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Propagation--Nature's Gift to Gardeners

By Larry Cohen

Every plant you see was propagated by one method or another. Most often plants are propagated (multiplied or grown anew) when seeds are scattered by the wind, water (rivers and streams) or by birds that ingested the seeds and dropped them elsewhere. Nature has her ways to make sure a species multiplies and does not die out.

Homeowners, too, can propagate plants, and not only by planting seeds. The two simplest methods are by division and tip cuttings. Many of the plants that we pay so much for can easily be propagated for no added cost giving gardeners a free gift. These plants can be used in your yard, be given as gifts to friends, or be donated to organizations, such as Weymouth Center, that have special home-grown plants sales.



Every five years or so, the clumps of irises and daylilies in our garden

become so overgrown that their flowering decreases; it's time to thin them out. And fall (after the hot weather has passed) is a great time to be able to give them extra watering. At this time, it's beneficial to dig up an entire clump of daylilies

and divide the mass into smaller pieces. Start with the outside and work your way inward by breaking off two to three growing tips to create a new clump. It's sometimes necessary to use a knife to separate the rhizomes. When dividing irises, dust the rhizomes with an insecticide to kill off or prevent iris borers. Replant the irises high on the surface of the soil so that the top of the rhizomes shows. This type of



propagation is usually most successful with perennials that have multiple

stems or thick clumps, such as grasses, salvias, hostas, and cannas.

When the parent plant, such as trees and shrubs, is not suitable for division, tip cuttings are the way to go. This gives you the opportunity to make as many cuttings as you need. Take a clipping with about four leaves and remove the bottom two leaves. Also remove any blooms or buds as they will create too much strain on the plant when it needs to concentrate on growing roots. Dip the bottom half in rooting power which you can buy at any full-service garden center. Shake off the excess before planting.

When potting up my plant divisions or tip cuttings, I use a general potting soil that I put in a low, but wide, flower pot. A golf tee or thin pencil makes the right size hole to slip the cuttings into. If you have an irrigation system, put the flower pots under a tree in a shady location where the water will spray them. If you do not have regular irrigation, put the pot in a plastic bag to conserve humidity, and check the pot every few days to make sure it stays damp. After several weeks, give the plant a gentle tug. If it resists your pull, it means roots have formed.

Many people claim that they have success rooting cuttings in water. This does work with all plants. However, the roots created are most likely aquatic roots. The down side of this process is that aquatic roots and soil roots are not the same. When aquatic roots are put in soil, the plant becomes stressed because it now needs to start over and develop soil roots.

Do what works best for you and your plants. And if your chosen process doesn't work the first time, try again using a different location or technique. You'll soon discover how rewarding, easy, and inexpensive plant propagation can be.

Monthly Gardening Activities

By Susan Strine

- There are still many hot days ahead, so to prolong the life of your plants, keep up a regular watering schedule. Pay particular attention to container plants as they dry out quickly at this time of year.
- Mulch to conserve moisture.
- Pull weeds before they go to seed. You will have the best success with removing all the roots if you weed after a rainfall.
- Begin gathering herbs for drying. Pick in the morning for best flavor and if necessary pat them to remove any dew or moisture. Tie in bunches of about six stems and hang upside down in a warm, airy room.
- Now is a great time to plant seeds for winter vegetables.
- Watch for lawn diseases and call the Master Gardener Hotline for help with identification and suggestions for a solution or for any other gardening questions you may have.
- If you don't have one already, consider buying or making a rain barrel to catch rain draining off your roof. Just think about how full that barrel would now be after the recent plentiful rains of July.
- Consider adding a native vine to your landscape. Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), and crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) are good choices.

What's Bugging You?

By Sandy McShea



If you live on or near a farm, or if you use manure to enrich your gardens, you have probably seen one or more of the 5,000 species of dung beetle--*scarabaeinae*.

On our farm, summer brings many luminescent green scarabs flying around. Busy buzzing here and there, they could easily be mistaken for large Japanese beetles. Don't swat them though, they are good bugs. *Scarabaeinae* aid in the decomposition of dung and thereby provide many benefits to garden, pasture and animal health. They compete with flies for food and breeding resources, enrich the soil by burying large quantities of nutrient-rich manure, and mix and aerate the soil by creating lots of tunnels.

Adult males and females, working in pairs, dig deep burrows underneath animal manure in which they bury por-

tions of the droppings. Eggs, deposited in the excrement, hatch and C-shaped grubs (larvae) feed on the dung buried by the adults. The grubs develop through several stages before pupating within the cells in the remaining excrement.

In 2006, research conducted for The American Institute of Biological Sciences indicated that dung beetles save the United States cattle industry in excess of \$380,000 a year.

Scarabaeinae exist around the world and feed off of all kinds of manure. Some have been observed rolling balls of manure many times their own size. It is this act of rolling balls of dung that ancient Egyptians likened to the sun god Khepri rolling the sun above the horizon each day, hence their worship of the "sacred scarab." .

Plant of the Month: Monarda

By Sandy McShea



I have found that with my poor Sandhills soil I sometimes welcome a plant that in other areas I would have considered too invasive. Monarda (*Labiatae Monarda didyma/ monarda fistulosa*)

falls in that category.

An upright perennial herb in the mint family, monarda grows from 2 to 4 feet tall in clumps, that mass up to 3 feet wide. Monarda have square stems and oval serrated leaves with interesting flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

The flowers of *M. didyma* are red and it seems to do fairly well in moist soil. *M. fistulosa* is happier in

drier soils, is drought tolerant, and has purple flowers. Both *M. didyma* and *M. fistulosa* are native to North America.

Monarda grows well in full sun to partial shade.

Deadheading will prolong its summer bloom period.

Mildew is the plant's biggest nuisance, with *M. fistulosa* being less susceptible. NC State research has indicated that Marshall's Delight, Claire Grace and Stone's Throw Pink are *didyma* hybrids that are "highly resistant" to local mildew.

Monarda's common name, "Oswego Tea," stems from *M. didyma's* use as a beverage and it is said was used during the Revolutionary War as a substitute for black tea.

Recipe of the Month

By Kathy Peterson RD, LDN



Fall is just around the corner with leaves changing, football season, and abundant North Carolina fruit options. Apples are just one of many kinds of produce available in our area. They taste great all alone or in any number of dishes. Check out the plentiful recipe sites on the web to find recipes for apples in every menu course, from appetizers, salads, meat dishes, beverages, and, of course, desserts. Who can resist apple pie, cake, or cider, and what is a pork chop without some homemade apple sauce?

The old saying, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" may be true as apples unpeeled are a good source of fiber and vitamin C.

Homemade Applesauce

- 4-6 unpeeled medium apples
- Water
- 1 Tbsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- Sugar to taste*

Wash and core each apple. Cut into quarters. Place quartered apples in a large saucepan. Fill pan with water to half cover the apples. Add cinnamon and nutmeg.

Bring water to a simmer and cook until the apples become soft. Once cooked, place the apples into a food processor and pulse until desired consistency. For a twist, try a chunkier applesauce.

*Taste the sauce before adding sugar as many varieties of apples have enough natural sweetness of their own.

Gardening Questions?

Call the MG
Hotline

(910) 947-3188



Monday - Friday

10 am - Noon

March - October

Activities of Interest

By Alexis Bohmeyer

Nature's Treasures Trail Adventure

When: Saturday, August 25; 9am-Noon

Where: SCC Horticultural Children's Garden

A *free, family event* created for all ages, especially those from 5-13. Treasure maps will be available to take you through six areas of discovery. Refreshments served. Register with Tricia Mabe at 695-3882.

Picnic in the Gardens

When: Thursday, September 20; 5:30-8:30pm

Where: SCC Horticultural Gardens

A picnic supper catered by Pik n' Pig with listening and dancing music in the gardens. Proceeds to benefit the SCC landscape gardening department. Admission: \$30 for Horticultural Society members and \$35 for non-members. Contact Tricia Mabe (695-3882) for reservations.

Discover Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve

When: Daily, 9am-6pm, thru November
(Interpretive programs every Sunday at 3pm)

Where: Weymouth Woods Exhibit Hall & Visitors Center

Open throughout the year, this 900-acre preserve offers more than four miles of easy-to-hike trails through unspoiled native lands with native hardwood and longleaf trees, swampland, and a bog filled with ferns, pitcher plants and shrubs. At the Exhibit Hall you can experience interactive, hands-on exhibits on the significance of our longleaf pine.



Taylor Williams
Extension Agent, Agriculture
Moore County Center
707 Pinehurst Avenue
Carthage, NC 28327

Staff:

Janet Bryant	sjan21@yahoo.com
Barb Cline	btcline@embarqmail.com
Dee Dee Forehand	nctutu@yahoo.com
Helen Munro	hsmunro@ac.net
Kathy Peterson	kathleenj.peterson@yahoo.com
Sandy McShea	swmcshea@embarqmail.com
Susan Strine	lowstrine@aol.com

Don't miss our next edition in September 2012.

For additional copies of this and past newsletter issues, go to ces.ncsu.edu and search for "Dig This."

Disclaimer: Dig This is produced by the Moore County Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) in conjunction with the NC Extension Service. Its purpose is to share with the general public some of the MGV's enthusiasm for gardening and some of their activities. The information contained herein is based on sources that the Master Gardener Volunteers believe to be reliable, but they do not represent that the information herein is accurate or complete.