

UConn Home & Garden Education Center Knowledge to Grow On!

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MAY IS FOR MAPLE SEEDLINGS, MILKWEED, & MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION OF SOILS

Hello Fellow Gardeners! You are receiving this email because you have provided us with your email address either when having your soil analyzed or testing the horticultural prowess and investigative abilities of our incredibly well-versed staff at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center! Or, we just might have thought you would enjoy this e-newsletter. If you do not wish to receive our monthly email updates on gardening tips, pest problems, events and other information, please email us at ladybug@uconn.edu and ask to be removed from this list.

Pest Patrol/Current Concerns/Topics of Interest:



Maple seedlings
Image by Susan Pelton



Baltimore checkerspot on milkweed
Image by Pamm Cooper



Microplastics
image by Kristiansand, Norway

What are those seedlings all over the yard?

This is a banner year for Maple seedlings as they have germinated in the hundreds all over our lawns. Regular mowing will control them as the new seedlings root reserves are used up and the plant is unable to make and store new carbohydrates to use for growth. Hand-pulling the seedlings is a good option where they are growing in flower and vegetable beds.

Milkweed: Not Just for the Monarchs!

Milkweed, *Asclepias*, is best known as the plant which is host to the caterpillars of the Monarch butterfly but it is also a great plant for other pollinators and even birds. Butterflies that are attracted to milkweed nectar include the painted ladies, fritillaries, red admirals, and swallowtails. Hummingbirds and their namesake, the hummingbird clearwing moth are also attracted to the complex flowers of the milkweed as are many bees and wasps. Among the different species of milkweed that are perennials in the Northeast are the Butterfly weed (*A. tuberosa*), Common milkweed (*A. syriaca*), Poke milkweed (*A. exaltata*), Swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), and the Whorled milkweed (*A. verticillata*). Visit our newest fact sheet, [Milkweed](#), for additional information.

Microplastics in the Environment

Microplastics are increasingly finding their way into our soils, possibly at greater rates than they are found in our oceans. As most plastics disintegrate instead of decomposing this can result in microplastic pieces which are measured as less than 0.2” (5mm) and nanoplastics which are less than 0.000004”. These plastics can end up in agricultural soil, on golf courses, and in home gardens when treated sewer sludge, also known as biosolids, is used as fertilizer. For some interesting reading check out these articles: World Landscape Architect’s [‘Microplastic Pollution of Soils’](#) and Food Safety News’ [‘Sewage Sludge as Fertilizer: Safe?’](#).

Birds Like Milkweed too!

Have you thought about adding some new flowering plants, shrubs, and trees to your landscape this month? Native perennial and annual plants will not only be the easiest to care for as they are already adapted to soil and weather but they will benefit so many native species. Birds can enjoy many aspects of native plants, from the nectar to the fruits to the seeds, all season long. Native plants can also provide places to nest and shelter. The National Audubon Society has a list of [10 Plants for a Bird-Friendly Yard](#) that start you in the right direction. The list includes the above-mentioned perennial milkweed, vines such as Virginia creeper, and trees in the Dogwood species.

The Bunnies are Back



The Eastern Cottontail and the New England Cottontail rabbits are actively bounding through our yards as they nibble away at any tender new growth that they can reach. Although they are considered prolific breeders only 15% of the litter may survive the first year as they fall prey to hawks, snakes, foxes, and even humans.



Evidence of their feeding habits in the spring can be seen on the ragged edges of tulip leaves or if they are lucky enough to have access to a vegetable bed, on the first leaves of beets and spinach. Fencing that has a mesh smaller than 1”, is 2 ½ to 3’ high and extends 6” below ground is the best way to exclude rabbits from an area. See our fact sheet [Rabbits](#) for additional information.

Dogwood Borers

Dogwood borers, *Synanthedon scitula*, are one of the most serious pests of flowering dogwood trees in Connecticut, especially of young trees which are frequently killed. The adult clear-wing moths emerge from late-May to September but it is their larvae which will do the most damage. The female adult moth will lay her eggs on the bark of the tree, usually near a wound or opening. The newly-hatched larvae cannot chew through the bark so they will enter through any available openings. They then tunnel into the cambium layer where they will feed, overwinter, and then pupate before emerging as adults the next spring. Control measures may be found in our fact sheet, [Dogwood Borers](#), although the easiest thing to do is to avoid damage to the bark with lawn tools.



Dogwood borer Image by Terry S. Price, Georgia Forestry Commission, Bugwood.org

Ten Tips for the May Gardener:

Click on highlighted links for additional information.

For a more extensive list of tips go to [Gardening Tips for May](#) at our website.

- Scout for [black vine weevil](#) adults feeding on the foliage of *Rhododendron* sp., *Taxus* sp., *Euonymus* sp. and *Ilex crenata* and use a foliar insecticide.
- [Lily leaf beetles](#) often show up first in spring on leaves of the crown imperial (*Fritillaria*). Check both sides of the leaves and down inside the center whorl of leaves.
- Clematis vines like cool roots so apply mulch or plant a low-growing ground cover to shade the ground.
- As night temperatures moderate into the 60's, move houseplants outdoors (avoid full sun and windy locations).
- Harden off tomato, eggplant and pepper transplants before planting out at end of month.
- Plant a second crop of lettuce, arugula, spinach, and radishes for healthy, homegrown salads.
- Clear grass and weeds from root zone areas around tree trunks and remove any suckers growing from the base of the trees such as apples and crabapples.
- Ground covers such as vinca, ajuga, pachysandra, creeping foamflowers, and ivy can be divided and transplanted now to create new beds or enlarge existing ones.
- Wait to prune evergreens, hedges and other shrubs until late spring into early summer.
- Hummingbirds and orioles return to northern states by mid-May. Clean and refill feeders to attract these colorful birds to your backyard or fill hanging baskets with flowers that will attract them such as petunias, salvia, and fuchsia.

It is Never too Late to Have Your Soil Tested for Macro- & Micronutrients



Our standard nutrient analysis includes pH, macro- and micronutrients, a lead scan and as long as we know what you are growing, the results will contain limestone and fertilizer recommendations. The cost is \$12/sample. You are welcome to come to the lab with your 'one cup of soil' but most people are content to simply place their sample in a zippered bag and mail it in. For details on submitting a sample, go to the [UConn Soil and Nutrient Laboratory](#).

Image by dmp, UConn

Click on the Following Links to Visit Any of Our Sites:

[UCONN EXTENSION](#)

[UCONN FOOD SAFETY](#)

[UCONN HOME & GARDEN EDUCATION CENTER](#)

[UCONN PLANT DIAGNOSTIC LAB](#)

[UCONN SCIENCE OF GMOS](#)

[UCONN SOIL NUTRIENT ANALYSIS LAB](#)

Events/ Programs/Save the Date:

[UCONN GARDEN MASTER CLASSES](#) are offered through the UConn Extension Master Gardener Program. These classes provide continuing education for Certified Master Gardeners as part of the Advanced Master Gardener certification process. These classes are also open to the **General Public**. Anyone with an interest in gardening and horticulture is welcome.

Growing Trends at the Garden Barn Wednesday, May 2, 2018 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
The Garden Barn Nursery, Vernon, CT. Instructor: Kim Gliha

Boot Camp for Your Senses Wednesday, May 3, 2018, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Edgerton Park Carriage House, New Haven, CT. Instructor: Tovah Martin

Digital Garden Photography Basics Sunday, May 6, 2018 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Auer Farm, Bloomfield, CT. Instructor: Pamm Cooper

The Plain Truth About Bee Keeping Wednesday, May 16, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.
Chunnie Town Farm, East Haddam, CT. Instructor: Linda Stuhlman

Pruning Trees and Shrubs Tuesday, May 22, 2018 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Fairfield County Extension Center, Bethel, CT Instructor: Dan Dalton

Forest Pests: Emerald Ash Borer and More Friday, May 25, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Tolland County Agricultural Center, Vernon, CT Instructor: Jude Hsiang

Mountain Laurel: An Intimate Introduction Wednesday, June 6, 2018 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Broken Arrow Nursery, Hamden, CT Instructor: Dick Jaynes

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station-New Haven

Toxin-Antitoxin Systems: Implications for Plant Diseases? Wednesday, May 9, 2018

Instructor: Dr. Teja Shidore

Invasive Plant Control Workshop-From Theory to Practice Tuesday, June 12, 2018 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Windsor, CT

Connecticut College

Annual Wildflower Walk Friday, May 4, 2018, from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.

Williams Street entrance to the Arboretum; meet at the Outdoor Theater. Instructor: Glenn Dreyer, Arboretum Director

Free

Just for Kids: Wildflower Walk Friday, May 4, 2018 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Meet at Arboretum entrance on Williams Street. Caroline Driscoll, Arboretum Volunteer

Free, reservations requested. Appropriate for ages 4 to 10, accompanied by an adult.

Annual Friends Celebration: Azalea Garden Walk and Reception Thursday, May 24, 2018, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Meet at Arboretum entrance on Williams Street.

Free to members, reservations required.

CT DEEP Programs

Phenological Walk Saturday May 5, 12, & 19, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

James L. Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton, CT. Instructor: Carrie Crompton

A Connecticut Medicinal Herb Garden Sunday, May 6, 2018 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

James L. Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton, CT. Instructor: Debra Hultgren

Gardener's Roundtable Saturday, May 26, 2018 from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

James L. Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton, CT.



UConn Department of Animal Science Summer Riding Lessons

Looking for something fun to do this summer? How about horseback riding? Or Polo lessons?

Once again, the University of Connecticut's Animal Science Department will be offering its popular Summer Riding Program to the public. Please note that Dressage, Hunt Seat, Polo, Western riding lessons and Trail Riding are open to adults and children who meet the minimum age requirements.



[UConn Equestrian, Western, and Dressage Teams 2018 Spring Shows](#)

Equestrian

Tuesday, May 1st to Sunday, May 6th, 2018, the IHSA Nationals in Harrisburg, VA

Western Team

Tuesday, May 1st to Sunday, May 6th, 2018, the IHSA Nationals in Harrisburg, VA

Please contact [Coach Alena Meacham](#) for more details.

[UConn Extension](#)

Planning to Build a Rain Garden? Download the [UConn Rain Garden app](#) first. This free app uses video tutorials, diagrams, text, and tools to help you determine the size and placement, the selection of plants, and the maintenance of your rain garden.

KNOWLEDGE TO GROW ON!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

[Coffee Flour Offers a Potentially Healthier Way of Enjoying Java](#)

[Does the Mediterranean Diet Boost Beneficial Bacteria?](#)

[People Waste Nearly a Pound of Food Daily](#)

[Raw Dough's a Raw Deal and Could make You Sick](#)

[3-D Printed Food Could Change How We Eat](#)

CLIMATE CORNER

[Farmers Along the 100th Meridian Stand to be Hard Hit by Climate Change](#)

[Forced to Move: Climate Change Already Displacing U.S. Communities](#)

[NASA's New Space 'Botanist' Arrives at Launch Site](#)

WHO KNEW?

[Dodo's Violent Death Revealed](#)

[How Would We Know if Intelligent Life Existed on Earth Before Humans?](#)

[The Dinosaur Menu, as Revealed by Calcium](#)

A New Pest to Watch For



Image by Lawrence Barringer, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org

Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*)

This Asian plant hopper was introduced into southeast Pennsylvania in 2014. It poses a threat to a broad range of deciduous forest, ornamental and fruit trees as well as grape. Both nymphs and adults feed on sap through the bark, injuring the plant. Efforts are underway to eradicate the pest in Pennsylvania. Become familiar with the appearance of all life stages of this insect and report it to one of the state diagnostic labs if seen in Connecticut: [UConn Plant Diagnostic Lab](#) or [CT Agricultural Experiment Station Entomology Dept.](#) This video produced by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture shows what to look for and when: [A Potential Threat to Agriculture](#)

We Need Your Support!

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