

NORTH COAST YARD & GARDEN

HORTICULTURAL NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE OHIO GARDENER

BY ROGER S. BOLGER
Roger@RogerBolger.com



15 AUGUST 2007
VOLUME 2, NUMBER 11

IN MY GARDEN

The summer is rapidly beginning to seem like fall as cooler temperatures and precipitation have returned to the region. Days are still warm and sunny, but some nights are getting chilly. This weather is perfect to rediscover your garden if you have been hiding in the air conditioning since June.

Weeds are once again growing like crazy. Some weeds are flowering and setting seeds before they are even noticed, so pay special attention to removing these weeds before they drop seeds all over the yard. Weeds in the lawn are particularly noticeable since they were able to thrive during the drought that shut down turf growth. Apply a liquid weed killer to the lawn when temperatures will remain under 85° F and there is no rain for the next 24 hours.

Vegetables and ornamental plants are also growing vigorously. This is a great time to apply fertilizer to support the new growth, especially on vegetables and annual flowers. Use a slow release fertilizer on trees, shrubs and perennials to avoid forcing excessive new growth at the expense of food stores in the roots for next year.

People are starting to complain about cracks in their tomatoes. The hot, dry weather this summer made the tomato skins tougher than usual, and now that the

fruits are growing and swelling rapidly, the skins can't stretch fast enough, causing cracks. Cracked tomatoes are still okay to eat, although they don't look as good and have an unpleasant texture near the healed crack.



Heliotrope
(*Heliotropium arborescens*) has a
delightful fragrance

Tomatoes, peppers and eggplants may also suffer from blossom end rot due to their rapid growth. The roots can not absorb calcium fast enough to take care of all the plant's needs, so the end of the fruit can not seal off properly. This allows mold to get inside the fruit and begin to rot it. A foliar spray of chelated calcium can help the plant get the extra calcium it needs without depending on the roots to absorb it.

Since the summer is winding down, be sure to spend some time enjoying your garden. There is still plenty to do, but garden tasks this time of year are not so pressing. Enjoy the fruits of your labors both in vegetable harvest and in beauty.

TURF TALK

LAWN RENOVATION

Now that cooler weather and rain has returned to Northeast Ohio, lawns are greening up and starting to grow again. Many gardeners will notice that their lawns have not recovered fully. Some lawns will have lingering brown areas that never came back to green, and others will have a general patchiness of green and brown areas throughout the yard.

This could be due to one or more of several reasons. If the lawn had an insect or disease problem during our dry months, the damage may have been attributed to drought and the infestation went unchecked until permanent damage was done. Some sections of turf may have been so dry for so long that the dormancy progressed into plant death. Lawns with heavy foot traffic, especially from pets and children, are unable to recover from injury when dormant, and may have sections or even paths of dead turf.

Sometimes a damaged lawn looks so bad that one is tempted to kill it off and start over from scratch. Such a dramatic step is usually unwarranted; only lawns with over 50% undesirable perennial grasses are candidates for total grass replacement. Most lawns require only partial renovation.

The first step in renovating a lawn is to determine what kinds of grasses are present so that the new seed will match your existing turf. Most lawns in Ohio will consist of bluegrass and ryegrass in sunny areas, bluegrass and fine fescue in shady areas, or tall fescue. Different grass species are difficult to distinguish, so you may need to bring a section of sod dug from your lawn to a local garden center for identification.

In the meantime, get rid of any broadleaf weeds in your lawn with a liquid lawn weed killer containing 2,4-D, MCPP or mecoprop, and dicamba. Kill off perennial grasses like creeping bentgrass, nutsedge orchardgrass and quackgrass with glyphosate. Crabgrass, as an annual, can either be killed with quinclorac or left alone to die in the frost.



Once the weeds are dead and brown, mow the lawn closer to the ground, at a height of about two inches. You may want to have the lawn core aerated, especially if you have over ½ inch of thatch or heavy clay soil. Leave the soil cores on the lawn surface, and add a ¼ inch topdressing of Michigan peat, compost or manure. This topdressing will serve as a seed bed for new grass seed, help break down thatch, feed the lawn and improve the soil. Patches of completely dead grass should be thinly but completely covered with the topdressing.

Purchase good quality grass seed that matches your existing turf to spread over the lawn. A light sprinkling is all that is necessary; most people spread grass seed too heavily. Put down one pound of grass seed for every 400 to 600 square feet of thin grass. Double this amount for seeding completely bare patches. Tall fescue seed is applied more heavily, at about one

pound per 200 square feet of thin turf, one pound per 100 square feet of bare ground.

Rake the lawn lightly to make sure grass seed has settled all the way down to the soil. Existing turf will serve as a cover on most of the lawn, but in bare areas you may either lightly rake the seed into the topdressing or cover with no more than 1/8 inch of peat moss to help hold moisture on the seed. Apply starter fertilizer to the whole lawn and water it thoroughly.

Keep the lawn watered through the coming weeks as the grass seed starts to come in. The soil should be kept moist, but not wet enough to form puddles. Keep the lawn mowed as usual through this period. It is common for weeds to sprout along with the grass seed – weed seeds are all over, and after all, you are making ideal conditions on your lawn for seeds to sprout. Do not apply weed killer for at least six weeks after sowing new grass seed. The lawn mower will take out most of the weeds, and the remaining weeds are easily killed once the new grass has matured.

FEATURED PERENNIAL

PASSIFLORA INCARNATA

You may be surprised to learn that there is a passionflower that not only survives the winter here and comes back year after year, but is also native to Ohio. The maypop, or hardy passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*) is a vigorously growing vine that dies all the way down to the ground in winter, and re-emerges late in spring, often in June. New shoots will appear anywhere and everywhere the roots go. In my experience, the vine grows best under dry conditions, and in wet years may not grow much or produce any flowers. It grows and blooms best in full sun.

The leaves are a glossy green with three rounded lobes, and the stems climb on their own with the aid of tendrils that will wrap around fences, trellises, or other plants for support. Vines will grow to be ten or more feet in length.



The most interesting part of this plant is the flower. *P. incarnata* has a frilly lavender bloom with red near the center, and a curious structure of five anthers and three stamens. Passionflower was given its name by missionaries to the new world, who saw in its flower the story of Christ's Passion. The three stamens represent the three nails used on the cross, the five anthers symbolize His wounds, and the radiating filaments of the flower stand for the crown of thorns.



Hardy passionflower produces a fruit that is edible, but hollow and rather seedy, so don't expect to harvest lots of luscious passionfruit. The fruit is ripe when it turns yellow. I have not yet seen a yellow fruit on my plants, but I do not know whether they are developing too late in the year to ripen, or if critters are stealing the fruit as it nears maturity.

Hardy passionflower is a hard to find treasure. My grandmother had one when I was a toddler, and I was delighted to find one at a native plant sale. The internet provides the best chance for finding one for sale. Visitors to your garden will beg for a root cutting from one of the numerous root sprouts, but be sure to get as much root as possible with the sprout to ensure the transplant's survival.

FEATURED INSECT

BENEFICIAL INSECTS

Gardeners know that insects provide a huge array of "services" that could not be replaced. The most important of these include pollination, predation and cleanup. Some insects are beautiful, fascinating or add interest and liveliness to the yard.



Pollinators and predatory wasps love this bonaset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

In recent years, declining populations of pollinators, especially honeybees, have been in the news. Help your garden grow
VOLUME 2, NUMBER 11

and produce bountiful crops by planting flowers that attract and feed beneficial insects. The list below has a few of the attractive flowers and shrubs that will draw plenty of insect help.

Wasps, after bees, are the gardener's second-best friend. Wasps are predators, and spend all day hunting and killing damaging insects from the yard. Nectar-producing plants keep them going when pest populations are low. Wasps only become a nuisance in the autumn when they no longer need protein from insects to feed their young, and they seek out sugars from fruit, soft drinks, and picnic foods.

PLANTS THAT ATTRACT BENEFICIAL INSECTS	
BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Agastache</i>	Hyssop
<i>Coreopsis</i>	Coreopsis
<i>Echinacea</i>	Coneflower
<i>Eupatorium</i>	Joe Pye Weed
<i>Mentha</i>	Mints
<i>Monarda</i>	Bee Balm
<i>Physostegia</i>	Obedient Plant
<i>Rudbeckia</i>	Black Eyed Susan
<i>Salvia</i>	Ornamental Sage
<i>Sedum</i>	Stonecrop
<i>Solidago</i>	Goldenrod
<i>Abelia grandiflora</i>	Glossy Abelia
<i>Buddleia</i>	Butterfly Bush
<i>Caryopteris</i>	Blue Mist Spirea
<i>Clethra</i>	Summersweet
<i>Hypericum</i>	St John's Wort
<i>Anethum</i>	Dill
<i>Foeniculum</i>	Fennel
<i>Helianthus</i>	Sunflower

You will get the most benefit from your insect population if you plant these flowers in a sunny area sheltered from high winds. Limit use of insecticides in and around the garden, and never spray a plant that is in full bloom.

GARDEN CALENDAR

- August 20 is Bamboo Celebration Day.
- Plant seeds outside for carrots, beets and peas.
- Remove excess blossoms from melon plants – they won't have time to ripen, and the remaining melons will be larger.
- Keep up with your garden harvest. Check each day for ripe vegetables to avoid spoilage and to reduce the temptation for hungry wildlife.
- Share extra vegetables with neighbors or donate them to a local food bank.
- Save seeds from heirloom vegetables.
- Continue deadheading flowers.
- Kill weeds in the lawn now that they are vigorously growing.
- Sow grass seed for new or renovated lawns, or for overseeding.
- Sharpen lawn mower blades as mowing becomes more frequent. Dull blades damage the lawn and give it a brownish cast from the jaggedly torn grass blades.
- Fertilize trees and shrubs for the last time until after dormancy.



ROGER S. BOLGER HAS OVER TEN YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL HORTICULTURAL EXPERIENCE AND HAS GARDENED ALL HIS LIFE IN NORTHEAST OHIO. HE HAS GIVEN DOZENS OF GARDENING TALKS AND SPECIALIZES IN WOODY PLANTS, PERENNIALS, TURF, ENTOMOLOGY, INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT, ORGANIC GARDENING, PONDS AND BACKYARD WILDLIFE.

© 2007 ROGER S. BOLGER. NORTH COAST YARD AND GARDEN IS PUBLISHED TWICE A MONTH. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (24 ISSUES) IS \$20 VIA EMAIL, \$45 FOR US MAIL. SEND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER (PAYABLE TO **ROGER S. BOLGER**) TO: 4200 WEST 229TH ST, FAIRVIEW PARK, OH, 44126