



# BOUNDARY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS MASTER FOOD PRESERVERS



## MG/MFP Monthly Meeting

I've been asked if we will continue to have monthly meetings. Yes, as long as there is interest..

The meeting with Cassandra Rutherford Eckberg regarding the proposed Boundary County Community and Youth Center was very informative.



We opted to support the effort as a group which constituted a \$20.00 yearly membership fee and will keep you informed as to the progress.

We had a donation of herb seeds which we all took samples of. There were some I have not heard of so I left them alone; as included in the samples was, burdock and tansy!! There are still some left for those of you who were unable to make it to the meeting.

Put your thinking cap on for November's meeting regarding programs you would like to have for 2005, and resource people to present them.

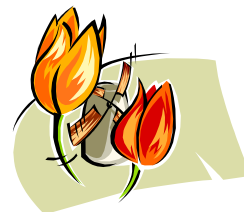
The Master Gardener Program will be offered again this spring. Any constructive suggestions are welcome.

## Recertifications:

Several Master Gardeners and Master Food Preservers have turned in their recertification hours. If you are not among those, please do so as soon as possible. If you don't have exact hours; do the best you can. Thank you for your time and efforts. They have really been appreciated.

## Plant Those Bulbs

Spring bulbs can be planted until the ground freezes solid. Three times their widest diameter. Pointed end up! Tulips can go deeper and will last longer but more than 6-8" they might not come up.



Sarah Howe  
Extension Educator

Joanne Erickson  
Master Gardener Coordinator

## More on Garlic FYI



I've had several inquiries regarding when to plant garlic, in the last couple weeks. This month's Organic Gardening had a little article on garlic which states, "Traditionalists insist on Columbus Day as the ideal time to get next summer's crop in the ground. If you're not bound by tradition, you can plant garlic during any dry spell in October." Oct/Nov 04 OG

## Thinking of making a new bed in the garden?

Try a lasagna bed. It's supposed to be effortless! It's supposed to be as simple as spreading 8 sheets of newspaper on the ground and topping with grass clippings, straw and leaves in the fall, then you're ready to plant in the spring. Give it a try and let me know how it worked for you—joanne

## To Rake or Not To Rake

University of Idaho HomeWise—Bob Tripepi

Let falling leaves lie or rake them up? That depends on where they fall and which plant they're falling from, says Bob Tripepi, University of Idaho horticulture professor.



You can let leaves remain in place in parts of your landscape

that have bare soil or that you're not managing, but remove them from your turf grass lawn and from borders where you're growing plants



with evergreen leaves.

That's because a wet mat of leaves can keep light from reaching blades of grass or evergreen groundcovers. That weakens plants and potentially boosts populations of insect pests and of disease organisms, like the ones that cause snow mold in lawns. Further, as fallen leaves break down over the winter, they release organic acids that can harm the foliage beneath them.



It's especially important to clear leaves from any parts of your yard where you'll be walking between late fall and early spring. Sliding on leaves that cover a lawn or sidewalk had the potential to cause serious injury. But where the overwintering leaves are neither a hazard nor a nuisance to you or your plants, they offer significant advantages in the landscape. They're nature's blanket to protect the ground from sudden or hard freezes in fall and to reduce damage to small plants or herbaceous perennials from soil freezing and thawing. Decaying debris also returns minerals to soil and benefits earthworms and other helpful soil critters.

In addition, leaves from most species except potentially plant-damaging black walnut and some species of oak, work fine in mulches. They're best chopped and applied no deeper than 2 inches. You can also use intact leaves if you don't let them build up deeper than an inch; otherwise, they may keep oxygen from reaching the soil.



## Hobo Spiders Prompt Fewer Calls To Entomologists

Source: University of Idaho HomeWise



"We've become accustomed to living with them", says Ed Bechinski, University of Idaho Extension integrated pest management specialist.



Each fall, as wayward male hobo spiders wander through homes in search of females (who probably stayed outside), Bechinski fields questions from concerned homeowners. But while the hobos have become increasingly commonplace over the last 15 years, questions about them have become rarer.

There was an initial fear factor response where everybody wanted to know what the danger was and how to kill them, but they haven't become an acute danger to human health and people have realized that they're not the threat we once thought they were.

Yes, hobo spider bites can cause slow healing wounds, headache, weakness and joint pains and in extreme and extremely rare cases, internal organ damage and even death. Most bites occur when the spider gets into bedding or clothing and is trapped next to skin. But emergency and primary health care physicians now know how to recognize and treat the bites to minimize damage and risk.

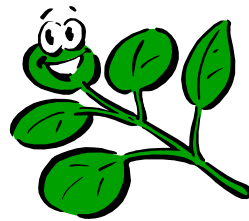
For most homeowners, Bechinski recommends using commercially available sticky traps if they're seeing brown spiders with spiny legs and 1 1/2 inch leg spans. While the spiders may not be hobos, the only way to know for sure is ask an entomologist to dissect their sex organs! It's reasonable to assume that they could be. One clue: hobo

spiders are fast. They're been clocked at 40 inches a second. Set the sticky traps under or behind furniture on or near the floor because hobos are poor climbers.

Parents with small children who might encounter a spider on the floor sometimes prefer to step up their defenses. For them you might escalate control recommendations to an inside-the-home cockroach type insecticide they can spray along baseboards. But you would have to have lots of spiders in the home to justify that approach.

The best way to keep fall intruders out of the house is to spray the exterior perimeter and to seal any cracks and crevices through which spiders might slip. But the hobo spiders that are already inside will likely soon die on their own. They survive by trapping insects and other spiders in their webs and there's nothing for them to eat inside the house. In the meantime, whack them with a newspaper.

### New Faces in The Extension Office



The Extension Office has two new people on board. Stop in and introduce yourself.

The new 4H Program Assistant is Erika Thiel. She isn't really new, as she used to be in and out of the office as a 4-H member. She is a cheerful addition to our staff.

Angie Merritt is our Ameri-corp, VISTA volunteer. She will be working in conjunction with the 4-H Program and the After School Program.

## Nature's Free Soil Conditioner—Using Leaves to Amend Your Soil

Source: Extension Focus Oct/Nov 2004  
Susan Bell, Extension Educator, Ada County

Cold weather doesn't stop diehard gardeners bent on finishing out the season in style. They know that fallen leaves are Mother Nature's gift of free fertilizer, plus a healthy soil amendment, and that manna from heaven needs to be gathered while the getting's good.

The key to loosening up clay soil is lots of organic matter. Organic matter is anything containing carbon that is or was once alive like leaves, grass clippings, old sawdust, coffee grounds and livestock manure, to name a few. Yes, even manure was once alive in the form of grass and grains before it went through the animal's digestive system. Fall is the prime time to add OM to the soil because it will have all winter to decompose underground before next spring. (also gives the worms something to chew on).

The big advantage to working your garden soil now before it freezes is that organic matter is plentiful. Use dried leaves, straw, or other plant debris like those dead veggies, annuals and perennial tops out in your garden. Leaves from your shade tree or your neighbor's are a good source of nutrients and their OM will help improve the structure, drainage and workability of your soil over time. Leaf mold is found naturally on forest floors. Those composted leaves are 5 to 10 times higher than ordinary topsoil in their ability to hold moisture. Pound for pound, leaves contain twice as many minerals as livestock manure, including many trace elements. A trace element is a necessary nutrient used by plants in small amounts.

Even the worst soil can be improved with enough organic matter. Tilling in 3 to 4 inches of shredded leaves, shredded straw, and/or other raw plant debris every year will eventually turn your gumbo into the black gold that gardeners crave. Add some nitrogen fertilizer or livestock manure to help speed up the rotting process. It

takes time to turn your soil into something resembling black, beautiful loam. You probably won't even notice a difference for 4 to 5 years.

Leaves are easy to come by and free, but they should be shredded to help them decompose faster in the soil. If you don't have a shredder, use your lawn mower on a flat surface to chop up those colorful jewels. A string weeder and metal garbage can will also do the job. Toss some leaves into the can and shred them with the weed whacker. When those are shredded, toss in some more and continue the process until you've filled up the entire metal garbage can. Wear safety goggles to protect your eyes during this wild and wacky melee.

Another way to get some organic matter is in the form of finished compost called humus. Composting is just a rotting process that breaks down plant materials and manures into nutrient rich humus. It resembles soil in appearance. Humus is easy to work with and because it is concentrated, you won't need to use much. Depending on what was composted, usually one inch of humus will take the place of 4 inches of raw plant material. Compost can be purchased at any nursery or garden center in bulk or in a bag. You can even start your own compost pile this fall and have your very own humus next year.

Sand is another amendment that can loosen up clay soil, but it won't add any nutrients and you'll have to use a lot of it to make a difference. Sharp, coarse builders sand is the kind that you'll need. Use one inch of sand for every 5 " of soil depth that's tilled. If you plan to rototill 10 inches down, then you'll need to work in 2 inches of sand. Sand is heavy to haul around and spread.

Gypsum (calcium carbonate) is another product that is used to improve clay soils, but it alone won't get the job done. If you plan to use it, follow the label directions for the amount to use and add it with the layer of organic matter that you plan to incorporate.

## Proper Storage Prolongs Apple Life

Source Extension Focus Oct/Nov 2004 Jo Ann Robins

Early varieties of apples don't store well. Mid-season apples can be kept for a few weeks. Late ones will last for months. Exact storage time will depend on the variety and storage conditions.

Storage conditions should be cool (32° -40° degrees F), moist and dark. Apples can be stored in open containers but don't stack too deep with fruit.

Apples can be stored in clear plastic bags, 5 # same variety per bag. Poke a small holes in the bag. Close bag with a twisty, keeping a good amount of air in the bag. The apples will use up the oxygen in the bag. The carbon dioxide level will increase, creating a mini modified atmosphere chamber. Check apples regularly. Remove any that show signs of rot.

Apples should not be stored with other fruits and vegetables. They give off copious amounts of a ripening gas called ethylene that can dramatically shorten the storage life of other produce.

## Care of Newly Planted Trees Into Fall/Winter

Source: *The Growers Guide*, Oct 2004, Carol Savonen, And Stephen Fitzgerald, Forestry Specialist, OR State Univ.

Have you planted any new trees in the last three years? Water, mulch and fertilizer are important ingredients for caring for younger trees. Continue to care for tree into fall and winter.

Trees require routine, thorough watering for at least three years after planting. Soil, weather conditions and the amount of competing grass around the tree dictate how much water to give the tree and how often. In general trees need the equivalent of 1 " of rainfall per week from June through September.

Trees use water even during winter. Just before the ground freezes in late fall, give your tree a thorough watering. During mild winters, where temperatures are above normal and the ground thaws, give your tree periodic watering. This is important for conifers which retain their needles and use water readily during winter.

Before watering, examine soil moisture 4–8" deep. If the soil feels dry or slightly damp, it needs water. Well-drained, sandy soils will need more water more often than a loam /clay soil. Place a garden hose at the base of tree. Run a slow trickle of water for several hours or until the soil is soaked. To help hold or direct the water around the root system, build a temporary soil saucer. Short, frequent watering, promote development of shallow root systems.

Mulch the trees. It keeps the soil moist, limits weed and discourages injury from lawnmowers and weed-eaters. Wood and bark chips are good mulching materials. You can use a porous landscape fabric as a weed barrier underneath the chips. Don't use plastic. It suffocates roots. Apply a 3–6" layer of mulch. Spread to form a circle 3' away from the trunk. Keep mulch from direct contact with the tree trunk. Some bark mulches may contain pathogens or contaminants that can harm your new tree. Maintain the mulch ring to keep grasses from competing with the tree.

Generally you don't need to stake trees. Young trees standing alone with their tops free to move will develop stronger more resilient trunks than tightly staked stress.

However, too much wind can bend young trees and disturb the root ball, damaging roots and stressing new tree. Staking helps trees that are top-heavy and would lean without additional support. Staking helps protect trees from vandalism or mechanical damage.

To properly stake a tree, you need two wooden or metal posts. Drive them into the sides of the excavated planting hole before you backfill to prevent driving them through the root ball. Secure the tree to the stakes with broad straps of hose; don't use wire. It will girdle the bark.. Guying and staking the tree will keep it secure from blowing over but allow the trunk to move up to 2" in any direction. If staking doesn't allow movement of the trunk, the tree will not allocate any growth to the main stem and will be unstable when you remove the stakes and guying. Remove the stake and guying materials within a year.

Autumn is also a good time to fertilize established trees (1 year after planting) every 2-3 years in the fall after the leaves have dropped. Or fertilize in early spring before growth begins. Apply fertilizer directly to the soil surface. Water it in. If there is thick sod beneath the tree, use a pipe to punch holes 12 " deep in the sod beneath the drip line of the tree and apply the fertilizer in the holes. This helps the fertilizer reach the tree's root system. Avoid using "weed and feed" fertilizers around the root zone of your tree.

Don't apply nitrogen in late summer. It can stimulate new growth that may not "harden off" or go into fall dormancy properly and will be more

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