



Perennial Notes

Newsletter of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society, Inc.

April 2020

WHPS EVENTS UPDATE – Covid-19 Virus

Due to the spread of Covid-19 and the uncertainty surrounding the length of time we will be under special Public Health recommendations, we are suspending all WHPS trips through at least July of this year. (Those who have signed up for the England Trip in June will be contacted by Frank Greer as he works out the details of the cancellation. If you have any questions regarding the England Trip, please contact Frank at frgreer@gmail.com.)

Our spring and summer of distance is a small price to pay for trying to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Once this challenge is behind us, you can be assured that WHPS will get us all "back on the bus" soon.

We are hoping our local summer programming will be able to happen and we'll keep you informed and updated as this fluid situation develops.

Meanwhile – have a happy spring in your own gardens!

NOTE – Isolated doesn't mean alone: This is also a perfect time for those of you on [Facebook](#) to stay in touch by liking our page. You can also participate in our ongoing gardening discussions/postings by joining our [Facebook](#) Group.

WHPS coming events!

Note that complete information on the events listed below will be provided in our June 2020 Newsletter.

Thursday, July 16, Evening tour of member's gardens on Madison's east side. More information in June Newsletter.

Wednesday, July 22, Evening tour of member's gardens in the Mt. Horeb area. More information in June Newsletter.

Wednesday, Aug. 12, WHPS Member Potluck and Walk Through Olbrich Gardens, 5:30-8:30 pm. Set-up at 5:30, food line begins at 6:00. Bring a dish to share and your own plates and utensils. Juice and coffee will be provided.

Wednesday, Sept. 16, WHPS Meeting: Speaker Brent Heath of Brent & Becky's Bulbs



Saturday, Sept. 19, Celebrating The Flower Factory, 3:30 pm. at The Flower Factory barn. Join us as we visit and say a proper farewell to a business that has meant so much to all of us and wish David and Nancy Nedveck a long, healthy, fun and exciting retirement.

Sunday, Sept. 20, Intrinsic Perennials Truck Sale, location and time TBD. Brent Horvath of Intrinsic Perennial Gardens in Hebron, IL will bring his truck loaded with one-gallon plants for sale to our members.

Wednesday, Oct. 21, WHPS Meeting: Speaker Frank Fitzgerald, an award-winning Landscape Architect with Cuninghams Group in



Minneapolis whose work has been featured in *Fine Gardening* and *Better Homes & Gardens*.

Wednesday, Nov. 18, WHPS Meeting: Have Plants – Will Travel, Speaker Michael Jesiolowski, Horticulture Director, Rotary Botanical Gardens.



Wednesday, December 9, WHPS Annual Meeting, Seed Exchange, Trash & Treasure Exchange and 30th Anniversary Party!

Other Events of Note

Cancellations

- *Friends of the Arboretum* 2020 Native Plant Sale.
- *West Side Garden Club* 2020 Plant Sale.
- *Madison Area Master Gardeners* have cancelled their Plant Sale and all volunteer activities, including the Color Wheel Garden (it will not be planted this year).
- *Olbrich Plant Sale* – an abbreviated sale is expected this year – announcement expected shortly.

June-December Gardening Events

We will list an extensive calendar of events for the remainder of the gardening season in our June Newsletter.



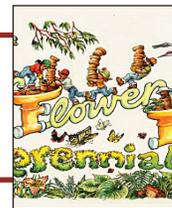
Landscape mistakes

see p. 4.



Biochar

and jumping worms – see p. 11



Flower Factory

see p. 3.

Newsletter survey

We would like to get your thoughts on our newsletter and how we might be better able to serve you through this publication. Please take five minutes (shouldn't take more than that) to click on tinyurl.com/WHPSnewsurvey, and complete the survey. We really appreciate your membership and want to make the best product we can for your information and pleasure.



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Linda Marx, ljmarx@chorus.net, Program Committee
Kitty Rankin, kitty.rankin@gmail.com, Grants Committee, Newsletter Committee

New Members

The following members have recently joined:

Beloit Tree Service; Jenny Bailey & Eric Bolden; Joan Bazan; Cynthia & Paul Broderick; Lorrie Burrows; Toni & Mike Campbell; Victoria Chi; Jan Ciotti; Mary Hanaway; Carol Holden; Joy Jameson; Cindy Kissinger; Jamie Klund-Kujawski; Elaine Lohr; Randall Luchterhand; Judi Magnus; Cheryl Martin; Marge Menacher; Roy Anne Moulton; Will Olson; Amy O'Shea; Connie Packard; Melanie Palmer & James Steindl; Debbie Quandt; Victoria Robertson; Sharon Rounds; Kathy Shafarik; Diane Spensly; Timothy Sprecher; Angie Stewart; Jeremy Trussoni; Cynthia Wright; Mary Zinnecker.

Welcome to WHPS!

Garden Expo Wrapup

We'd like to thank all of the volunteers who worked the WHPS booth at the Wisconsin Garden and Landscape Expo 2020 this past February: Lois Anderson, Stephanie Bloomquist, Nell Cummings, Diane Flynn, Jeannette Golden, Rose Heflin, Ann Klecker, Karen Kuenzi, Lolita Martens, Lynn Montgomery, Janell Morehead, Barbara Obst, Margaret Plotkin O'Connor, Shirley Scriver, Karen Schultz, Evelyn Shimshak, Pat Tillman, Marge Weiland and Linda Zelewski. Many thanks as well to Rita Thomas, who gave a funny and informative presentation on the creation of her garden. Special thanks to coordinators Lynn Belanger and Donna Freiman.

Members in the News

Special *Garden Gate* Issue: *Garden Gate – Easy Weekend Backyard Retreat – Early Spring 2020*:

- *38 Ideas for a Better Backyard – Add Lighting Solution* – page 7 – Garden of WHPS member **Karen Watson-Newlin**
- *Better Than Indoors*, page 50, features the Minneapolis garden of WHPS member **Frank Fitzgerald**, who will be our October speaker

Posted on UW-Madison Arboretum Facebook page March 2, 2020:

- WHPS members **Jane Hawley Stevens and David Stevens** - In addition to his job as curator of Longenecker Horticultural Gardens at the Arboretum, David Stevens also owns an organic farm with his wife, Jane Hawley Stevens. We're delighted to share the news that Jane and David were named [Organic Farmers of the Year by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service](#). The award recognizes organic farmers who practice outstanding land stewardship, innovation, and outreach. Congratulations to Jane and David!

WI Gardening update

Posted by Janet Aaberg 2/25/20 on WHPS Facebook Group page:

When I learned that *Wisconsin Gardening* magazine had stopped publishing, I realized I wasn't getting the magazine and immediately contacted the Better Business Bureau (BBB). It took a while, but yesterday I got a full refund from them. If you also had a subscription unfilled, I encourage you to gather your info and [file a claim with the BBB](#).

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Bloomin' Bucks with Brent and Becky's

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phone and mail orders as well – just be sure to mention WHPS or write us in as the organization you would like to support. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, donations like these are essential to continue our mission!

WHPS Grants Awarded

The Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society offers grants to community groups, schools, or other organizations for projects that promote the use of herbaceous perennial plants in the landscape. Grants can only be awarded to a nonprofit organization or a group that is associated with a nonprofit organization. For more information go to our [website](http://www.whps.org).

Amazing Sprouts 2020 — Allen Centennial Garden (ACG) – A \$500 grant to purchase age-appropriate tools and supplies for children to use during the program (a partnership with Eagle Wings Daycare and Education Programs) which creates a fun and educational outdoor learning experience at the ACG. Up to 20 children will participate.

Paw Print Park – City of Janesville – A \$721 grant for materials to assist in developing a sample garden dubbed "The Nursery," located just outside the park on an adjacent piece of City of Janesville property to grow, care for and monitor specific plants that, once established, will either be transplanted into the park or used for a seed bank for collection/distribution into the park.

Pollinator Residency Program – Olbrich Botanical Gardens – A \$495 grant to purchase perennials for the second year of the program that will continue to help save and build the pollinator population by providing an early-season food source, a late-season food source and hollow stems for nesting in and near the Moonlight Meadow. The first year of this project was a major success, creating a habitat nesting wall, bee house and plantings to support native bees near the Moonlight Meadow that provides critical habitat, and also inspires, educates, and demonstrates to visitors how they can support and protect pollinators in their own garden.



This will be the last season for The Flower Factory. We thank you for the 35+ years of being the Midwest's largest selection of perennials, but retirement and other pursuits are calling us (it's time for us to enjoy the gardens we've worked so hard to keep up!). We will be closing the retail operation on September 1st, 2020, although David will still be bringing some of his selections to the Dane County Farmers' Market in the following years with help from Derek.

But don't fear that we won't have any plants this season – last summer we didn't have to spend our time watering our gardens, so we potted up and grew up tons of native, prairie, butterfly and pollinator plants for your sustainable, perennial garden. On top of that we've got 167 new varieties waiting to take their rightful place in your garden too – you did save some room, didn't you?

There is no print catalog this year, but we do have an excellent online catalog, bit.ly/FlowerFactoryCatalog, to help you search for plants that fit your exact needs. You can make your selections and save them to a list to print out, ready for:

Opening day April 18th, 8am

Thanks again for being our customers, and we look forward to seeing you this spring!

The Flower Factory,
David, Nancy, and Derek

www.theflowerfactorynursery.com

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Common Landscaping Mistakes

by Laurie Robertson, Nursery Manager & Buyer, Ganshert Nursery & Landscapes, LLC

As gardeners, we are “chomping at the bit” to get back into our gardens once spring arrives! With that in mind, it’s perhaps a good time to momentarily pause and temper our excitement (just a bit), by reviewing some common landscaping mistakes so we can avoid them in our own gardens.

The following suggestions, provided by the team at Ganshert Nursery & Landscapes LLC., offer some reminders for best practices so that you will not be disappointed with the results of your gardening efforts!

1) Repeat after me: “Right Plant. Right Place.” Although many of us fall in love with a plant we see at our local nursery or in a glossy magazine or catalog, there is no sense in purchasing said plant, (watch the impulse buy), unless it fits your garden, i.e.:

- What is the mature (full grown) size of the plant (height and spread)?
- Is it a slow or fast grower (size in 10 years)?
- Is the plant zone hardy (4b-5a for most of us in the area)?
- What are the light and water requirements?
- Consider micro-climates on your property (like heat retention of siding/wind)
- Is your plant choice pest prone to either insects, animals, or both?
- Is the plant toxic to either pets or humans?

2) Color Palette. Often, we can end up with lots of greens. . .on green. Green is good, but, consider using a color palette to guide your plant choices in order to provide cohesiveness along with variety in your landscape. For example, you can choose plantings based on:

- Complementary colors (colors across the color wheel)
- Analogous colors (colors adjacent on the color wheel)
- Monochromatic (scheme along a color spectrum) i.e., pink, red, maroon
- Warm colors or cool colors
- Don’t forget white!

3) Planning for all Seasons. Many of us have a profusion of blooms in the beginning of spring or at the height of summer, but a little planning can create interest in your landscape throughout the growing season and beyond. Things to think about include incorporating plants that bloom at different parts of the season, using plants that provide a long or continuous bloom time, and considering fall and winter interest such as bark, twig color, berries, and vertical elements such as ornamental grasses. A little texture and structure can go a long way!

4) Maintenance: There is no such thing as a maintenance-free landscape. It is important to consider weeding, mulching, watering and pruning. It’s possible to reduce or expand your investment in maintenance given your planting choices. For example, choosing more perennial ground covers and less lawn/turf reduces your need for time spent mowing. Proper pruning, which means familiarizing yourself with the proper time to prune, the proper tools and the proper techniques for doing so will keep your trees and shrubs healthier and more attractive for the long haul.

Check out UW Horticulture for pruning tips, or leave it to the pros.



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We’ve all made landscape and gardening mistakes, and luckily for us, many of our herbaceous and woody friends can be quite forgiving! However, doing things right the first time and not cutting corners will save you time and money in the end. You also don’t have to “do it all at once.” Phasing your projects can make sure you get the garden you want. Slow and steady wins the race.

Professionals like the folks at Ganshert’s Nursery & Landscapes, LLC can help you plan, or even install and maintain your projects to make sure your investment is money well spent and your garden a continual source of enjoyment.

Amelanchier X grandiflora ‘Autumn Brilliance’ or Service Berry, is a great example of a multi-season interest plant.



Public Gardens, Gardening Businesses and Safer at Home

In lieu of our April Newsletter Calendar, we approached several public gardens and gardening businesses in our area to ask how they are handling their own operations in light of the Safer at Home order. Please note that this is a fluid situation and if you want more information or have questions for any of these organizations/businesses, please go to their websites or call them directly. For a list go to our WHPS [business members](#) link.

Allen Centennial Garden – With the Allen Centennial Garden and the UW-Madison campus effectively closed to all except essential personnel, we and many others are considering what is critical vs. simply productive. This is a delicate balance in a public garden where often “simply productive” is precisely what’s critical. In this context however, our first responsibility is the health and safety of our staff, students, and community, followed closely by our living collections. Things like “pretty patrol” (i.e. sweeping paths, flower arrangements, etc.) are being put on the back burner while spreading mulch to reduce seasonal weeding later in the year is a top priority.

– Ben Futa, Director

Olbrich Botanical Gardens – *Volunteer Services*

While the next few weeks will be a work in progress, here’s what’s happening at Olbrich right now for Olbrich Volunteers.

- Olbrich Gardens will remain closed until it is safe to reopen.
- All Olbrich Volunteer shifts and activities in April are cancelled.
- The Volunteer Bus Trip to Chicago Botanic Gardens will be rescheduled from June 23 to September 1.
- Olbrich is sharing photos, updates, and other content from the garden via social media. Follow Olbrich on Facebook or Instagram for regular updates.

Staff appreciates our volunteers and looks forward to their return.

– Marty Petillo, Volunteer Services Manager

Gardening This Spring

Regarding the approach to the future 2020 Olbrich gardening season, we’re taking it one day at a time for the most part, following all state and federal guidelines. We want to first and foremost keep everyone safe – those who work at the Garden and those who visit. A good portion of the Olbrich staff is working at

home, some almost full-time and others as much as possible, but coming in when they need to. The hort staff is coming in and gardening every day and following all social distancing and sanitation guidelines. Luckily the “essential business” category is where we fall and it allows us to keep the gardens cared for as much as we can with a skeleton crew. So far, we’re doing well with everyone healthy, both physically and mentally – we’re all remaining positive and respecting everyone’s “zone of safety” and hope that this crisis will end soon.

We have decided to eliminate spring annual plantings this year, since visitors won’t be able to see them and we want to cut down on labor for the staff and save money to preserve our budgets. Summer and fall annuals are on track and will be looking great when visitors return to the garden. The plantings around the new Learning Center will happen, but at a slower pace due to the lack of labor available and financial constraints. Otherwise, perennials and the rest of the plant collection will be maintained as best we can with our limited labor pool – I think we’ll do okay until volunteers return a bit later in the season.

Regarding the plant sale and other events at the garden, here are some excerpts that Missy Jeanne, Special Projects Manager, and others have sent out to various groups to explain where we’re at right now:

Olbrich’s leadership team is currently evaluating some creative strategies regarding how to host a safe and successful plant sale this spring. Possible option - offering a limited selection of perennials for sale online with no-contact curbside pick-ups during the month of May. Stay tuned for announcements via our website and social media.

Concerning Olbrich’s 2020 Home Garden Tour – at this time the garden tour has not been cancelled or postponed. As it currently stands, we have postponed or cancelled all programs and education classes through April 30. These cancellations may be extended further into the spring season depending on how long the Governor’s Safer at Home order remains in place. The Gardens’ staff is optimistic that our summer programming (JULY - Home Garden Tour, Blooming Butterflies, etc.) will occur as scheduled. We are taking it week by week, evaluating how to continue fundraising for the Gardens in ways that are safe for our supporters. Olbrich will anticipate sending an update on the status of the home garden tour towards late May, early June.

My own garden and my thoughts about it – “Garden On” is my thought about that! I’m actually on the hook for Olbrich’s Home Garden tour this summer, so I’m already gearing up for that and look forward to having gardeners out and about again.

(Continued on page 6)

Nursery Opens April 25th
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Gardening – Safer at Home (cont. from p. 5)

I can't think of a safer place for me to be than in my garden, so I'm happy to be there and am spending as much time as possible doing so, but have been very busy with other projects with my design and consulting business.

– Jeff Epping, Director of Horticulture

Rotary Botanical Gardens –

We are disappointed that many of the events that were planned for the next couple months have been postponed. We have been hard at work planning this year's garden and have a lot of excitement that we've been looking forward to sharing.

The majority of our labor force comes in the form of volunteers and seasonals; the former have been away for a couple weeks and the latter will have a postponed start date. This severely limits the progress we can make in getting both gardens and hardscapes ready for when we do open. Most of our volunteers are in the age range that Covid-19 has shown to be most detrimental to, so it is imperative that everyone stay home at this time and stay safe.

I cannot wait until we open our doors again and welcome everybody back.

– Michael Jesiolowski

Reiman Gardens, Iowa – One of the hardest decisions of this crisis was making the decision to close the Gardens to the public on March 17. Gardens are the perfect place for people to find solace and respite in stressful times. Ultimately, however, the health and safety of my staff and public had to take priority. We do believe self-isolation is key to getting through this with minimal harm. Most of us are working remotely; however Horticulture is still probably 90% on site and Entomology 50%. We miss the team interaction!

As for the future in 2020, it is a challenge we are continually re-assessing. For us, projected dates change almost daily. Currently the University and we have cancelled all events through May 10. However, we are making contingencies for that to go later. The University has looked at remaining closed through summer and even remote classes again in the fall. We are looking right now at the chance we might have to extend to June 15. We are behind other states and only have two confirmed cases in this county so we have to watch to see if we are dealing with this later while other areas might start seeing improvement. We have looked at May events with the likelihood that classes and programs may still be cancelled but are tentatively looking at moving our plant sale from Mother's Day weekend to Memorial Day weekend. We also have several member/donor events we are postponing out further.

The loss of the volunteers is a huge hit. Not just in labor but part of a successful volunteer program is keeping them active and connected. We are doing Tuesday and Thursday remote coffee breaks with them. Product availability is no problem yet but we have to cancel product we can't use. Our Jan-May conservatory exhibit would turn over completely from May through September; this year we will modify the first rather than spend the money on an entire do-over. As long as there is no mandatory

Safer at Home, Horticulture is working to make sure the Gardens will be spectacular once we re-open. We are photographing and video-taping occurrences as they happen in the Gardens and sending out to members and social media. I have a \$3.4 million new garden finishing up and so far that work progresses. We just got a bid on a sidewalk improvement project – it looks like they might be able to start soon, which is actually good because there won't be a disturbance to public and renters. We also have a front entrance remodel that looks like it is still moving forward. However, all contracts are written with contingencies to schedules in case coronavirus affects them.

I hear very similar stories nationally and internationally. Looking ahead at similar challenges. It is a close-knit community so lots of exchange of ideas; webinars relating to these types of situation. We are all making sure people know that we will be ready for them once this is over. Our national conference is in Portland in mid-June. We are hoping that doesn't get cancelled – we will all need to see each other and share stories by then. We are all learning what we can do remotely. Many plant sales, including ours, are looking at the potential for online sale; garden centers and nurseries are trying to find ways to make product available without coming on site. I think we all feel we are in the best possible field to handle this – there are few things more healing than gardens. I emphasized to my staff that even though we are closed, they need to make trips in and utilize the Gardens to help with their own stress. It is truly their garden now and I want them to use it to get through this.

– Ed Lyon, Director

(Continued on page 7)

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Gardening – Safer at Home (cont. from p. 6)

UW-Madison Arboretum –

Here is a short roundup of what's going on for us at the UW-Arboretum. For now, we have closed our visitor center and all employees have been directed to stay at home. Currently all Arboretum events are cancelled, including our annual Native Plant Sale, and the Visitor Center will remain closed through May 15. While the gardening season has been put on hold, the Arboretum grounds remain open, and we are seeing a high number of visitors enjoying the outdoors while practicing good social distancing. This is similar to what we are hearing from other public gardens around the country that have been able to remain open.

While work at the arboretum is on hold, work on my home farm continues and brings a sense of normalcy – something I think every gardener can appreciate in these uncertain times.

– David Stevens, Curator, Longenecker Horticultural Gardens

Friends of the UW-Arboretum – The decision to cancel our sale was made before the Safer at Home order went into effect and will stand even if the order is lifted before early May. We will not be receiving any plants at the Arboretum this year.

About 150 customers placed advance orders this year, and I'm working to fill those orders where possible. Some of those plants will be shipped from Agrecol directly to the customers. Some of those plants will be held at Winterland Nursery for customer pickup. But unfortunately some can't be shipped by or picked up from our suppliers.

If you're looking for native plants this year, I suggest you refer to the Wisconsin [DNR's list](#) of native plant nurseries in Wisconsin. Check websites or call to find out about whether the nurseries are offering mail order sales during the Safer at Home order. After the order is lifted, please support our regional growers. In addition to the nurseries in the Wisconsin list, here are two in northern Illinois that are good sources for Midwest natives:

[Country Road Greenhouses](#) for prairie plants and [Possibility Place Nursery](#) for woody plants.

– Karen Deaton, Friends of the Arboretum Native Plant Sale Coordinator

Breezeway Gardens – Right now it looks like the state guidelines will be in effect during bloom season so I need to see what may be possible for our usual open houses. I was considering making specific time appointments so people could walk the garden on their own. I was also thinking of planning a few Facebook live garden walks to show what's in bloom.

I am hoping online ordering will not be affected. Our shipping dates are in July and early August, so I hope we are in the clear by then but if not, shipping may be affected if I cannot hire workers to help me process the orders. Right now it's "wait and see," just like so many businesses.

– George Bacon, Owner

The Bruce Company – We're doing our best to respond to the changing circumstances. Our customers are gardeners and they are ready for spring. Seed sales are traditionally strong at this time of year, but we're seeing much higher volume as folks consider the importance of control over food sources. And having something to do for the kiddos stuck at home is certainly a bonus. In order to keep everything flowing as smoothly as possible, the Garden Center has added curbside pickup and discounted local delivery charges. Fortunately for our gardeners, plants were already in production so there don't appear to be any shortages. We've also seen a huge uptick in social media engagement, and we're responding by posting a lot of different types of videos, from projects for kids to exploring garden myths.

The Bruce Company touches base regularly with other garden centers, both locally and around the country. We're doing our best to support each other and draw what we can from everyone's experience. COVID-19 is at different stages in different U.S. regions, so responses vary widely. Although we don't have much interaction with other garden centers internationally, there will certainly be an impact on the availability of things that are made to order, like furniture. Manufacturers across the globe have been hit hard, and once the virus abates, there will be a backlog on shipping. But we are in this together and we will do what we can to learn strategies for the future.

Please visit our website if you have questions and to keep track of our hours of operation.

– Lisa Briggs, Seasonal Department Head/Merchandiser



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avantgardening.com

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Gardening – Safer at Home (cont. from p. 7)

Cobrahead, LLC – Changes are still uncertain for us. For the time being, we won't be attending any events or giving live presentations. However, we plan to offer educational vegetable gardening webinars in the near future. Subscribers to our newsletter will receive invitations to sign up. Our website is still open, and we are shipping orders.

– Anneliese Valdes, Sales Representative

The Flower Factory – The 2020 gardening season is definitely not “business as usual,” and we are constantly evaluating all of our processes, which is not necessarily a bad thing.

Here at The Flower Factory, we are currently developing a curbside pickup application for our business. Our gardening friends will be able to select desired plants from our website, submit an order through our payment app and make an appointment for pickup at our nursery. We are encouraging our gardening friends to connect with us via email to get the latest updates on how this process will proceed. The [signup link](#) is here. As the Safer at Home process evolves, we will evaluate how that will impact us. By May 1, all of our greenhouses will have the sides rolled up, providing adequate ventilation both to keep the plants cool and our customers safe. At that time, our nursery resembles a botanical park more than a “commercial greenhouse,” and the directives state that visiting parks is allowed as long as the “six-foot separation rule” is respected. If safety directives allow, we will then be able to “open” the greenhouses for business, perhaps on an appointment basis.

With the increased demand for shipping of all products, the travel time for plants will be lengthened which will be detrimental for living things kept in boxes. Some plants will be in short supply simply because they don't ship well. Plants don't ship well in hot weather; this is the voice of experience.

For a gardener, finding ways to spend leisure time has never been a problem. We are looking forward to being able to savor each new flower as it emerges and with the noise level at an all-time low, the sound of birds singing and the fresh, clean air is invigorating.

– David and Nancy Nedveck, Owners

Heritage Flower Farm – We are classified as agriculture; specifically we grow our own plants. Agriculture is exempt from the governor's Stay at Home order. We are working and, to the extent possible, at six-feet apart. In the interests of health and safety we are only shipping plants and we will also accept pickup orders. Pickup orders can be made on our website and we will refund the shipping charge. Please give us one-day notice to get the order together. It will be in the parking lot at the time and date that you designate in the “NOTES” area of our website. We have acres of gardens and you are welcome to wander the paths, but we will not help or sell plants. It's spring and the best time for requiring gardeners to stay at home and indulge our passion. We'll all stay healthy and watch new sprouts coming up until the pandemic is past.

Wishing you days of sunshine and showers at night.

– Betty Adelman, Owner

J. Carlson Growers – We have closed our Nursery office to the general public and we expect business to be somewhat normal within the next month or so. We will encourage clients to let us load their selections into their vehicles and we will be wearing disposable gloves at least in the foreseeable future. As far as payments go, we will be billing most clients and retrieving credit card numbers via the phone.

Regarding hours, we have a tendency to ease into spring. As the demand increases, we will extend our hours. The first part of the season is critical with planting our liners and harvesting our plants at the right time, usually before plants leaf out. The process of stocking our yard takes most of April, with the beginning of May being the goal to have things organized, priced and ready for sale.

Our plants are typically ordered the fall before, so unless there is an issue with trucking this spring I expect to have the plants we are well known for.

If members want a copy of the price list, please email us from contact page on our website.

– Jon Carlson, Owner

K&A Greenhouse – K&A Greenhouse has had to think outside the box this spring. We are still planting as usual for the 2020 season, but with an extremely limited crew which has been rather challenging. Our staff has been very supportive and flexible but we cannot in good conscience allow more than a handful of employees into the greenhouses each day. We have also cancelled many orders in anticipation of a slow start to our 2020 season, with hope that these plants and products can be acquired at a later date once things get back to “normal.” Like most small businesses, K&A is working on creative ways to get our products to customers this spring. This includes online ordering, curbside pickup and/or delivery, which should be available sometime in

(Continued on page 9)

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Gardening – Safer at Home (cont. from p. 8)

April. As always, customers can order gift certificates from our website, through Facebook messenger, or by calling the Verona location's phone number. We still hope that we can open on April 24, but we will continue to monitor the situation and do what we feel is best.

Most of the vendors I order from are driving home the point that garden centers and greenhouses are considered an essential business and therefore can stay open when others have been ordered to temporarily close. One of the sales representatives said that Texas and Florida are in the middle of their spring-time and are having booming sales. It's also being speculated that this year will follow what the crash of '08 was like: people will stay home more, and since they are enjoying more time at home, or partaking in "stay-cations," they will work to fix up their homes and the gardens around them. Others have remarked that people are worried the grocery stores will run out of food and have started to make plans to grow Victory Gardens again (which is why garden centers have been considered an essential business: they grow food for people to buy, which will feed themselves and their families). As stated above, though, if unemployment rates increase, many will be watching their budgets and we may not see many customers come through the doors until things get back to "normal" again. Most greenhouses we're in contact with are keeping calm and planting on, with the knowledge that they must adapt and find new ways to get their plants to gardeners.

– Jessica Killingbeck, Greenhouse Worker

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In order to deal with the Covid-19 situation I am bringing in a lot less inventory this year than I normally do. It is not so much that I am concerned with the social distancing/self-isolating situation but rather the economic consequences for all of the people who are out of work and the businesses that have had to close down. I think that it is going to be a very tough economy this year. I suspect that other places have their normal amounts already booked and the consumer won't see much difference in initial inventories.

– Peter Moersch, Owner



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Jumping Worms Update

Our November 2019 Newsletter included an article with the perspectives of various experts highlighting information and their experience with jumping worms (*Amyntas*). Since then, we have learned that Early Bird Fertilizer (a product that was being used by some of our members and by Olbrich Gardens to draw the worms to the surface and desiccate them) is no longer being produced by Ocean Organics for distribution (due in large part to tariffs on the main tea ingredient from China).

Here are some further comments on the upcoming season:

• **Jeff Epping, Director of Horticulture, Olbrich Botanical Gardens** – It's business as usual for OBG with the jumping worms. We are treating small areas that seem to be heavily infested with the Early Bird we have on hand to temporarily (they always come back) knock down the population. After the EB runs out, we'll probably just live with them as we are in the majority of garden areas where the worms are living. The EB fertilizer is so expensive that I don't think we can afford to keep using it to any degree. I think we may do a little experimenting with biochar this year, since it is good for the soil in so many ways beyond knocking down the jumping worm population.

I think home gardeners will have to learn to live with them until the research finds a good way to help alleviate their impact. Collect worms when you see them, and keep all of the organic matter in your garden that you produce and use it for mulch and compost. At home (I have jumping worms in my garden) I mow everything up with my mower and put it back in the garden as mulch. I also mow all of my beds in spring (all parts of my perennials, as well as tree leaves) and let it lay to serve as mulch and provide nutrients for the season. I take in a good amount of my neighbors leaves and pile them up in my veggie garden in the fall and then mow them on the lawn in the spring and move them into the garden for mulch. I don't bring in any additional mulch and I don't send any out and I don't share any plant divisions with anyone like I used to before I had jumping worms in my garden. If you think you have jumping worms in your garden don't move or share any plants, soil, organic matter, digging tools, etc. to other locations.

• **Brad Herrick, Ecologist and Research Program Manager, UW-Madison Arboretum** – There is a small group at the Arboretum working on jumping worms. We keep track of recent articles as they come out. Lee Frelich at the University of Minnesota just got funding to do work on *Amyntas* in Minnesota, so there will soon be other Midwest researchers doing work on that group of worms. At the Arboretum we're doing quite a bit of research looking at Early Bird control, physical and chemical soil changes, and litter preferences.

We are wrapping up a couple experiments this season. We conducted a field trial looking at the efficacy of using Early Bird to kill adult jumping worms in a sugar maple forest. We're still crunching the numbers but it appears that does kill them as long as the worms come into direct contact with the solution. The second part of the experiment will be to look at the effect on cocoons. We'll be conducting some lab and field trials to look into these questions. Second, we will be analyzing data from a mesocosm experiment where we looked at resource preferences of adult jumping worms. (Do they prefer maple, oak, pine,

compared to no litter controls.) We tracked body weight, litter consumption, and reproduction (number of cocoons produced), and changes in carbon:nitrogen ration in soil and litter of several months.

Also planned is development of a monitoring project looking at control options on private properties throughout Dane County (possibly other areas as well). We're going to meet early this year to start planning that project. We should have several published papers coming out on various jumping worm research in 2020.

As for home gardeners, I give many talks each year to garden clubs, plant societies, Master Gardeners, etc. and I always share the link to the [DNR jumping worm page](#): I tell them to pay close attention to changes in the soil structure and plant health. Know what jumping worms look like and signs of their presence. Take precautions to not spread them to your neighbors. Clean your tools and boots on-site. Keep mulch and compost on-site. Do not trade or sell plants unless you are certain the soil is free of jumping worms. Otherwise, bare root! Experiment with different mulch types...pine, native grasses, hay, etc. Try solarization in the spring using clear plastic.

• **Josef Görres, Associate Professor, Department of Plant and Soil Science, University of Vermont** – While there are some positive results with alfalfa pellets, the experiments are not conclusive. We have been working with a fungus that seems to work pretty well when it is treated in a certain way prior to application. We also isolated a penicilium that seemed to be a good control. So fungal agents may be good biocontrols but we are a bit hampered by lack of funding to test a battery of them. We are hoping to submit a paper in a month or two with a more complete report because the data will be better collated and analyzed.

Some horticulturally used soaps are also great controls of the worms but we are not sure whether they are going to work on the cocoons. Relatively low concentrations of soap (a couple of spritzes into two gallons of water) seem to kill them if exposed for longer than 10 minutes (five might also work, but we did not try that).

Other possible means of prevention is to use a mustard solution of 1 oz. (1/3 cup) powdered mustard seed (the spice) per gallon of water has also been shown to be effective as a drench to bring worms out of the soil. You may then need to drown them or put them in a bucket to dry out in the sun.

It is possible that finely ground biochar kills these earthworms. A small amount of biochar added to the soil may be enough. The sharp edges of biochar particles disrupt the earthworm guts when ingested. This may be an alternative to mustard or Early Bird. This amendment is in the process of being tested.

• **Ed Lyon, Director, Reiman Gardens** - After my contribution to the Nov. 2019 WHPS Newsletter, I did do some late season planting and, later, planted bulbs. I was pleased to see that, as high as my worm population had been, they had really only chewed up maybe an upper inch or two of the organic matter and I still had a thick layer. Keep in mind, I added around 6" of compost to soil that was already pretty good when I moved to the property five years ago and continued to add every season,

Jumping Worms (cont. from p. 10)

so my beds aren't typical of most homeowners. By fall, there were very few adult worms present, but in order to protect the new plants from worms burrowing through and around the roots, I put Early Bird fertilizer in each hole and dusted the roots before planting (I already plant by washing the growing media off roots first; I have done that for a number of years now).

That doesn't mean I am not aware that this year, season two into worm infestation, I don't expect that the worms might consume even more organic matter than they did last year. Fortunately, it seems, I bought enough of the Early Bird fertilizer for two applications over the next 3-4 years. It has been established that this recourse will only knock down populations, not eliminate them, but I will do my best to keep the numbers down this way.

I have been using permaculture for the last several years and, like Jeff, will continue to add compost through materials from my property. I invested in a brush grinder four years ago and everything from plant debris to branches is ground and goes back to the site. It will take a couple of years to see if this is enough for replenishment. This should be slower to break down than "ready-made" compost, so less palatable. Right now I am going to walk away from plugs even though I advocate for them, particularly in difficult soils. I stated in my last report I feel the worm activity pushed them up and their roots desiccate exposed to air. Even if they stay put, the worm castings surrounding them are hydrophobic and water is repelled. Anything under a 4½" pot may be up-potted and grown out for more root growth if I don't think the root system is extensive enough for the plant not to be pushed upward. I will continue to plant by washing all growing media from the roots, dusting those roots with Early Bird fertilizer and adding the fertilizer to the hole. My biggest losses were new plants, not established, so I think it will be key to do whatever I can to get them through at least that first year.

After seeing [Thomas Rainer's \(author and landscape architect talk\)](#), I will also "dilute" the areas in which I have overly rich in organic matter where I am growing stress-tolerator plants (those not indigenous to organically rich soils). I have mistakenly advocated that one cannot have too much organic matter. This theory disproves that and may be part of the solution for jumping worms. I realize I am encouraging worm activity around plants that are already struggling because I have overdone the organic matter; a double whammy, so to speak. This philosophy is based on CSR theory (competitor, stress-tolerator, ruderal plants); if you are interested, there is a [scientific paper](#) that addresses this – in particular page 451. It might even mean reducing the amount of competitor plants I now grow and move to more in the stress-tolerator category.

Finally, I am intrigued by the alfalfa pellet studies. Alfalfa pellets are relatively inexpensive sold as livestock feed so I may try some in an area of the garden. Since it looks like it is fungi that might be the worm killer, it seems that adding it at a time when the weather prediction is for warm and extended rain might increase fungal growth on the pellets. I will try it first within my fenced areas; I can imagine alfalfa pellets might be a rabbit attractor!

I will say that finding masses of these wriggling worms this past season was very depressing, especially when there appears to be so little recourse. But I have not let that deter my excitement for the 2020 growing season. Gardeners are constantly fac-

ing challenges; recent ones sometimes make us wonder why we do it. But I think we can still manage great gardens in spite of this latest nuisance. Don't let them get you down – grow on!

Biochar

by Danny Aerts and Betsy True, WHPS members living in Middleton's west side

What Is Biochar?

Biochar is porous carbon made from biomass. More simply - it is charcoal. Biomass is plant material such as wood, grasses and crop residues. Biochar has been used for centuries. Studies show pre-European native people in the Amazon Basin used biochar to improve soil to allow for cultivation. The process there is called terra preta de Indio.

The approximate dry composition of biomass is: 50% carbon 6% hydrogen 44% oxygen. We want to reduce the biomass to leave only the solid carbon, the biochar. This is done by a process called gasification, whereby the material is heated in the absence of oxygen to remove volatile compounds and leave solid carbon. We will oxidize (burn) the volatiles to minimize smoke generation and air pollution. We do not want to oxidize the solid carbon.

Some reasons to use biochar – It improves soil structure. Compost can improve soil structure but biochar breaks down very slowly so it is longer lasting. Moisture is retained in the pores of biochar and is released slowly. Nutrients in fertilizer can be washed away but biochar binds nutrients and releases them slowly. Some studies have shown it deters jumping worms. Animal and crop wastes can be used productively. It sequesters carbon which can help mitigate climate change.

How To Make Biochar – There are many possible setups to produce biochar. Some use two metal containers- a small one fit inside a larger one. The biomass to be made into biochar goes in the small container. A fire is created in the outer container to provide the heat for gasification.

We will describe the small-batch method we used. It worked for us because of the materials and resources we had available. We started with a metal container large enough to handle the biomass particles but small enough to fit into our burn pit. Holes were drilled along the top edge of the container. These allow the volatile gasses to leave as the biomass is heated. The biomass is then broken or cut to a reasonable size and then placed in the container. You want to pack the material in as tightly as you can get it. Then put a lid on the container. You don't need a perfect seal; you just want to minimize airflow. Place the container in the burn pit and put firewood under and around the container. Light the firewood in the burn pit. Water vapor comes out the holes in the top of the container as the material inside heats up. Volatile gasses will be produced and ignite about 15-20 minutes later. After about an hour only carbon and some ash should be left. Cool the container and contents as quickly as possible without allowing further combustion of the contents. This can be done by dumping out the container and quenching the contents with water.

Once the process is finished you should have nice chunks of biochar, as shown in the photo. You should break up the larger pieces. Some producers crush it to grit size, but we don't bother doing that much work. You want to charge the biochar pores with water and nutrients. This can be done by mixing it with compost.



References: *Biochar and Soil Biota*, by Natalia Ladygina and Francois Rineau; *Biochar Environmental Management, Science and Technology*, edited by Johannes Lehman and Stephen Joseph; *The Biochar Debate, Charcoal's Potential to Reverse Climate Change and Build Soil Fertility*, by James Bruges; *The Biochar Solution, Carbon Farming and Climate Change*, by Albert Bates



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Hive Losses

By Betsy True
Creating Bee Lawns

I have lost all six of my hives this winter. There are a lot of reasons for hives to fail: mites, pesticides and lack of forage. I treated for mites several times, yet they all died. It used to be that a 10% hive loss was common, but these days 40% is more typical. 100% is clearly unsustainable. I would like to recruit folks to improve their habitat for the benefit of all pollinators. One way is to improve the forage in your yard: your lawn. A lawn is a vast desert for bees, there is no nutrition for them in grass. The [Bee Lab](#) in Minnesota has some recommendations on how: cutting your lawn at a higher setting, allowing clovers to bloom, allowing dandelions and creeping Charlie to thrive.

Of more importance to the ecosystem is the health of all insects.

One of the challenges we have today is the steady loss of bird and insect numbers and diversity. The main cause of this in landscaped areas is the loss of the native flora that is the evolved food of many insects. The non-native horticultural selections used in landscaping are not visited by anywhere near the number of insects that native plants are; they are a waste of space in the food web. The plant breeding that has focused on resistance to predation by pests has at the same time deprived insects of the food they evolved with. The food web depends on insects, and they depend on native plants. We need to be more aware of how damaging this pattern is to the ecosystem and how we ultimately are dependent on a healthy ecosystem.

I would recommend *Bringing Nature Home* by Doug Tallamy and *Climate-Wise Landscaping* by Sue Reed and Ginny Stibolt.