

September 2020

Issue 62



Photo by Chris Jacobs

A Note from our President

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Who would have thought that a tiny virus could have changed our lives so thoroughly? But, in March things certainly turned upside down for most of us. In this organization, we had to do an abrupt about-face. We can no longer do face-to-face meetings, our volunteer work has ground to a halt, and we had to cancel our very popular Gardening for Gold Fall Symposium for this year.

But, as with any disruption, trial, set-back or whatever term you want to ascribe to this time in our life, there is always the flip side. Call it a blessing, a benefit, or a gift, I find that there is always something to be grateful for in any situation.

As for me, my gardens have never looked so good! Because I have had more time to spend in the gardens, the weeds are almost always kept at bay. Now, I am battling only tiny weeds instead of the larger ones that I previously had because I sometimes neglected things while I was otherwise occupied. Although, sometimes I think I hear whispers of tiny weeds laughing when I walk away. I am confident that I have every last weed out of the garden only to go back a day or two later to find they have reappeared.

This spring I started a new pollinator garden, and planted fruit trees, and berry bushes. Sometimes I wonder at my sanity starting all of this at my age, but I am investing in the future. I was able to work at a more leisurely pace rather than hurry through things because I was rushing off to teach a class or do a presentation. Staying at home more definitely has its benefits as I work in these gardens and nurture them toward success.

I have had the opportunity to learn new things. Prior to March, I had never even heard of Zoom, let alone attended a Zoom meeting. Now, I have added it to my ever-expanding repertoire of online skills. I am proud of all of you who have stepped up and learned right along with me. We have made a seamless transition to having our meetings remotely instead of just abandoning them. It is likely that this method of having our meetings will continue well into 2021, but we will keep going and learning.

Here's to honing our skills through the rest of this season! Happy Gardening.

Carol



Photo by Diane Hemling



Upcoming Meetings

Anyone with an interest in gardening is welcome to attend the following free programs. Master Gardener meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month. Unless otherwise noted, the meetings are at 6:30 p.m. in the Administration Building, 127 E. Oak Street, Juneau.

Until further notice, in-person Master Gardener meetings are on pause.
For meeting updates watch for emails or Facebook posts.

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Master Gardener Websites

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Insects---The Good, Bad, and Ugly



When gardeners think of insects, their first thoughts jump to the pests that plague their gardens. However, only two or three insects out of one hundred are pests. The remaining fall into one of four beneficial categories.

Pollinators are beneficial insects, including wasps, butterflies, moths, some ants, beetles, and a few flies. Pollinators distribute pollen from one plant to another and are a vital part of the food chain.

Predators consume large quantities of harmful insects; about thirty percent of the insect population are considered carnivores. Dragonflies consume mosquitoes, lady beetles keep aphids in check, praying mantis eat a variety of beetles, robber flies will tackle grasshoppers.

Parasitoids are particularly crafty in their method of destroying harmful insects. They lay their eggs on an unsuspecting prey. When the eggs hatch, the larva will feed on the host pest, killing it. Most parasitoids are bees, wasps, or ants and are so tiny they are rarely seen. They are host specific attacking only within a certain species. Two of the most important are braconid wasps which attack tomato horn worms and ichneumonid wasps which favor weevils and loopers.

“Poopers” comprise twenty percent of the population. They feed on dead material and are the insects that clean up nature. Within this category are termites cleaning up dead wood, fly maggots

cleaning up road kill, and sow bugs cleaning up dead leaves and organic matter. Some insects also recycle animal wastes, like the dung beetle.

Why is all of this important? When pesticides are applied, they are non-specific. They do not shake hands with the insect, get to know them first, and only kill the bad ones. Instead, they eliminate all of them; all ninety-seven percent of the good ones along with the three percent of the bad ones.

What can homeowners and gardeners do when that two to three percent get unruly and out of hand? The first step is to identify the pest; make certain that the problem is correctly identified.

If indeed there is a pest problem that needs to be addressed, first, try taking away the insect’s food, water, and/or hiding place. When existing populations must be addressed, begin with the least toxic method first. Hand picking insects gives a certain satisfaction when observing the bucket full of conquered pests. Spraying a steady stream of water will dislodge an infestation of small invaders. Soapy water sprayed on plants is non-toxic and quite effective at reducing the population of many pests.

When all else fails and chemical applications become a must, follow all label directions carefully, use as little as possible and as seldom as possible. Be sure to wear safety gear to protect the applicator. Insects are not the only creature that can be harmed with these compounds.

Carol Shirk, Certified Master Gardener

About Insect’s Senses

By: Addie—Youth Master Gardener

Insects have different senses. Like humans, insects can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste but unlike humans, insects use different parts of their bodies than we do. Insects have compound eyes which are made up of more than 2000 smaller eyes. These eyes allow insects to see all around. Some insects use their antennae to smell. They can use pheromones to communicate via smell. Antennae and legs can also be used to feel. For hearing, insects have eardrums either in their wings or their abdomen. They feel the vibration of sound similar to humans. How would you like to taste food through your feet? That’s what butterflies do!



The Good

Soldier Beetles (*Chauliognathus pensylvanicus*)

Soldier beetles are active from July—September, and are found on flowers and leaves of many plants, especially those with yellow flowers. The adult beetles are both pollinators and predators. They feed on pollen and nectar, along with aphids and other plant pests. The larvae, which look like mini alligators, are predators as well. Soldier beetles are beneficial and harmless—they should be encouraged not eliminated.

<https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/soldier-beetle>

<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/soldier-beetles>



Photo by Chris Jacobs

The Bad

Iris Borer (*Macronoctua onusta*)

In Wisconsin, the iris borer is the most serious pest of iris, causing severe damage by feeding on the rhizomes. The most severely affected is the Bearded iris, while Siberian and dwarf iris typically have few problems with this insect.

<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/iris-borer/>

<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/iris-borers>



Photos by Carol Shirk



Adult iris borer moth

Photo from University of MN Extension

The Ugly

Dogday Cicada (*Tibicen spp.*)

Cicadas are not harmful or dangerous to people, pets or property. While they do feed on trees, they do not cause noticeable injury. They are present July—September and are usually heard and not seen. They have a distinctive humming sound, which is made by the male to attract females.

<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/cicadas-0/>

<https://insectlab.russell.wisc.edu/2020/06/29/cicada-mania-in-wisconsin-not-quite-yet/>

<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/cicadas>



Photo by Carol Shirk

More Insects



Red-headed ash borer.



Dogwood Sawfly



Larva of stag beetle



Tussock moth caterpillar



Aphids from the genus *Uroleucon*



Asian Lady Beetle



Corn Rootworm

Insects—From Youth Perspective

Insects

By: Theodore—Youth Master Gardener

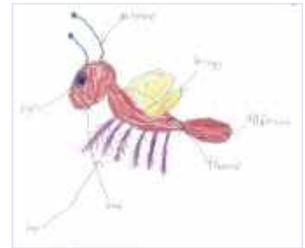
My favorite thing that I learned in gardening this year was about insects. All insects go through the Incomplete or Complete life cycles. I learned the body parts. The body parts of the insects are antenna, legs, head, thorax, wings and abdomen. Some insects have chewing mouths for ripping their food. I also learned that some insects eat other animal's poop.



Insect Body Parts

By: Addison—Youth Master Gardener

There are four main types of body parts for an insect. The thorax, abdomen, head, and legs. Most insects have six legs. Spiders are special, and have eight. The head has the eyes, a mouthpart, and antennae. The types of mouthparts are chewing, piercing, sucking, and sponging. Next comes the thorax. This is what all of the legs and wings are attached to. It also holds all of the organs. Next comes the abdomen. On a spider, this is where the web comes out of. I think learning about insects is really neat, and I'm glad I can do that in gardening class.



Insects, Not Bugs

By: Mia—Youth Master Gardener

Insects are fascinating. As a Youth Master Gardener, knowing about different insects is very important. Why? Well, if you have plants that are being destroyed, you're going to want to take care of the pests. But in order to use insecticides you have to know the insect that's causing the problem. Insects may not interest many, but there are so many benefits of certain insects. For instance, without our wonderful pollinators you wouldn't have many of the foods we eat today. Flies are even pollinators believe it or not! Not only are these creatures beautiful, they have many hidden features. Insect's legs are actually not attached to both their thorax and abdomen—they're connected to only the thorax, which is the middle section of the body. Did you know that butterflies have a mouth part called a proboscis that helps them collect a sticky substance known as nectar? There are so many insects that many people don't know about. For instance, the leaf cutter bee. Have you had plant leaves all of a sudden have these perfect little cuts on them? Those are made by the leaf cutter bees. They have a chewing mouth part that helps them with their unique job. They take the leaves that they collect and they go underground or into a hive made of tubes. They then will take their leaves and make nests. These bees can make up to nine nests in one tube. After the nests are made, the eggs are laid and the tube is sealed up. IN no time at all, out pops a fuzzy adorable adult leaf cutter bee. You don't have to love insects to appreciate what they do for us. Take a minute today to learn more about our friends—Insects.



Program Updates and Changes: BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

From: [Wisconsin Master Gardener Program Office](#)

Your deadline to report hours moves from September 30 to December 31, 2020. You may continue to report less than 24 hours for volunteer activities this year; **10 hours of continuing education is still required.**

Starting on January 1, 2021, we will operate on a calendar year for all program requirements. All program requirements must be completed and reported by December 31, every year. We will wait until January 2021 to determine if COVID-19 restrictions continue to apply.

We are changing the deadline for reporting this year:
September 30, 2020 → December 31, 2020
(past report cycle: October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020)

We will adopt a calendar year for all future hour reporting:
January 1 to December 31

New volunteer onboarding and returning volunteer enrollment will be:
January 1 to March 31, annually

see wimastergardener.org for additional updates.

I went into a pet shop and asked for twelve bees. The shopkeeper counted out thirteen and handed them over.
"You've given me one too many."
"That one is a freebie."

