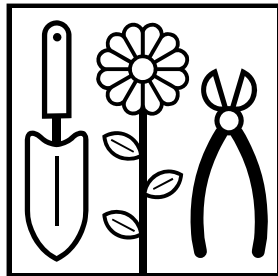


**October  
2009  
Volume 7  
Issue 10**



## **Piscataquis Gardening Newsletter**

University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMaine Extension) is the major educational outreach program of the University of Maine, with offices statewide. UMaine Extension 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.

You can receive this newsletter electronically. To sign up for the electronic version go to [www.umext.umaine.edu/piscataquis/gardening/newsletter.htm](http://www.umext.umaine.edu/piscataquis/gardening/newsletter.htm).

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Donna R. Coffin'.

**Donna R. Coffin**  
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**Piscataquis County Extension**  
**Educator**  
**165 East Main Street**  
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**207-564-3301**  
**In Maine 1-800-287-1491**

### ***A letter from the Piscataquis County Extension Association Executive Committee: We Need Your Help***

Please join us at the Piscataquis County Budget Hearing in the Superior Court Building in Dover-Foxcroft on Monday November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at 7:00 pm (tentative date and time) to just show your support or even better speak of the difference that University of Maine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis County has made in your home, business, family and our community.

As you know University of Maine Cooperative Extension's successful educational programs result from a federal, state and county partnership. Since 1919, when the Maine legislature passed the County Extension Act, the University of Maine has been in all Maine communities with a local county office that is funded by county government.

Piscataquis County is recommending a significant cut to our University of Maine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis county office and if approved could close the office - resulting in loss of jobs, terminating all UMaine Extension Piscataquis county programming and reallocation of remaining staff to other parts of the state.

So, please join me in showing our countywide support to these programs and staff! If you cannot attend please write or call your Piscataquis County commissioners. Every correspondence will help! Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Judy Merck

Member of the Piscataquis County Extension Executive Committee  
Phone 564-3563 (leave a message) Email: [woodhav@localnet.com](mailto:woodhav@localnet.com)

### **Gardening after Late Blight**

*James F. Dill PhD, Pest Management Specialist*

The gardening season has come to an end and you are already thinking ahead to next year. The garden was a pretty good success except for LATE BLIGHT that wiped out the tomatoes and potatoes. Now that the garden season is over, what do we do?

Let's first look at late blight and what happened in 2009. Late blight (which helped to create the Irish Potato Famine and the "hungry forties" in England and throughout Europe in the 1840's) is

### **IN THIS ISSUE:**

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- ◆ Don't Feed the Deer!
- ◆ Power of the Wind
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- ◆ Monthly Garden Activities
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- ◆ Calendar

caused by *Phytophthora infestans*, a fungus that overwinters on living tomato or potato tissue. The disease first appears as irregular, pale to dark green, water-soaked spots. In cool, moist weather or under humid conditions, the spots enlarge rapidly and form brown to purplish-black necrotic areas with wavy, indefinite borders, surrounded by a yellowish-green halo. Also under these conditions, a ring or a surface of white fungal growth may appear at the edge of the lesion on the underside of the leaf, which produces spores that move to other plants and continue the infection.

In 2009, we had perfect late blight weather for the months of June and July.

Unfortunately, there was also plenty of spore inoculum around from store purchased tomato



plants to cause very early late blight infections in home and commercial gardens. These spores continued to spread and caused severe outbreaks of late blight in both tomatoes and potatoes in southern and central Maine. Luckily, the weather in August was hot and dry and eventually slowed the outbreak down and brought it to a standstill.

However, that doesn't mean that the disease is gone. It is just lying dormant in those remaining leaf, stem, fruit, and tuber lesions waiting for the cool, wet weather so it can become active again and start sending out new spores for new infections.

So now the big questions come up. What do I do with my dying plants and disgusting fruit and, oh yeah, what about those potato tubers that I still haven't dug yet? What about next year do I have to worry about late blight in my garden again, especially since I had it this year? Are there any resistant varieties?

Late Blight is an obligate parasite and thus needs living tissue to survive. Once the infected plant material is dead the fungus will die and will not carry over to the next year. The removal of living tissue is the key to preventing carry over. The remaining infected and dead plants (both potato and tomato) and infected fruit should be destroyed by burying or sealing in garbage bags and taken to a landfill.

Do NOT compost diseased plants or fruit. Composting is not recommended because many compost piles are not tended properly and are therefore not "cooked" to the proper temperature to kill the pathogens. Next year, if there are any surviving pathogens in the compost or on partially

decomposed plants, they may be spread to living plants if the compost is used in the garden. ALL potato tubers should be dug and carefully washed and graded. If you leave any tubers behind in the ground and if they have a late blight lesion on them, it is possible they could survive the winter in the ground and give rise to a new infection next year. After you have examined your potatoes, discard any damaged ones as was done with the diseased plants.

If you are storing your potatoes for the winter be sure to examine them every couple of weeks. It could be possible that a small lesion or two may have been missed during washing and grading and could give rise to an infection in storage destroying much of your winter supply, just like in the 1840's!

You are now ready for next year's garden. Don't plant any of the saved tubers from your late blight potatoes from this year. You certainly don't want to infect your plants before you get started. Buy and plant certified seed to reduce your risk of planting infected tubers. You can plant your tomatoes and potatoes in the same spot you did last year and you shouldn't have any late blight problems as long as you cleaned up plant debris well. However, it is certainly good practice to rotate the crops in your garden as much as possible. Don't plant the potatoes in the same spot in your garden year after year. Also, do not rotate with related crops. For example, tomatoes should not be planted where your potatoes were last year.

Planting late blight resistant varieties is also an option. The thing to remember about resistance is that it does not mean immunity. Resistance means that the plant can resist to a point, in this case, the late blight fungus. However, if there is a great spore load from many infected plants, then even resistant plants can get the disease although not as badly as the susceptible ones. The other point to remember is that the fungus can mutate and the mutation may be able to overcome the resistance. There are some resistant potato varieties available to the backyard gardener such as Kennebec, Sebago, Allegany and Chieftain (a red-skinned variety). There are also some resistant tomato varieties, including Ferline, Fantasio, and Legend that are available. Good gardening!

*Source: Dill, J., Gardening After Late Blight, email September 2009. Photo credit: Jim Dill, Pest Management Specialist, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Orono, ME.*

### **Don't Feed the Deer!**

For some home gardeners and home owners deer are a wonderful species of wildlife that they want to see frequently near their home. We live in a state

that is known for its large deer population and want to see them frolicking in our back yard. To encourage more deer sightings some people start feeding deer grain in the fall. Unfortunately the folks at Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W) know that this act can have detrimental affects on the deer in the immediate area. For years IF&W have tried to discourage people from feeding grain to the deer.

Why? It changes the microorganisms in their stomach so the deer can't digest their usual winter diet as well. They usually browse on tree branches in the winter. Also, feeding grain causes a large number of deer to congregate around the home of the feeder. They are more susceptible to disease and traffic fatalities. One year on a one mile stretch of road that I traveled frequently the game wardens said they had cleared over 100 dead deer from the road. That didn't include the injured deer that ran farther away from the road to die. This was because a large herd of deer were moving daily between two homes that folks were putting out grain for them. Please don't feed the deer grain!

If you want to help the deer through the winter and you have a wood lot consider cutting a few cedar trees down for them to browse. You could cut hardwood trees down this winter to start on your firewood needs for next winter. The tops will provide food for the deer.

Deer can be very destructive in the home landscape and garden. Anyone trying to grow apple trees, strawberries, cedar hedges, yews, etc. are plagued by deer eating their plants at all times of the year. When neighbors feed the deer the gardens and landscapes in the area have increased deer pressure.

### Power of the Wind

Through 4H's Science, Engineering and Technology programs (SET) they have developed a new program that focuses on wind power. *Power of the Wind* encourages critical thinking and creativity by engaging youth in hands-on activities and problem-solving projects. With only 5% of today's college graduates earning degrees in science, technology and engineering, we are falling dangerously behind global competitors. *Power of the Wind* is meant to encourage these youth and show them that there are expanding opportunities for them. We want to spark their imaginations and build analytical, writing and computer skill sets.

If you have any questions or would like any more information please contact Alisha Targonski [atargonski@umext.maine.edu](mailto:atargonski@umext.maine.edu) or Claire Thompson [cthompson@umext.maine.edu](mailto:cthompson@umext.maine.edu) 4-H Power of the Wind VISTA Volunteers, Telephone: (207) 532-6548.

### HEARTH VISTA Volunteer Needs Your Help

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension introduces HEARTH (Home Energy Aid & Response Team Help). Maine HEARTH aims to connect the many generous responses communities have developed to support those trying to stay safe and warm at home. Our goal is to convene county wide councils of volunteers supporting this concept.

In the coming months, we will be promoting volunteerism and involvement in service projects to communities, including student groups, service and faith based organizations, businesses and those with disabilities. We are focused on coordination, at a town, multi-town or county wide level, resource partnerships and project information around home energy crises and keeping Mainers safe and warm in their homes throughout the winter. This could include things like sheltering in place, energy audits, weatherization, building collaborative, and volunteer program development for community based efforts.

To this end, in the short term, we are recruiting volunteers in Piscataquis County to (1) help do basic weatherization (window caulking, weather stripping, etc) for our neighbors who might not be able to do it for themselves. (2) We need volunteers willing to make and donate draft stopper, rice bags, mittens, caps, scarves, lap robes, etc. We could also use extra yarn or fabric pieces you would be willing to donate.

Over the long term, we plan to recruit volunteers who would plan and develop at least two Warming Centers in the county. These centers would be a place where anyone of any age could take refuge from the cold on a short term basis, get a hot meal, network, and socialize. Energy audits, basic weatherization, and collaborative volunteer efforts for the development of community based efforts are also major goals. We need and want your ideas, input, and participation. If you are interested in helping please contact Judy Morrison at [jmorrison@umext.maine.edu](mailto:jmorrison@umext.maine.edu) or call 564-3301 or in Maine 1-800-287-1491.

### October Garden Activities:

Our outdoor garden season has ended, now we can focus attention on our indoor houseplants. If your houseplants spent the summer outside be sure to watch for disease or insect attacks on your plants. If you don't know what it is you can give us a call at the Extension Office at 564-3301 or in Maine 1-800-287-1491 or you can email Hannah Todd, Extension Home Horticulture Aide at [htodd@umext.maine.edu](mailto:htodd@umext.maine.edu).

◆ Now is the time to jot down information on how your garden did during the growing season. What veggies or flowers would you try again? What crops would you pass on another year? Do you need to plan for more

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 Piscataquis Gardening October 2009



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raised beds? An irrigation system?

- ◆ Finish digging your root vegetables and prepare them for storage. Remember some crops such as carrots and parsnips can spend the winter in our gardens if we mulch them heavily. The reward of over-wintering parsnips outdoors is that early spring feast of sweet parsnip roots.
- ◆ Websites that include lists of direct marketing farms: [www.MaineHighlandsFarmers.com](http://www.MaineHighlandsFarmers.com); [www.GetRealMaine.com](http://www.GetRealMaine.com) and [www.MOFGA.org](http://www.MOFGA.org).
- ◆ Take your extra garden produce to the local food cupboard or share with a neighbor in need. Gardeners can check with your town office for a food cupboard near you.
- ◆ Sharpen your garden tools and cover with a protective layer of oil to prevent rusting.
- ◆ Clean your bird feeders and get them up and filled with bird seed and suet to attract our feathered friends. Those of you with cats remember to keep your pet inside if you are planning to feed the birds, otherwise you are providing an unintended meal for your cat.
- ◆ Check your stored potatoes often for signs of rot.

#### Featured Extension Publications:

The following Gardening Extension Publications are available at the Extension office nearest you. Many publications are also available online for free download at <http://extensionpubs.umext.maine.edu/>. For sale publications can be ordered directly from our publications store at the same web site.

- ◆ **365 Audubon Songbirds & Other Backyard Birds Calendar—2010** Item #9502. Publisher: Workman Publishing. A perennial best seller, this "picture-a-day" oversized wall calendar features a full-color photo on every day. In addition, each month's spread highlights

one species, including a large photograph and details on calls, plumage, migration, habitat, and more. From the experts at Audubon. **\$12.99**

- ◆ **Bird Feeding Basics** Item #7124, Publisher: UMaine Extension. Feeding birds can be an all-season activity and provide a constant spectacle. This 8-page fact sheet explains which types of feeders (with illustrations) and food are appropriate for which birds. Discusses sanitation and unwelcome visitors. 2000. Download it for free or buy a color copy **\$1.25**
- ◆ **Draft Stoppers** Maine Home Energy series Item #7220. Publisher: UMaine Extension. Instructions for simple and inexpensive homemade devices to stop window and door drafts. Includes color photos. 2 pages, 2009. Free download available or buy a color copy **\$0.50**

#### Calendar:

November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 (tentative) **Winterization Training for Keep ME Warm Volunteers** at the Piscataquis County Extension Office in Dover-Foxcroft. Call the Extension office for details.

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009 **Piscataquis County Public Hearing** on county budget at 7 pm at the Superior Court in Dover-Foxcroft.

January 13, 14, 15, 19 & 20, 2010 - **9<sup>th</sup> Annual NOFA 5-Day Accreditation Course in Organic Land Care**, held at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, 6 Plum Island Tpke., Newburyport, MA. Intensive course (accreditation optional) trains professionals to practice organic land care. Recommended for landscapers, designers, municipal and parks employees, horticulturists, etc. Visit [www.organiclandcare.net](http://www.organiclandcare.net) for more information or contact Kathy Litchfield at (413) 773-3830 or [Kathy@nofamass.org](mailto:Kathy@nofamass.org).