

Weed Patch

Spring Is For
The Birds ...
And GardensBY LINDA WUEBBEN
P&D Correspondent

I can tell it's spring. Warm, sunny days, lots of wind, bright green sprouts everywhere, smells of burning leaves and trash and my good buddy, the window-smacking cardinal is back.

I can tell he has had some strategic planning sessions with his significant-other cardinal companion over the winter months because they have a couple new planning attacks and have implemented them already.

The red dynamic duo started on my back deck this year. I guess they decided the huge patio door gave more smacking power than the basement window on the front. She stands watching, letting him do all the work - smart girl! She's more of a cheering section and he's all muscle.

Their other attack plan involves my cherished purple car that is parked just three feet from my deck. The driver's side rear mirror is his favorite battle line that he attacks ferociously. He has even added several battle calls although I don't know who will come to his aid; certainly not his female partner. He will be disappointed in a few weeks when my purple ride heads south to a new home.

I have also watched them dance in front of the chrome on the front end of Bob's pickup. No pecking there though. Must be a safe spot like when we were all young and played hide 'n seek. You know, home-free we would all yell.

Despite all the window banging, I really was pleased to see my cardinal buddy return. He is a burst of color especially now when the green is still coming alive and there aren't any flowers to dance along the horizon.

Last week I couldn't resist a temptation. I purchased three tomato plants. One even had blossoms. As I considered every plant on the display cart positioned just a bare four feet from the checkout, the clerk started laughing and told me gleefully she had picked hers out the day before. It isn't hard to pick out a fellow gardener. We all have the same gleam in our eye. How soon will those blossoms set on the red juicy vegetables we can't resist?

So, I proudly set my three plants in a dishpan on my back deck; yes, close to where the head-banging cardinals sometimes set up shop. I must add Bob is not as enamored with the amazing birdsongs and birds circling our home. He even has commented he is headed for the gun. He came in one afternoon and said those darn birds had eaten my blossoms off. Should he get the gun he casually asks? I gazed over his shoulder and zeroed in on my plants. The plants and their blossoms were fine.

Of course, I had to give him the look. Stay away from my birdies.

Bob has disked the garden one time and spread a layer of fertilizer from one of the feed yards so I'm ready to go. But for crying out loud, it's only March! I heard an announcer on the radio say this morning, the average daily high for March is 41 degrees. Now that's the March I remember; not these temperatures we have been enjoying. They are hard not to enjoy but I feel like I'm waiting for the other shoe to fall. Surely there might be one more blast of winter before summer hits us.

Who am I kidding? Summer has hit us. My box of seeds is safely waiting to be opened in the basement and I can't deny the gardening itch has hit both Bob and I. I want to get my radishes and lettuce planted before the next full moon. That's the best planting "moon phase" for vegetables that grow under the ground a wise gardener told me last summer. That means I have to dig those rows next week, which is also Holy Week. It has always traditionally been the week to plant potatoes for all the old-timers. Funny how they knew those things without all the amazing technology we have today. I stopped to talk to a family this week and sure enough, their children had four rows of radishes planted and staked already.

I hope you're all enjoying the return of birds and delighting in the morning birdsong, too. We survived winter; a very pleasant one and look to a good gardening season in the summer months. Can't you just taste the tomatoes, cucumbers, kohlrabi, radishes, lettuce, onions, zucchini and ooh, sweet corn?

Is it really only March?

Linda
WUEBBENCrofton Workshop
Examines What
Trees To Plant And
How To Prune ThemBY LINDA WUEBBEN
P&D Correspondent

CROFTON, Neb. — Using gardening cartoons from *Family Circle* magazine and photos snapped from successful landscape projects in and around Wayne, state forester Steve Rasmussen talked to Crofton residents recently about selecting the right tree for the right spot.

The Crofton Tree Board invited Rasmussen to speak to landscaping lovers. He presented a power point slide show that included, of course, the right way to select and plant trees for this northern Knox County area but also the wrong way to do things and had examples of both.

With Crofton's history of being part of Tree City, USA, Rasmussen pointed out the city is part of an excellent list of Arboretum cities in the area.

"To select the right tree when considering a landscaping project, it is good to have a vision," said Rasmussen. "But also to use your vision; look up, look down and look around." He advised checking for power lines, utilities lines and to call Diggers Hotline before beginning any digging process. Part of the vision needs to include future growth.

"Your arboretum here in town is an excellent source if you are wondering about certain species of trees," Rasmussen said. He suggested checking out the different varieties to see if their growth matches what a resident has in mind for a project.

During the last two to three decades, Rasmussen said it is estimated there has been a 40 percent loss of trees. He added there are lots of excuses not to plant trees. But

PHOTO: LINDA WUEBBEN
Nebraska state forester Steve Rasmussen discussed tree selection and care during a workshop held in Crofton, Neb., recently.

people are forgetting about the energy saving aspects of trees, which offer protection from bitter northwest winds in the winter to make for a warmer home and also the shade they can provide in the summer

months to make a home cooler.

Some quick tips Rasmussen offered included caution about how deep to plant a tree. He has found people in Nebraska tend to plant trees too deep. The hole should be

twice as wide as deep so the tree grows outward. Staking trees is also not a common practice anymore. The bending of a young tree makes for a strong trunk and if it needs to be staked, Rasmussen said to stake it at the base of the trunk. Use organic mulch like wood chips and refrain from over-fertilizing and also over-watering.

Then Rasmussen talked about the science of pruning — knowing what to prune while keeping an eye on future growth. For a complete vision into the future, he said to start slow because once one prunes a tree it is changed for life. When growing a tree for a landscaping project, he suggested pruning one or two branches the first year.

Some instances when pruning must be completed for safety's sake include street and sidewalk clearance, which are usually regulated by city ordinances and good vision at intersections and driveways. Spring-time, before trees actually set on leaves, is also the best time for trees to be pruned. There will be wounds and this gives the trees time to heal before temperatures turn to freezing in the winter.

When starting to prune, remember safety first. A hard hat and harness are needed if the pruner is off the ground. Rasmussen generally recommended if a chain saw is needed off the ground, to call a professional. Identify the tree parts and find the branch collar before pruning large branches that are diseased or damaged.

Pruning is negative to a live tree so make sure there is a good reason for the sawing or cutting. If a tree is damaged during a winter snowstorm or summer thunderstorm, he advised if there is 50 to 60 percent damaged, it is best to remove the tree and replant.

After answering questions and drawing for door prizes, Rasmussen and tree lovers headed to the city park and arboretum for some actual hands-on pruning activity.

Workshop For Local
Food Entrepreneurs
Set For Montrose

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension is hosting a series of trainings April 10, 17 and 24 for local fruit and vegetable growers and food producers, local food-product processors.

The morning sessions will include three business planning sessions running from, 9 a.m. to noon. The afternoon will include three local food focused tracks running from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Individuals interested can register for each session individually. The workshops will be held at the Montrose's United Methodist Church, 109 S. Second Ave.

Workshop details include:

- April 10, 9 a.m.-noon — "Determining Feasibility"; this workshop includes; answering feasibility questions, marketing analysis tools, creating a mission statement, setting business goals and objectives.

- April 10, 1-4 p.m. — "Farmer's Markets"; this workshop includes; start-up and selling tips, developing by-laws, provides an agency overview, food safety, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

- April 17, 9 a.m.-noon — "Developing the Business Plan"; this workshop includes; an overview/executive summary, company summary, management and ownership, product and service summary, and market analysis, marketing plans, financial analysis.

- April 17, 1-4 p.m. — "Starting a

Commercial Licensed Kitchen"; this workshop covers the benefits, start-up, regulations — equipment, facility, food safety, foodservice manager sanitation certification, types of license, and beginnings of a business plan.

- April 24, 9 a.m.-noon — "Business Documents & Financing Options"; this workshop includes; choosing a business structure, taxes and licensing, overview of financial statements, and financing options.

- April 24, 1-4 p.m. — "Online Marketing"; this workshop includes; interactive session to show tools, tips and techniques for online marketing, popular internet business tools, sites for marketing local food and online etiquette.

Following each business session, a coach will be available for one-on-one business planning assistance, for those not attending the afternoon sessions.

For some sessions it is suggested to bring a laptop or one can be provided. See registration for detail about computer usages at specific classes.

Registration form available at <http://www.igrow.org/events>. Return this form along with payment to; SDSU Extension-Sioux Falls Regional Center, Attn: Chris Zdorovtsov, 2001 E. 8th St., Sioux Falls, SD 57103. For more information contact Chris Zdorovtsov at 782-3290 or Christina.Zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu.

Yankton Church Offering Community Garden

Riverview Reformed Church of Yankton is offering a community garden this year and is seeking people to participate.

This will be a raised-bed garden.

Those interested are encouraged to sign up by April 1. For more information, call Teresa at 665-9204.

Gardening Class Set For Yankton Library

The Yankton Community Library, 515 Walnut St., is hosting a spring workshop entitled "Starting Seeds, Container Gardening, Basics of Starting A Garden" which will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 5.

Master Gardener Mary Klimczyk will teach her method of starting seeds. Master Gardener Betts Pulkrabek will talk on container gardens and the basics of starting a garden. The evening will close with a round table discussion of gardening problems and solutions. Pulkrabek and Klimczyk will sprinkle in plenty of humor in their gardening tips.

This is a class for both experienced and beginning gardeners. There is no registration required and no limit to the class size.

For further information, contact the library at 668-5275.

Sign Up Now For Master Gardener Training

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension is offering Master Gardener training at Regional Extension Centers in Rapid City, Aberdeen, Brookings and Sioux Falls.

The SDSU Extension Master Gardener program trains volunteers to serve in providing horticultural information to the citizens of South Dakota. The training consists of more than 60 hours of class work provided by SDSU Extension specialists.

Topics include basic botany, insects and diseases, plant propagation, pruning, fertilizing, plant selection and other aspects of growing fruit, vegetables and landscape plants, says Rhoda Burrows, SDSU Extension Horticulture Specialist and Master Gardener Coordinator.

To earn the designation of SDSU Extension Master Gardener, graduates of the classroom training are required to also complete 50 hours of volunteer service interning at SDSU Regional Extension Centers. They are then presented official badges and are designated certified Master Gardeners.

The training schedule at the Sioux Falls Regional Extension Center is: Fridays April 13 through June 8. Classes run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There will also be training in Brookings on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from April 10 through June 7.

Information and application materials are available online at the South Dakota Master Gardener Web site, <http://hortmg.sdstate.edu>.

Applications with deposits may be submitted to: Sioux Falls Regional Extension Center, 2001 E. 8th St., Sioux Falls, SD 57103.

For more information, contact Dr. Rhoda Burrows at 605-394-2236 or rhoda.burrows@sdstate.edu.

Compost Available At Yankton Landfill

Compost made from grass clippings, leaves and other yard material is available to local gardeners at the Yankton transfer station located at 23rd and Kellen Gross Drive.

The compost is loaded into containers and vehicles by those getting the material. The compost is considered a soil

conditioner and the proper use of the compost is the responsibility of those receiving the material. The compost has not been tested for chemical content.

The transfer station is open 8 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Monday through Saturday. There is no charge for the material.

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