

University of Idaho Extension *Payette Valley Horticulture*

Spring 2008 Issue

The following newsletter is an effort of the University of Idaho Extension System to keep Master Gardeners updated on Horticulture events and current issues affecting homeowner landscaping in Southwestern Idaho. Writer and editor: Tony McCammon, Extension Horticulture Educator, Payette County Extension. For questions or comments contact me at 642-6022 or email to tonym@uidaho.edu.

Hortdork Calendar

Events:

Slow the Flow Idaho Master Gardener Conference Water Conservation **Free**
Demonstrations Lake Lowell Bird Refuge
June 3 - 9am to noon. Call 642-6022.

Classes:

Junior Master Gardener 4-H Club meetings
Thursdays 2-3:30 in Fruitland call 642-6022

For more information on these and other Extension Activities please contact us or visit us. For some events registration is required and seats are limited. Call soon!

Alert: 07' Graduated Master Gardeners, please pick up your badges at the Payette County Extension office. They are ready for proud owners!

All Gardeners Welcome to:



To help Idahoans avoid overwatering their landscapes this irrigation season, University of Idaho Extension is offering a half-day training June 3 at the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge near Lake Lowell, southwest of Boise, for its Master Gardeners and the general public.

The **free** Southern Idaho Master Gardener Conference, from 9 a.m. to noon., will include discussions by biologists on the importance of water and wetlands to area wildlife, information from local

water company representatives on rising water costs and available conservation programs and presentations by university and private horticulturists on native plant species, xeriscape principles, drought-tolerant turfgrass trials and water-efficient sod mixes. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to get their hands dirty—and wet—while diagnosing water-wasting sprinkler irrigation problems and conducting simple water-audits of sprinkler systems.

Billbugs

Tony McCammon

What are billbugs?

Billbugs (*Sphenophorus* spp.) are a type



of weevil or so called 'snout beetle' due to the shape of their heads. There are about 50 species present in the U.S. but only five are a concern in home lawns (bluegrass, hunting, Denver / Rocky Mountain, lesser, and Phoenician). Adult billbugs are small (1/4 – 3/8 inch) insects with rather non-descript color markings grey to black but sometimes reddish-brown Billbug larvae are white, legless grubs that can be the same size as the adults and have brown heads. Overwintering adult billbugs become active in the spring when soil temperatures warm to 65°F.

Why should I be concerned with billbugs?

Billbugs may be small in size but their large numbers can devastate a lawn.

Damage first becomes apparent in late June – August with the arrival of hot, dry weather. The damaged lawn looks drought stressed. Although billbugs rarely fly, they spread by walking from an infested lawn to a neighboring lawn. Billbug damage is often mistakenly attributed to other causative agents such as disease, white grubs, chinch bugs, or green bugs (aphids that infest grasses).

How do I know billbugs damaged my lawn?

Check damaged areas of the lawn using the tug test – simply grab the grass and pull up. If the stalks break easily at ground level and the stems are hollowed out

or packed full of a sawdust-like material (frass), billbugs are the culprit. To be sure it is billbugs, take a sample of the turf with a portion of soil and look for the small larvae. They can usually be found feeding in the thatch or top inch of soil. And next spring, be alert for adult billbugs as they wander across sidewalks & driveways in the late afternoon. Billbug adults also can be seen walking in the late summer as they look for overwintering sites.

How do I treat for billbugs?

Adult billbugs have a hard, armor-like exterior that does not absorb insecticides readily. And billbug larvae are hard to reach because they spend most of their time protected inside the grass plant or under the thatch. Applying the right product at the right time is crucial to success!

Late April to early June (Preventative Treatments)

Imidacloprid (Merit©) Systemic Insect Killer will provide residual control. Recommended imidacloprid rates for effective billbug control should be between 0.3 to 0.4 lb a.i./acre.

Early May to mid-June (Laval Control)

At this timing, it is likely the adults have mated and the females have deposited their eggs. The best way to control billbugs now is by a systemic product that will move into the grass plants, such as imidacloprid (Merit©). These products contain a chemical which moves into the grass plants to kill the young developing larvae.

Mid-June to early July

If you did not apply one of the 'preventative treatments' mentioned above to control the number of adults that overwintered or their first larvae, chances are damage to the lawn has already occurred. Make a curative treatment with a soil active insecticide such as carbaryl, malathion, trichlorfon and beta-cyfluthrin. Lightly water-in with $\leq 1/2$ " of water to move the active ingredient into the soil to kill the larvae. It is important to understand that a curative approach may not be as effective, as the larvae may be deeper in the soil and more difficult to reach with the residual insecticides and the grass will need some time to repair any damage that may already have occurred.

Native Botanical Minute

Balsam Root

Balsamorhiza sagittata

Family - Asteraceae

Habit: Clumping, Basal Vegetation, Flowering stems generally leafless 6 - 32 inches tall. Multiple rays of disk shaped yellow flowers bloom in spring.

Habitat: Valleys, foothills and canyons. Elevation 4,500 – 10,000 feet. The communities where this plant is present consist of coniferous forest, aspen forest, pinyon-juniper, shrub steppe. Found on southern slopes in fine to coarse textured soils.



Native American

Uses: Medicinally this plant served many purposes, mostly revolving around disinfecting and cleaning wounds cuts and bruises. Although other uses insist it had internal healing power as well. Healing stomach aches, colds and sore

throats, and toothaches. The young shoots also had sedative properties and could be used as a sleeping pill if large amounts were eaten.

Leaves were used for salads. Roots were eaten raw or cooked. A staple for many tribes consisted of the seeds. They were ground into flour for cakes or bread. Root pitch was chewed by Idaho natives as gum.

Roots were used in the ceremonial rites for the runner of the Buffalo. The Runner had the responsibility of herding the buffalo to the tribes buffalo jump. The runner would submerge himself in the smoke of the smudge of the plant roots which would allow him to run more than 20 miles a day. Leaves were also wrapped on young boy's feet to practice walking silently and carefully in the woods.

Eat More Fungus



Huitlacoche, also known as cuitlacoche, corn mushroom, Mexican truffle, or caviar Azteca, is a fungus (*Ustilago maydis*) that can naturally develop on corn. It is highly seasonal and perishable, though it can be frozen, dried and canned to preserve it. Records from the 1500s indicate that indigenous

Mexicans had been eating huitlacoche for some time. Other indigenous peoples, such as the Hidatsa's of

the Dakotas also consumed huitlacoche. The flavor is a cross between mushroom and corn.

Troy Gardens

Huitlacoche Project:

We are currently exploring huitlacoche as a specialty item for Troy Community Farm. Huitlacoche has been eaten as a delicacy in Mexico for centuries. It has become internationally recognized as a gourmet food and featured in magazines such as *Bon Appétit*. Though it can occur naturally on corn, we are exploring deliberately propagating and selling huitlacoche. The huitlacoche project is also serving to introduce Madison's Hispanic community to the Troy Community Farm, and to forge linkages with local Hispanic businesses.



SESAME ENCRUSTED CHICKEN BREAST STUFFED WITH HUITLACOCHÉ IN A GREEN PEPPER SAUCE

Ingredients: 2 chicken breasts salt and pepper to taste
Filling: 3/4 pound huitlacoche, sautéed in oil
1/2 onion
Crust: 1/2 cup flour
1 egg, beaten
1/2 pound sesame seeds
1 cup oil

Sauce: 1/4 c butter
1/2 onion, chopped.
1 clove garlic, chopped
2 green peppers, chopped (remove seeds and stem)
6 sprigs of fresh cilantro, chopped
1/2 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup flour salt and pepper to taste
Garnish: 1 carrot cut into eight pieces
1 red pepper
2 zucchini Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 cup butter
1 beet
3/4 cup safflower oil



Preparation:

Preparation time: 1 1/2 hours

Separate each breast so that you have 4 pieces.

Carefully slice each horizontally (parallel to the cutting surface) without cutting all the way through so that each of the four breasts remains in one piece. Open each breast (it should be twice as big and half as thin). Pound each piece to flatten.

Finely chop the onion and sauté in oil with huitlacoche about 10 minutes or until reduced. Salt to taste. Stuff the chicken breasts with the mixture, roll or fold the breast and wrap in aluminum foil and bake until the chicken is done. Once cooked remove from foil, roll in flour, dip in beaten egg, roll in sesame seeds until covered and fry in hot oil until golden. Remove and drain.

To make the sauce: Sauté the chopped onion, garlic, green pepper and cilantro. Add a little flour, then the cream and continue cooking until sauce has thickened. Season and remove from heat, blend and strain the sauce and return to stove; heat gently.

Garnish: Dice the carrot, red pepper and zucchini into fine, precise pieces (à la brunoise). Sauté in butter and reserve. Slice the beet into thin strips (à la julienne), blanch in boiling water, drain and sauté in hot oil. Reserve separately from vegetable mixture.

To assemble: Cut the chicken into thick slices, place on a platter, arrange the vegetable mixture garnish around the chicken, cover with sauce and garnish with beets.

Contact Information

If you would like to comment on this newsletter, write an article for the next issue, or add future events to the calendar please contact the Payette County Extension Office by phone (208)642-6022 or email Payette@uidaho.edu.

If you have received this newsletter by mistake and would like to be taken off the mailing list please call or send an email.