C:N mulches in annual beds or vegetable gardens where the plants of interest do not have deep, extensive root systems.

Concern: Woody mulches will attract termites, carpenter ants, and other pests.

Evidence: Many wood-based mulches are not attractive to pest insects but are actually insect repellent. For instance, cedar (Thuja) species produce thujone, which repels clothes moths, cockroaches, termites, carpet beetles, Argentine ants, and odorous house ants. In general, termites prefer higher nutrient woody materials, such as cardboard, rather than wood chips.

Application

Let wood chips age before using them if there are concerns about disease.

Personally, I have never done this; I happen to love the smell of fresh wood chips and enjoy spreading them out over the landscape. Additionally, some of the nutrient value (particularly nitrogen if the chips contain leaves or needles) will be lost in the composting process. Using fresh chips ensures that some of the foliar nitrogen will feed the landscape rather than the compost pile.

Before installing wood chips, create a thin underlying layer of a more nutrientrich mulch (like compost) if there are concerns about nutrient deficiencies. This “mulch sandwich” approach is a logical one that mimics what you would see in the mulch layer of a forest ecosystem. It’s not required, though, and over time a wood chip mulch will develop this same structure as the lower layers break down.

Begin mulch application before annual weeds are established. Mulch is most effective in suppressing weeds when weeds are not yet present on site. Therefore, bare soil should be mulched as soon as practical, especially in the spring and fall when weed seed germination is at its peak. If this is not possible, the most effective, non-chemical way to remove weeds prior to mulching is to mow them as close to the ground as possible, followed immediately by mulching.

Prune or mow perennial weeds at the root crown in early spring when root resources are lowest (generally just as leaf growth begins). Extensive pulling of perennial weeds from unprotected soil is not recommended, as this disturbance will increase erosion, especially in sandy soils or in sloped areas. It is better to keep unprotected soil undisturbed. However, you

can pull resprouting perennial weeds covered in mulch; the mulch layer prevents erosion and facilitates pulling.

Remove all noxious weed materials from site to prevent rerooting or seeding. Self explanatory!

Install chips to the desired depth. A successful wood chip mulch must be deep enough to suppress weeds and promote healthy soils and plants: research has demonstrated that weed control is directly linked to mulch depth, as is enhanced plant performance. A review of the research on coarse organic mulches and weed control reveals that shallow mulch layers will promote weed growth and/or require additional weed control measures. I recommend 4-6 inches for ornamental sites and 8-12 inches for restoration sites and/or perennial weed problems.

Keep mulch away from trunks of trees and shrubs.

Piling mulch against the trunks of shrubs and trees creates a dark, moist, low oxygen environment to which above-ground tissues are not adapted. Fungal diseases require a moist environment to grow and reproduce; piling mulch on the trunk provides exactly the right conditions for fungi to enter the plant. Likewise,

opportunistic borers are more likely to invade a plant whose bark is wet due to excessive mulching. Rather than creating mulch volcanoes, instead taper the mulch down to nearly nothing as you approach the trunk. This donut-shaped application will protect the soil environment as well as the above-ground plant tissues.

Replace mulch as needed to maintain desired depth; replacement rate will depend on decomposition rate.

Once mulch is applied, little management needs to be done other than reapplication to maintain minimum depth. High traffic areas are most likely to need replacement.



Enjoying Thyme In the Garden and at the Table

Thyme is one of the more delightful gifts from the Mediterranean region. This perennial plant belongs to the genus *Thymus*, a huge family of aromatic plants with small leaves and twiggy stems. Thyme is popular with gardeners and cooks alike and is prized for its performance in rock gardens, borders, containers, herb gardens and, of course, the kitchen.

Thyme has a special talent for lending complexity to a dish and is best combined with other herbs, as in classic Bouquet Garni and Herbes de Provence. A bit of thyme will enhance other flavors; a bit more will lend its own unique and wonderful flavor to a dish. In cooking, thyme is terrific with vegetables, particularly squash, carrots and in pasta primavera. Soups, stews, sauces and dressings are all improved with the addition of thyme, either alone or in combinations with other herbs.

Use thyme fresh from the garden whenever possible. Although dried thyme has the familiar flavor, it lacks a wonderful, subtle quality of fresh thyme. Rudyard Kipling described it as the “wind-bit thyme that smells like the perfume of the dawn in paradise.”

Thyme is easy to grow. Although it is never invasive, it rambles and spreads with minimal effort from the gardener. Plant thyme in a sunny spot. It will thrive in poor soil as long as it has adequate drainage. Too much fertilizer will result in a profusion of leaves with weaker fragrance and flavor – dry, poor soil actually produces a higher concentration of the fragrant oils in the leaves. Additionally, leaves harvested late in the season, when the plants are in bloom, will be the most aromatic of all. Harvest thyme early in the day after the dew has dried. Tie the sprigs into small bundles and hang in a well ventilated, dark area until dry.

Enjoy thyme in the garden throughout the season. Plant it at the edges of borders and kneel upon it as you work. Or use creeping thyme as a groundcover in container gardens or your deck or patio. Brush your hand across the plant as you happen by to release the delicious fragrance.

Executive Committee			<p>From the Editor Donald Sminkey</p> <p>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</p> <p>Deadline, August issue: Aug. 8, 2010</p>
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