

Children's Garden Mini-Grants Awarded

BROOKINGS — Twelve youth and school gardens from across South Dakota received funding this spring to launch or enhance garden programs through \$125 mini-grants provided by the Community and Family Extension Leaders.

SDSU Extension and the South Dakota 4-H Foundation administer the funds which support these projects. The gardens can use the funds to purchase seeds, plants or small garden equipment or utilize the award to purchase programming materials.

Garden programs must have an SDSU Extension partner, such as a Master Gardner, a county 4-H Youth Program Advisor or Food and Nutrition Program/Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program assistant. They must provide programming to a school-age group, K-12, incorporate hands-on learning experiences for a 4-12 week period, and incorporate plant science and nutrition education topics.

This year's awardees from the Yankton area include:

- Andes Central Afterschool Program
- Charles Mix Co. 4-H, Lake Andes;

For more information on this program, contact Chris Zdorovtsov, SDSU Extension Community Development Field Specialist at 605-782-3290 or via email at Christina.Zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu.

Neb. Wildflower Week Event Is June 4

WAYNE, Neb. — Wayne State College will host "Nebraska Wildflower Week, Gardening with Native Plants at Wayne State College" on June 4 at 6:30 p.m.

Please take a leisurely stroll through the Wayne State College campus to explore the use of native plants in the landscapes. Meet in Parking Lot 6 (Gardner Business Hall Parking Lot), located on the west edge of the campus.

This event has been sponsored by the Campus Beautification Committee and the Wayne State College Arboretum.

For information contact Kim Schramm at 402-375-7384, kischra1@wsc.edu. See: <http://www.wsc.edu/about/map/> or a campus map.

Tour Of Gardens Set For June 28

The Missouri Valley Master Gardeners Tour of Gardens will be held June 28 in Yankton. The tours run from 9 a.m.-noon at will start at 417 Linn St.

For more information, visit <http://missourivalleymastergardeners.webs.com/>.

STEM Workshops Slated For July

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension and the South Dakota Discovery Center will host a two-day free training to demonstrate ways to connect science, technology, engineering and math (S.T.E.M.) with the kitchen and garden. Participants will learn about S.T.E.M. focused curriculum used to enhance food and garden education programs and participate in hands-on activities involving produce preparation.

The program is designed for PreK through middle school teachers, after-school program leaders, school administrators, garden-focused educators, 4-H advisors, food service staff and wellness committees.

Participants can attend one or both days of the training for no charge, however on the garden training day, there will be an \$8 fee to cover the lunch program.

The Kitchen Day will present the Harvest of the Month program. This is an adaptable, easy to use program that uses short presentations and produce sampling to teach children about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables every day. The fun and quick presentation explains the history, peak seasons, vitamins and minerals and how to choose the produce.

Additional topics will include food safety science, tools and tips for cooking with kids, Pick It! Try It! Like It! resources and USDA Team Nutrition curriculum activities to take back to the classroom.

The Garden Education Day will provide information for teachers and others who are interested in developing or enhancing their curriculum. The class will feature specific lesson ideas to incorporate into a program. Garden to table, biodiversity, math in the garden and garden-based science experiments will be featured. Additionally, participants will tour the site of a local garden education program.

A session will be held at the Sioux Falls Regional Extension Center, 2001 E. 8th St., on July 9, running from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (STEM Garden), and July 10, running from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (STEM Kitchen).

One undergraduate or graduate credit is available through the SDSU Health and Nutritional Sciences Department, College of Education and Human Sciences for \$40. Two Continuing Education Credits are also available for \$5. Attendance at both training days is required and homework assignments must be completed to receive this credit.

Registration forms are available iGrow.org/events, under the event posting. Completed registration forms should be sent to Karlys Wells, SDSU Extension EFNEP Associate at karlys.wells@sdstate.edu or printed and mailed to Karlys Wells, SDSU Extension, SWG 212 Box 2275A, Brookings, SD 57007. For questions, contact Karlys Wells, 605-688-4039, karlys.wells@sdstate.edu.

Control Dandelions With These Tips

BROOKINGS — The yellow flowers of spring are here and many more are coming, said Paul O. Johnson, SDSU Extension Weed Science Extension Associate.

"Although dandelions are running a couple of weeks behind normal in the state, they are here now, and if you did not get your yard sprayed last fall, expect to see them in your yard throughout the summer," Johnson said of the weed which thrives on cool damp weather.

He explained that the dandelion is a perennial that can produce multiple flowers. "With a large plant more than 50 flowers have been found to be produced with 50-150 seeds per flower," he said.

Johnson added that spring treatments are not as effective as fall but can be used to stop the yellow flowers from producing viable seed.

HOW TO TREAT

Herbicide treatments: These can be used either as a weed-and-feed type granule or as a liquid spray. The chemicals must enter through the leaves. Spray products can be applied with a variety of equipment. "Keep sprays coarse and use low pressure to reduce the chance of spray going on non-target sensitive plants. Remember the more mature the dandelion the harder it will be to kill," Johnson said.

Dig: Scattered plants can be dug, but be sure to cut the root off below the ground so the crown is killed to avoid the plant coming back as a new plant.

Fall treatment: This fall, make a note on your calendar to control dandelion after the first frost. "You do not need to be one of the people with a yellow lawn next spring. Remember even if your lawn looks good this year, seedlings can be back next year," he said.

For more information, visit iGrow.org.



Mertensia grows well in part shade.

COURTESY OF IGROW.ORG

BY DAVID GRAPER

SDSU Extension Horticulture Specialist
and Director of McCrory Gardens

One of my favorite smells, especially in the spring, is that of an approaching rain or lingering fragrance after a rain.

I am not exactly sure what causes that particular smell but after the dry weather we have had the last couple years, it is certainly welcome. As the old saying goes, "April showers bring May flowers." Hopefully many areas received some of those much needed showers within the last few weeks.

May is the month when our gardens, trees and shrubs really start to take off. It is an exciting time for all of us to see the color green again showing up in our lawns, flower beds, and on our trees and shrubs. It is a time of regeneration in the garden when the old foliage and stems of last year are removed or tilled into the soil to be replaced by lush new shoots and hopefully some of those long-awaited May flowers.

Lots of plants bloom in May, including the Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla patens*), our state flower. It is one of our earliest flowering plants, blooming as early as mid-April to June, depending on the weather and elevation. It can be found all over the state, particularly in mixed-grass prairie areas, particularly on hillsides and in the Black Hills. It also makes a fine garden perennial plant.

We have it growing in several areas at McCrory Gardens where it has spread around a bit, with its feathery seed that appears later in the spring, after flowering. I enjoy the seed heads just as much as I do the lovely, lavender to pink flowers. The seed heads remain on the plants for several weeks after the flowers have faded.

Check at your local garden center or look online for companies that sell prairie or native plants. You may find several different related species listed for pasqueflowers, some will have slightly different flower colors, bloom time or degree of hairiness on the stems and leaves when they first emerge in the spring. Look to see that they are hardy for your particular zone.

Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) is another of the earliest blooming plants in the garden. As the name suggests, the flowers of this plant are blue, or at least close to blue. They actually start out looking quite pink when in bud then turn more lavender as they open and mature.

These plants live a hectic lifestyle. They can emerge and grow quickly in the spring, particularly if they are grown close to a south or west-facing wall. The relatively large, oval leaves have a blue-green color which contrasts nicely with the clusters of pink flower buds that are soon visible. *Mertensia* can grow to 12-24-inches in height.

They grow fine in full sun or part shade. The nodding clusters of flowers last for a few weeks, the plants a few weeks longer. Then, almost as quickly as they appeared, the foliage dies down and the plants almost disappear. By July, you can hardly tell where they were. Try inter-planting them with other perennials that will fill in the gaps left in the landscape after the plants die down.

Helleborus, sometimes called the Lenten rose, is usually another May bloomer but the flowers can last into the summer months.

There has been a lot of interest and breeding work being done with Hellebores, greatly expanding the flower colors available from mainly white, pink or red to yellows, burgundy, multi-colored types and some that are almost black.

Although this plant is usually rated as being hardy to USDA Hardiness Zone 5, we have had excellent success with this plant at McCrory Gardens, rated as Zone 4. However, we grow it in the shade of some Kentucky coffeetrees and a big maple so the plants get thoroughly mulched with leaves in the fall. As the common name, Lenten rose suggests, this plant can be in bloom during lent, but even this year, with a late Easter and Lenten season, we didn't make it. There is also another species known as the Christmas rose, but it won't bloom for Christmas in your garden here either. If you lived about 600-miles south, you might get to see that.

There are quite a few shrubs and

trees that usually bloom in May. One of the earliest is *Magnolia stellata*, the star Magnolia. This is another one of those plants that is usually rated as being hardy to Zone 5 but it has done fairly well here in the city of Brookings. It grows even better down in the southeastern part of the state. "Royal Star" is the most common and hardiest of the magnolias. It has bright white flowers that emerge from large hairy, brownish buds on the stems of the plant.

A magnolia covered in those white flowers is a wonderful sight to behold. This species of Magnolia normally grows to be a large shrub or small tree in our area. There are a number of other species of Magnolia but you will have to travel farther south to experience those in person. Lilacs are probably the quintessential spring blooming shrub for us here on the Great Plains. They have been extensively planted in yards and shelterbelts so are a common sight when you are driving through a town or the countryside.

Like the smell of rain, being engulfed by a wave of lilac fragrance is a wonderful spring experience. There are several species and dozens of cultivars so you can experience that fragrance for several weeks over the course of the spring. Flowers may be single or double and range in color from pure white to pink, purple, lavender, blue, bicolor and light yellow.

Lilacs grow best in a full sun location. Be aware that many of the older varieties in particular can grow to be very large shrubs or small trees, getting up to 10-feet tall and 6-feet wide over the course of many years. Prune out the tallest stems, 2 to 3 inches above the ground after flowering in the spring. This will encourage new, shorter shoots to develop at the base of the plant.

If you continue to do this renewal pruning you can keep a lilac at a shorter height and encourage more flowers to develop closer to the ground where you can reach them, smell them and cut them to take into your home. There are also shorter varieties that only grow about 5 feet or 6 feet in height, but these plants can still take up quite a bit of space.

How Do You Pick The Best Produce?

BROOKINGS — As the weather warms and thoughts turn to gardens and fresh produce, questions arise in many minds such as, "How do I pick the best produce?" "In what forms could I try it?" and "What recipe will I like?" For free answers to these and many more questions, SDSU Extension developed educational resources, Harvest of the Month: Pick it! Try it! Like it! which features 43 different produce items that can be grown in South Dakota.

The Harvest of the Month/Pick it! Try it! Like it! campaign helps address the issue of low fruit and vegetable consumption in South Dakota.

In a 2013 report from the Department of Health (DOH), South Dakota ranked lowest in the nation in vegetable consumption and in the bottom five in fruit consumption. Since high intake of fruits and vegetables is associated with good health, increasing consumption is a goal of the DOH and SDSU Extension nutrition programs.

The South Dakota Department of Health is providing

funding to supply quantities of these materials for distribution in South Dakota grocery produce departments and farmer's markets. Grocery stores and farmer's market vendors who would like to participate and receive a free monthly set of recipe rack cards, signs, and videos, may complete a request using the secure link: <http://orderpicktrylike.questionpro.com/>.

"Consumers may access copies of these materials on fruits and vegetables from some grocery store produce departments and farmer's markets. Through this collaboration between SDSU Extension and the South Dakota Department of Health, local fruits and vegetables vendors are distributing these print and video materials monthly to educate shoppers about the selection, preparation, and health benefits of fresh produce," said Karlys Wells, SDSU Extension Family Nutrition Program Family Nutrition Project Manager.

The resources include a variety of 5 1/2" X 8 1/2" rack

cards which contain consumer selection information plus a simple and low cost recipe; produce area signs - large (8 1/2" X 11") and small (5 1/2" X 8 1/2"); and a video showing the recipe being prepared.

To view the resources, visit igrow.org/healthy-families/health-and-wellness/pick-it-try-it-like-it/. For more information, contact Wells, 605-688-4039, karlys.wells@sdstate.edu.

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