

Alpha Nursery & Garden

Center Newsletter

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What's all the Buzz about Pollinators?

You have probably heard about the decline of the Honeybee due to insecticides that contain neonicotinoids. Neonicotinoids is a chemical contained in many insecticides that in high levels are highly toxic to bees, butterflies and other insect pollinators. Even if the pollinators are not killed by contact with neonicotinoids, their immune system and sense of navigation is impaired making them susceptible to mites, diseases, and loss of navigation back to the hive.

Awareness of this problem is being addressed by removing neonicotinoids from insecticides but it is not yet eliminated fully. Beware of any insecticides that contain this chemical. If you do have to use an insecticide containing this chemical, use it sparingly and when pollinators are not present.

To help with the declining Honeybee population, you can start your own pollination endeavor with Native Bees. Here are some facts about Native Bees.

- Native bees do not produce honey and do not have a hive.
- They rarely sting. If they do sting is it is a very minor sting and it does not cause anaphylactic shock for those of you who are allergic to bee stings.
- Native bees include many species. The two most common are the Mason Bee and the Leaf Cutter Bee. The Mason Bee is equivalent to 100 Honeybees and are known as super pollinators.
- A few hours a year is all it takes to raise gentle Mason and/or Leaf Cutter Bees.
- Help to support nature's native pollinators by raising Native Bees.
- Increase your garden yield by having a bee house nearby.

This coming Saturday, April 7th, join us for a Pollinator Seminar covering Native Bees, Butterflies, and other pollinators. Bee, Butterfly, and Hummingbirds attracting plant lists will be handed out. Watch a slide show to learn more about Native Bees. Learn how to care for these gentle bees and start your own Native Bee community.

The seminar will begin at 10AM and last for about 1 hour. It will be held at the Cascade Food Pantry across from the Cascade Airport. There will be some Bee Houses and Bee Supplies for you to look at.

What's Happening?

We are working behind the scenes gearing up for the spring! The Alpha Girls have been hard at work planting up Hanging Baskets, Planters, and Liners (Bareroot trees and shrubs). They are glad to be back to work in the warm greenhouses. The flowers are even blooming!

The dog you see in a couple of the photos is the newest addition to our family as the Nursery Dog. Serah is a female 4 year old German Shepard adopted from McPaws in January. You will likely see her when you come to the nursery this year. Come say Hi! She loves people!



Your Monthly Checklist

What should you be doing this month?

This is a checklist of items that may or may not pertain to you or what you do in your yard or garden. It is meant as a guide to help you be better prepared for this month and next.

- **Check all gardening and yard tools: Sharpen any dull blades or hand tools, If you didn't clean them in the fall before putting them away, clean them now. Start up any power tools or equipment to make sure it is running well.**
- **If you are planning on planting a garden, Do a layout to determine what seeds or plants you may need. Order or locate your seeds or plants.**
- **Check all of your herbicides, insecticides, and fertilizer to make sure you have ample supply for the start of the upcoming season.**
- **Look online for projects you may want to spend some of your time in. Gardening can be fun too!**
- **If you have a greenhouse, start seeds if you haven't already.**
- **When it warms up a bit more (around 50 degree days), you can plant some cool season crops such as Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Kohlrabi, Cabbage, and Lettuce with a bit of protection from any really cold nights.**
- **Get ready for Spring! It is coming!!**

Notable Quotes

“When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.” Author unknown

“Crabgrass can grow on bowling balls in airless rooms, and there is no known way to kill it that does not involve nuclear weapons.” Dave Barry

“Gardener’s Recipe: One part soil, two parts water, and three parts wishful thinking” Author unknown

“Nature has no mercy at all. Nature says, “I’m going to snow. If you have on a bikini and no snowshoes, that’s tough. I am going to snow anyway” Maya Angeiou

“There are no happier folks than plant lovers and none more generous than those who garden” Ernest “Chinese” Wilson

“A flower cannot blossom without sunshine nor a garden without love” Chinese Proverb

Pantone Color of the Year

Pantone Color of the Year for 2018 is Ultra Violet. What is Pantone Color of the Year you may ask? Pantone color of the year is a result of The Pantone Color Institute. It is a consulting service within Pantone that forecasts global color trends for the coming year.

“The Pantone Color of the Year has come to mean so much more than ‘what’s trending’ in the world of design; it’s truly a reflection of what’s needed in our world today.” – Laurie Pressman, Vice President of the Pantone Color Institute

The choice of Ultra Violet as Pantone Color of the Year not only is a forecast of global color trends but leads global fashion and design in color choices. Watch the fashion and design world and see the dominance of each year’s color choice.

If you want to share in the global color trend for this year, choose paint chips 18-3838TPG or Pantone 2096-C for any painting you would like to tackle. To color your garden in Ultra Violet, there is a wide array of flower choices to color your world. Bathe your surroundings in purples and know that you are sharing in a global color event.

To find out more about Pantone, visit <https://www.pantone.com/color-of-the-year-2018> Until next year when a new color is chosen you will see the color sidebar of this newsletter in “Ultra Violet”.

Is the PH of My Dirt Really That Important?

PH is the measure of the acidity or alkalinity of your soil. The technical definition of PH is the negative logarithm of the hydrogen ion concentration. Good thing we don't have to remember that! Simply, the PH of your soil will determine how well your plants are doing. 7.0 is neutral on the PH scale. Below 7.0 is considered acidic and above 7.0 is considered alkaline.

Most plants prefer the PH to be between 6.8 to 7.2. Some plants such as Azaleas, Blueberries, and Rhododendrons like the PH to be more on the acidic side in the range of 4 to 5.

The importance of the PH in your soil to be at the proper range is if you soil or dirt is below 6.5 there are certain nutrients that are locked away from your plants. Subsequently, if the PH in your soil is above 7.5, there are nutrients that are locked away from you plants. Essentially, they are starving with the food being right there. They just can't access it.

Plant nutrients are divided into 2 categories: Micro nutrients which are needed by your plants in smaller amounts and Macro Nutrients which are needed in larger amounts. Micro nutrients would include Boron, Calcium, Magnesium, Iron, Sulfur, Chlorine, Copper, Manganese, Molybdenum, and Zinc. Macro nutrients would include Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium.

When your soil or dirt is below 7.0 it is considered acidic. When the PH reaches 6.5 or below some of the micronutrient availability starts to diminish. When it reaches 6.0 many micronutrient availability diminishes rapidly. When the PH reaches 7.5 some of the macronutrient availability begins to diminish. When the PH reaches 8.0 it starts to drop dramatically.

Of all of the years that I have been testing soil or dirt up in Valley County, every PH test has tested 6.0 to 6.5 signifying that the plants are not getting the nutrients for healthy plant growth. It is very easy to bring your PH levels up by applying Dolomite Limestone. This 'sweetens' the soil.

To take a test of the PH of your dirt, dig down about 2" and gather a sample below the 2" by taking a tablespoon of dirt and placing in a plastic baggie. Take three samples around your yard or the area that you wish to test to get a good idea of the overall PH of your yard.

There are several different ways to test your PH. Purchase a PH Soil Test Kit, a PH Tester, or bring your sample into the nursery. The PH Soil Test Kits contain 10 capsules for 10 tests plus a container to do the testing with a color guide to show you where your soil PH comes out. The PH Tester is a probe that you stick into the dirt and it will measure the PH. If you bring in a sample, we will test it for you and send you the results for \$7.00 per sample.

Once you have the test results and know the PH of your soil, we will help you to determine the amount of lime to spread.

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Is the PH of My Dirt Really That Important?

Generally we put down 6 lbs per 100 square feet. The Lime comes in 40 lb bags and will do approximately 660 square feet.

Once your soil or dirt has the correct PH, your plants, grass, garden, and flowers will grow better. If you garden organically, your PH will stay in the 6.8 to 7.2 range. Ask us for more information.

Sue Wisbey

Did you Know?

Instead of going to the gym, garden or work in your yard.

- 1/2 hour of digging burns 150 calories.
- Raking a lawn burns 120 calories
- Mowing a lawn burns 165 calories.
- Turning compost is like lifting weights.
- Raking a lawn is like using a rowing machine.
- Pushing a mower is like walking on a treadmill.

Planting trees have many benefits

- The shade produced by trees helps reduce energy costs in the summer months and improves the quality of outdoor living spaces.

According to the Arbor Day Foundation:

- A mature leafy tree produces as much oxygen in a season as 10 people inhale each year.
- One acre of trees annually consumes the amount of carbon dioxide equivalent to that produced by driving an average car for 26,000 miles.

Working in the Dirt can Make you Happier!

According to research by Dr. Chris Lowry, a bacteria in the soil '*Mycobacterium vaccae*' elevates your mood, gives you better emotional health, vitality, and cognitive functions. When you work in your garden and breathe in dust from the dirt, this bacteria (good bacteria) is thought to activate the serotonin neurons that helps with elevating moods. Ingesting this bacteria will have the same effect. So it's really not insulting to tell someone to 'Eat Dirt!' is it?



Do you have any suggestions, comments, or would like to see a specific article or information in an upcoming newsletter? Please email your requests or comments to Sue Wisbey. Email address is alphanursery@hotmail.com.