



## July, 2004 Volume 2 Issue 7

University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMCE) is the major educational outreach program of the University of Maine, with offices statewide. UMCE provides Maine people with research-based educational programs to help them live fuller, more productive lives

### Goal:

The goal of the Piscataquis Gardening Newsletter is to provide timely information on practical, sustainable, research-based horticultural practices, tools and techniques which will improve home gardening success. Topics on growing and caring for vegetables, fruits, flowers, and landscaping for the home will be included as well as pest management techniques. Information will be based on our U.S.D.A. plant hardiness zone. Upcoming events and programs of interest will also be included.

If you have a question, feel free to contact me and I can include it in our garden question section.

Sincerely,

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# Piscataquis Gardening

## July 2004 Gardening Newsletter



### Master Gardener Plant Swap a Success!

If you drove by the Extension Office the morning of June 6<sup>th</sup> you would have seen a large selection of plants that gardeners brought to the swap. We had twenty to twenty-five people participate. Some folks who were unable to bring plants to swap, donated to the Master Gardener fund to maintain our Extension garden.

Joanne Estes used the donations to mulch the garden. We were able to add a number of perennials from the plant swap, so you will want to make a point to stop by the office to look at our garden.

To give you an idea of the variety of plants folks brought here is a brief listing. Iris, Day Lily, Asiatic Lily, Blood Root, Phlox, Cascading Hops, tomato, strawberry, Hyssop, Dianthus, Lupine, Yarrow, Columbine, Bellflower, Lily of the Valley, Geranium, Hosta, Bee Balm, Viola, and others.

Thanks go out to Joanne and all the other Master Gardeners that made this a fun event!

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## Torching the Weeds

When someone asks about using a propane torch to burn off weeds, I think about a story that appeared many years ago about a back yard strawberry patch covered with straw and someone wanting to burn their lawn to rejuvenate the growth. You can guess what happened, the fire got into the strawberry patch straw and killed the strawberry plants. Plus the grass didn't grow that much better.

So before you fire up the old blow torch to take care of your weed problem there are a few things to consider.

- Don't use in an area that has either organic mulch or plastic mulch that can catch fire.
- Don't use next to any wood structure or the fire department may be your next call.
- The torch flame will work very well on small broad-leafed annual weeds (less than two inches in height). The flame only needs to touch the leaf long enough to change its color to do its job you don't need to burn the plant to a crisp.
- The torch does not affect perennial grasses like quack grass since their root reserves will easily replace any grass blades burned by the flame. Other grasses growing points are protected under ground so the flame may not be as effective on grasses.

## Pest Management in the Home Garden

Here are some ways to make your garden a healthy place for your plants and an unattractive place for pests.

1. Plant disease or insect resistant cultivars
2. Provide the right amount of moisture
3. Maintain correct fertility levels
4. Rotate vegetables so you don't grow the same or related plant in the same area every year
5. Keep your garden clean (garden debris provides great hiding places for slugs and insects)
6. Time plantings to avoid peak insect infestations
7. Encourage naturally occurring beneficial insects and other animals
8. Identify the problem - Don't jump to conclusions. That bug might not be a pest. It might be a beneficial insect.

9. Determine the problem potential - Sometimes the damage will be minimal. Decide what you and your garden can tolerate.
10. Select the least toxic approach
11. Observe the results of your control method.

*Source: Brzozowski, R., and V. Holmes, Smart Gardener, a learning guide for home vegetable growers, UMCE, Bulletin #2282.*

## Giant Hogweed



Giant Hogweed is a member of the carrot or parsley family (Apiaceae) that was introduced into North America in the early 1900s. Its massive size and imposing appearance made it desirable for arboretums and

gardens. But it soon escaped from cultivation and became established in rich, moist soils along roadside ditches, stream banks, waste ground, along tree lines and open wooded areas.

This tall majestic plant is a public health hazard because of the potential to cause severe skin irritation in susceptible people. Plant sap produces painful, burning blisters within 24 to 48 hours after contact. Plant juices can also produce painless red blotches that later develop into purplish or brownish scars that may persist for several years.

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources is trying to identify sites that have Giant Hogweed. They will help you identify this weed and help with management suggestions. You can call 287-3891 if you suspect you have Giant Hogweed. I also have a flyer on identification of Giant Hogweed in the office. It has been identified in Piscataquis

County in only one site.

You can also go online at

<http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pi/horticulture/gianthogweed.htm> for pictures of this noxious

weed.

Source: Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), an attractive but dangerous, noxious weed. Have you seen this plant? Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources.



## Summer Vacation for Houseplants

Some of our houseplants can use a "summer vacation" outdoors when nighttime temperatures are above 55 degrees F. We need to be mindful of their moisture and light requirements and susceptibility to pest attacks.

Many houseplants are of tropical origin. This means they cannot stand full sun for more than an hour a day, or temperatures below 55 degrees F at night. Chinese Evergreen (aglaonemas), Aluminum Plant, Dumb Cane (Dieffenbachia), Grape Ivy (Cissus incisa), and indoor begonias may receive injury or even drop their leaves if the night time temperature dips below 55 degrees.

English ivy varieties, the cast-iron plant and the fiddler-leaf fig on the other hand can tolerate temperatures as low as 40 degrees F, but these plants should not be exposed to such low temperatures too often.

Many plants cannot take full doses of bright sunlight outdoors. Cacti are the exception, but full sunlight often causes bleaching and leaf drop on most other houseplants. So you should select an area on the east side of your house, where the sun is filtered after 9 am.

The bright outdoor light means a boost in plant growth, hence the vacationing houseplants will require adequate fertilizer and water. Just because your plants have moved outside doesn't mean you can neglect them. Plants kept outdoors often run into insect attack. That calls for close inspection of the plants twice a week.

Some flowering plants, such as poinsettias, azaleas, and amaryllis, will do well outdoors. It is important to bring your

houseplants indoors in the fall before the nighttime temperatures start to drop.



Roundheaded Apple Tree Borer Tunnel Photo:

## Roundheaded Apple Tree Borer

When a young backyard apple tree dies, the cause is often insect borers. The most important insect borer attacking home apple trees in Maine is the roundheaded apple tree borer.

Adult roundhead apple tree borer beetles begin emerging around June 10; egg laying begins around June 20, peaks in the last two weeks of July, and continues through August. During their first summer, the young larvae feed under the bark. Infestation may be evident as clumps of reddish-brown sawdust-like pushed out of the tunnel, sunken and dark bark, and sometimes oozing sap.

The larvae overwinter inside the trunk and resume tunneling the next spring. They remain inside the trunk throughout second, and sometimes a third or fourth summer, before emerging as adults in the spring. The tunneling disrupts the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients between leaves and roots. Borer-infested trees grow slowly and have sparse foliage. Small trees with multiple borer larvae can be so weakened that they break off in a stiff wind.

Insecticide sprays during June - August for other insect pests kill or deter the female roundheaded apple tree borer beetles before they lay eggs.

Nonchemical preventive measures include removing infested mountain ash, crabapple, hawthorn, shadbush and cotoneaster within at least 100 feet of apple trees. Remove vegetation or winter "mouse" (vole) guards that shield the lower trunk from sunlight. Apply a 50:50 mixture of white latex (not acrylic) paint and water as a

thick whitewash to the lower trunk. The whitewash deters egg-laying, and makes it easier to see frass from infestations that do occur. You can try to exclude the beetles with wire mosquito screen or ¼ inch mesh hardware cloth surrounding the lower two feet of the trunk. The barrier must be loose around the trunk but sealed at the top with a cord and at ground level by mounded soil.

Check lower trunks for frass and tunneling in September, and again in late May. If you find signs of infestation, first try to dig out shallow larvae by removing decayed tissue with a sharp knife. If there is a tunnel, you may be able to locate and kill the larva with a stiff wire.

For more information on apple pests, check out the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Apple Pest Management web site at <http://pmo.umext.maine.edu/apple/>, or call Glen Koehler, Associate Scientist for Apple IPM and NAPIAP, at 581-3882 or email [gkoehler@umext.maine.edu](mailto:gkoehler@umext.maine.edu).

*Source: Koehler, G., Associate Scientist for Apple Pest Management, email [gkoehler@umext.maine.edu](mailto:gkoehler@umext.maine.edu) and 581-3882.*

## The Maine Highlands Food and Farms Map

Recently the group of thirty-six area farmers raising vegetables, fruits and livestock products organize as **The Maine Highlands Farm Products Promotion Group** released their 2004 the Maine Highlands Food and Farm map. The organization's members, farm name, address, phone, email are listed in this map along with the agricultural products and services they have available so customers can find local farms to provide food and other farm products.

The 22" by 17" two sided full color map on glossy paper is available for free to consumers in the Piscataquis and Penobscot area. Twenty thousands copies of the map have been printed funded in part by the Piscataquis County Public Health Council, a Healthy Maine Partnership. Development of the map was with the support of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis County Office and the Penobscot County Soil and Water Conservation District. You can pick up your copy at Piscataquis or Penobscot County University of Maine Cooperative Extension Offices or Soil and Water

Conservation District Offices.

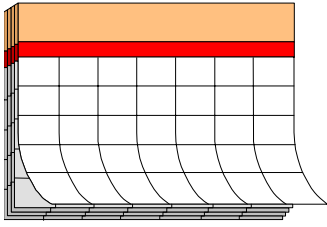
The following businesses have supported the production of the map and have supplies of the map for distribution. Blue Seal Feeds, Inc in Bangor, Realty of Maine in Bangor, Allen Freeman McDonnell Agency in Brewer, Lambs Farm in Sebec, Dorr's Equipment in Bangor, Perkco Supply, Inc. in Exeter, Sherburne Farms in Dexter, Foxcroft Agway in Dover-Foxcroft, Roger Merchant Photographer in Dover-Foxcroft, Vine and Branch Family Farm in Bangor, Simply Soap in Garland and Breakneck Ridge Farm in Blanchard.

Member farmers also have a supply of maps and they include: Vine & Branch in Bangor; Breakneck Ridge Farm in Blanchard; Country Junction in Bradford; Penquis Valley Shepherd and Haven Farm in Brownville; Ash Hill View Deer Farm in Carmel; Olmsted's Orchard, G & M Maple Products, and Maple Lane Farm in Charleston; Oak Ridge Farm in Clifton; Thunder Ridge Farm in Corinna; Thomas Farms and Critterwoods Outdoor Recreation Area, Lucky Stars Farm in Corinth, Windy View Farm in Dexter, Leaves & Blooms Greenhouse, Tudor Farm Orchard, and Shaw Historic Farm in Dover-Foxcroft.

Other farm members include Mapleshade Farm & Rumphius Dairy Goats in Garland; Perseverance Wild Blueberry Farm in Kingsbury Plantation; Treworgy Family Orchards in Levant; Ireland Farms in Lincoln; Wyman Farms in Milo; Nutkin Knoll Farm in Newburgh; Worcester's Wild Blueberries in Orville; Tarry Farm in Orono; Snow Brook Gardens and Checkerberry Farm in Parkman; Stutzman's Farm, Mossflower Farm, Campbell/Richardson Farm and Hall's Christmas Tree Farms, Inc. in Sangerville; Lamb's Farm, La Bererie Farm and Blueberry Ridge Farm in Sebec, Nickerson's Fresh Vegetables in St. Albans and Foss Farm in Stetson.

The Maine Highlands Farm Products Promotion Group will be distributing this map throughout the area so folks living in or visiting Piscataquis and Penobscot Counties will be able to easily find a farm to purchase locally produced, high quality farm products. A farm direct seasonal availability guide is included with approximate harvest season for the different farm products. Also, a few farming facts and fun quiz on farming topics can test your agriculture

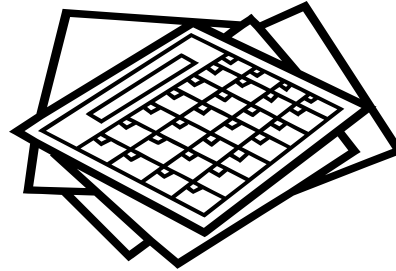
knowledge.



sheet explains 9 principles for creating landscapes beneficial to wildlife and humans alike. Includes list of backyard wildlife species common in Maine. #7132, *Free*

[Planning a Backyard Wildlife Habitat](#), 4-pg. fact sheet on planning and mapping your yard for wildlife habitat over the years. #7133, *Free*

[Components of a Backyard Wildlife Habitat](#), 8-pg. fact sheet details 16 important components of backyard wildlife habitat. #7137, *Free*



## Calendar:

### Monthly Garden Activities for July:

- Start harvesting your early vegetables and berries
- Contact the Extension Office for publications on freezing and canning your excess garden produce
- Don't fertilize fruit trees or landscape plants after mid July to improve over wintering
- Check fruit trees for excessive loads of fruit. You may need to hand thin or prop up branches.
- Monitor rainfall and irrigate. Plants need 1 inch of water a week. It is better to irrigate only once or twice a week and wet the soil to a depth of six inches so the plants will be able to tolerate the dry weather better. Mulching and increased levels of organic matter in the soil will reduce the need for irrigation.
- It is normal for bluegrass lawns to turn brown in the summer heat. No amount of water will keep this type of grass green during the 90 degree days.
- Renovate strawberry beds after harvest
- Keep weeds under control in the garden.
- Remove bolting lettuce and replant with beans
- Thin phlox and beebalm to reduce powdery mildew

### Featured Extension Publications:

The following Gardening Extension Publications are available at the Extension office nearest you. You will notice some publications are free and some have a cost recovery charge. Many publications are available online at <http://www.umext.maine.edu/publications/catalog.htm>.

[Black Knot of Plum and Cherry](#), 2-pg. fact sheet. #5091, *Free*

[Why a Backyard Wildlife Habitat?](#), 2-pg. fact sheet describes the benefits of backyard wildlife habitats. #7131, *Free*

[Principles for Creating a Backyard Habitat](#), 8-pg. fact

July 2, 2004 - October 10, 2004 **Maine Agricultural Fairs** start in July with the Houlton Fair, and end in October with the Fryeburg Fair. [http://www.getrealmaine.com/visit/maine\\_fairs.html](http://www.getrealmaine.com/visit/maine_fairs.html)

July 25, 2004 **Maine Open Farm Day** - 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM About 80 farms all over the state are open to the public the 4th Sunday in July. Visit one or visit many. Rain or shine. Watch the web when July approaches for a list of participating farms. <http://www.getrealmaine.com/>

August 21<sup>st</sup> **Garden Celebration**; 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM at the Roger's Farm, on Bennock Road in Orono. Plan to come and check out the Demonstration garden and research plots as well as learning about interesting gardening topics from their presenters.

August 26<sup>th</sup> through 29<sup>th</sup> **Piscataquis Valley Fair**, Dover-Foxcroft. You can enter your vegetables or flowers for judging on the Wednesday before the fair. Contact Pat Johnson at 876-3204 for the Open Flower Show information and Tammy Cunningham 876-3353 for information on the Open Produce Show.

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