

From The Ground Up

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Green Thumb

By Gloria Bauske,
Intern Master Gardener

Green Thumb is a series of articles on gardening green to protect the environment and save money.



COMPOST 101:

What is composting? It is simply speeding up the process of decomposition of organic materials by microorganisms.

What is compost? Partially decomposed remains of things once living (plants & animals); called humus in its final state of decomposition; from Latin “com” = together and “post” = to bring.

Why compost? Helps prevent pollution; saves natural resources; curbs climate change; reduces your “environmental footprint” on earth.

Composting process: **aeration**-oxygen is required for some microbes to decompose organic wastes efficiently.

Moisture-proper moisture will feel like a well-wrung sponge. It encourages microorganism growth that break down the organic matter into humus. It is essential for microbial activity. Under 40% is too little and slows decomposition and over 60% is too much and it forces out the air, leading to anaerobic conditions, slows down the process and causes foul odors.

Temperature: A minimum pile temperature of 150 degrees F for at least 3 days is necessary to destroy weed seeds and plant pathogens, 15 days is more effective. If the pile doesn't heat up it may be because the pile is too small, not enough nitrogen, lack of oxygen, too much moisture or not enough moisture. If you have trouble creating a hot pile, cold composting is an option, though pathogens and weed seeds are not killed with this method.

Particle size: the smaller the size of the refuse particle, the more quickly the microbes can consume it; grinding the organic material before composting greatly reduces decomposition time; all woody stems over 1/2

inch should be run through the chipper before composting.

Materials not for composting: Meat scraps, fats, oils, grease, pet and/or human feces, diseased plants, weeds when seed head is present, Walnuts and walnut leaves because they are allelopathic (toxic to some plants) and herbicide treated grass clippings.

Compost composition: Bottom-coarse material-twigs; then layer each of organic waste,-leaves & grass, soil and fertilizer and repeat until the pile is completed.

Pile up to about 5 feet high and moisten each layer as it is applied and top the pile off with six inches of straw or hay leaving a basin for rain.

MINNEHAHA COUNTY MASTER GARDENER GARDEN TOUR

Wednesday, July 8
(rain date July 9)

Tour includes 5 gardens

Morning buses depart at 9 a.m. & evening buses at 6 p.m. The departure location will be provided with ticket purchase. Tickets may be purchased through the Minnehaha County Extension Office, 220 W. Sixth St., Sioux Falls or by calling 1-605-367-7877.

From The Ground Up

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July 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 <i>Visit public gardens in the area for gardening tips</i>	2 <i>Dig and divide overgrown plants</i>	3 <i>Tend to transplants to get them through the summer heat</i>	4 <i>Celebrate the holiday safely</i>
5 <i>Water plants every day to get them through the heat</i>	6 <i>Check new plants daily and keep their roots moist</i>	7 <i>Split and replant early bearing strawberries</i>	8 <i>Minnehaha Master Gardeners Garden Tour 9 and 6 p.m. Five gardens featured</i>	9 <i>Fertilize plants showing signs of need</i>	10 <i>Mulch groundcovers and vines</i>	11 <i>Pull weeds as soon as they surface</i>
12 <i>Watch for scorching on plants that may need water</i>	13 <i>Monitor plants for Japanese Beetles</i>	14 <i>Watch plants for mites and aphids</i>	15 <i>Water plants in morning to prevent mildew and fungus</i>	16 <i>Trim off wayward stems on groundcovers and vines</i>	17 <i>Deadhead summer blooming sedum</i>	18 <i>Use water from rain barrel on garden produce</i>
19 <i>Prune off water sprouts from trees</i>	20 <i>Pick summer berries for jams and jellies</i>	21 <i>Start watering trees for winter survival</i>	22 <i>Purchase canning lids and jars for season</i>	23 <i>Select vegetables and flowers for the local fair</i>	24 <i>Let grass clippings fall on lawn as one extra application of fertilizer</i>	25 <i>Check canning jars for cracks</i>
26 <i>Start canning tomatoes</i>	27 <i>Have local Extension Office check gauge on pressure cooker</i>	28 <i>Watch Garden Line every Tuesday night on SDPB at 7 p.m.</i>	29 <i>Keep your summer squash well harvested so they continue to produce</i>	30 <i>Stir compost pile</i>	31 <i>Pick grapes for jelly, jam or wine</i>	

Tips and Tricks, Quotes and Notes...

By Bonnie Lynch, Master Gardener

A tip for watering containers

To make soil in containers more absorbent, water your potted plants twice during each watering session. Water a container, allow time for the water to soak in (as you go on to other pots), then return to water the container a second time. This technique of "waiting a spell" may give you greater time between needed watering cycles.

A trick to save a leaky garden hose

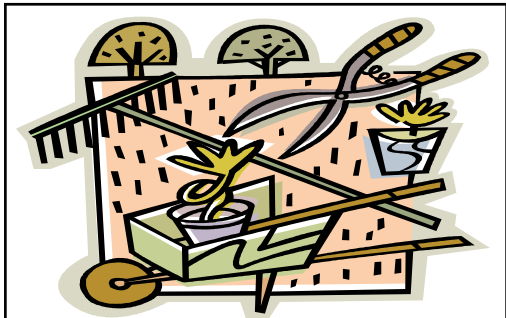
Garden hoses often develop small pinhole leaks. In order to keep the hose serviceable, insert a round toothpick into the leaking location then break it off flush with the outside of the hose. Wrapping the dry hose with tape (black electrical tape works) will reinforce the area. When water flows through the hose, the toothpick will swell and fill the hole.

July's note

With the hotter weather of July, be certain to spend time in the garden to water, weed, and check for insect pests. Now is not the time to let the garden fend for itself. Avoid applying high quantities of nitrogen. Applying a thick layer of straw or mulch will help reduce the amount of weeding needed, and will help keep the soil moist and cooler during hot, dry spells. If you wish to enjoy vegetables into the fall, this is a good time to consider planting fall crops such as beets, spinach, lettuce, broccoli, etc

A quote from Hanna Rion

*The greatest gift
of the garden
is the restoration
of the five senses.*



Garden Fence

By Gloria Bauske, Intern Master Gardener

XERISCAPING:

Technique that involves designing lawns & gardens to consider the natural landscape of the region.

Native (adapted) plants;
Reduced water use & soil erosion;
Lower maintenance time and costs;
Preserve natural resources

The ABC's of Gardening..... By Bonnie Lynch, Master Gardener

L...Leggy

Term used to describe a plant, or a portion of a plant, that has grown long, thin stalks. Normally, this is due to lack of adequate sunlight. These "leggy" plants have a difficult time supporting the weight of the plant and areas easily damaged.

M...Microclimate

A microclimate is a physical area with a set of conditions different from those in the surrounding areas. Variations of the climate within a given area are usually influenced by elevation (hills, hollows), direction and degree of slope, nearby structures/buildings, proximity to bodies of water and vegetation such as trees and hedges, etc. From 2 feet down in the soil (nutrients, moisture, warmth, etc.) to 3 - 4 times the height of the plant (shading, winds, etc.), environmental conditions are important factors in a plant's health and success.

N...Node

The point on a stem where a leaf, bud or branch is attached. Node cuttings are when you take a cutting of a stem right below a node. This is a better method of getting success than taking a cut just anywhere on the stem.

O... Ornamental

A plant that is grown strictly for its foliage or flower rather than for food or any other economic use. Ornamentals (most landscape plants) are showy or visually pleasing to humans.

Odds & Ends



Bluegrass Seed Heads Many are noticing seed heads in the lawn right now. Some of the older cultivars of bluegrass do this under long-day conditions when the temperatures are moderately cool, 65-75 degrees F. Long-day conditions occur when there are 12 or more hours of daylight. A yard with low nitrogen levels tends to produce more seed heads. Higher nitrogen levels delay the maturation or reproductive process.

Keep the seed heads mowed so they do not take carbohydrates from other plant parts such as the crown and rhizomes. The seed heads will not act as a source for over seeding your lawn. The heads are immature and are not viable.

Black Walnut Juglone Toxicity You may not realize that the black walnut releases a compound called juglone that is toxic to several plants species.

Sensitive food crops include but are limited to tomatoes, eggplant, rhubarb and cabbage. Some flowers that are affected include petunias, lilies, columbine and mums.

Vulnerable crops within the root zone of this tree can be affected. There are a number of crops, shrubs & annuals that can tolerate juglone. See this extension publication out of Purdue University for a detailed plant list www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/HO/HO-193.pdf

Chris Zdorovtsov Chris Zdorovtsov

In 2010, 'From the Ground Up' will be transitioning to an internet-only based newsletter. Please contact Maureen at mbuller@minnehahacounty.org to provide an email address if you currently receive a mailed version of our newsletter.

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