MAY is for Moss, Mole Crickets, Migrating Monarchs and Mystic Illusion

Hello Fellow Gardeners! You are receiving this email because you have provided us with your email address either when subscribing to our quarterly newsletter, 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:

Connecticut May See Reduced Peach Crop
While the early April snowstorm might be most memorable to us because of the really, really terrible commutes we had on the way home April 4th, the worst day of the winter for many of our plants occurred over Valentine’s Day weekend when temperatures plummeted to more than 10 degrees F below zero. Jon Clements, a University of Massachusetts tree fruit specialist, predicts that there may not be a peach in Massachusetts, Rhode Island or Connecticut as peach and nectarine trees planted here are not hardy enough for their flowering buds to withstand such a drop in temperatures especially after, the previous months were relatively mild. UConn Fruit IPM Specialist Mary Concklin believes that there will be a partial peach crop in orchards along the shore while more inland it would depend on both the variety and site location. She reminds backyard orchardists that trees need to be pruned even if no fruit is produced this year and passed on this link: http://extension.psu.edu/plants/tree-fruit/news/2014/considerations-for-pruning-peach-trees-with-no-crop
Moss in Lawns and Gardens
We get many complaints about moss growing in lawns and gardens from clients who send soils to the UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab (www.soiltest.uconn.edu) for testing. Many suspect that acidic soils are encouraging moss growth. In reality, moss is tolerant to a fairly wide range of soil pH levels but turf grasses do best if the soil pH is 6.4 or so. Moss also tolerates shade, poorly drained soils and compaction. None of these conditions are conducive to a healthy lawn. For information on moss causes and control see: http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu/MossControl.htm. Other folks appreciate and even encourage moss growth in their yards. Researchers from the U.S. Forest Service found moss to be helpful in evaluating pollutants in urban areas: How tree moss could revolutionize what we know about air pollution –

Monarchs Need More Than Milkweed
The decline of Monarch butterflies has been blamed on decreasing milkweed populations due to herbicides, GE-crops and habitat loss both in the United States and in their overwintering ground in Mexico. Recently Cornell University researchers discovered another cause for their decline – lack of pollen sources for adult butterflies in the fall on their southward journey (https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/04/160422163150.htm). Adult Monarchs feed on pollen from a number of flowers and especially are attracted to composites like daisies, zinnias, boltonia, tithonia and coneflowers. Check out on-line resources or call the UConn Home & Garden Education Center (877) 486-6271 for planting suggestions and be sure to encourage friends or relatives south of us to plant fall flowering annuals, perennials and shrubs to provide a pollen source for migrating Monarchs.

Lily Leaf Beetle Biological Control 2016 - Looking for Volunteer Gardens in Connecticut
Researchers at UConn are conducting a lily leaf beetle biological control project during the summer of 2016. If you grow lilies in Connecticut, have a minimum of 12 plants in the lily family (e.g., Oriental lilies, Asiatic lilies, Turk’s Cap lilies, or Fritillaria) in your garden and have lily leaf beetles feeding on them, we would like your help. We will be introducing two species of beneficial parasitic wasps in June and would like to collect lily leaf beetle larvae from May through August. The parasitoid wasps attack lily leaf beetle larvae, and over time these natural enemies will disperse from release sites and begin to spread through the state to reduce populations of lily leaf beetles. The wasps were first introduced in Connecticut in 2012 and have also been released in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, where they are establishing and starting to impact lily leaf beetle populations. Please contact Gail Reynolds, Middlesex County Master Gardener Coordinator (gail.reynolds@uconn.edu; phone 860-345-5234) if you would like to participate in the research project. Information on lily leaf beetle biological control is available on the UConn Integrated Pest Management (IPM) website – click here for a fact sheet and an infographic on the project.

Mole Crickets Moving to Connecticut
The Center received a call about northern mole crickets this past week. This typically more southern species has been reported in Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Illinois in recent years. They damage turf by tunneling through
it and are particularly attracted to moister soils. Illinois researchers are wondering if changes in rainfall patterns in the Northeast and Midwest might be a factor in their northward spread.

**Soil Temperatures**

Temperatures have been fluctuating a lot this past month. One day it is sunny and warm and in the 70’s and the next morning temperatures go down to the 40’s. What’s a gardener to do? First realize that frosts may occur in Connecticut until the middle of May and even a couple of weeks later at higher altitudes. Do not set out tender vegetables like tomatoes, peppers and squash until then and keep an eye on the weather forecasts. As far as planting seeds in the soil, depending on the plant species, the seed requires a certain minimum soil temperature to germinate. [Click here for a list of common vegetables and the minimum and optimal soil temperatures for seed germination ...](#)

Topics that the Center is getting calls or emails on include winter damage to forsythia, pruning apple trees, seeds not germinating, winter moths, Eastern tent caterpillars, soil aeration, fertilizers and grub control. If you have specific questions, gardening queries or pest problems, check out our website, [www.ladybug.uconn.edu](http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu) or call the UConn Home & Garden Education Center (877) 486-6271 (toll-free in CT). Your County Cooperative Extension Centers are also listed on the website.

**Ten Tips for the May Gardener:**

1. Plant tomatoes, peppers and melons after the danger of frost is past and the soil temperature is 65° F, usually the last week in May. Plant tomatoes, potatoes, and eggplant in different locations each year to reduce insect and disease problems.

2. Keep mower blades sharp and set your mower height at 2-3 inches. Remove no more than one-third of the total height per mowing and mulch to return nitrogen and other nutrients to the soil.

3. Hummingbirds and orioles return to northern states by mid-May. Clean and refill feeders to attract these colorful birds to your backyard. Hummingbirds are attracted to flowers with trumpet-shaped blooms such as columbine, salvia, and fuchsia.

4. Start to monitor lilies for red lily leaf beetles. Check the underside of leaves for the clusters of tiny orange eggs and remove. Spray with neem every 5-7 days to kill larvae and adults or handpick and destroy.

5. Remove any sucker growths from fruit trees as soon as they appear.

6. Plant dahlias, gladioli, cannas and other summer flowering bulbs. Put hoops and stakes in place for floppy plants while they are still small.

7. Ground covers such as vinca, ajuga, pachysandra, creeping foamflowers, lamium, and ivy can be divided and transplanted now to create new beds or enlarge existing ones.

8. When transplanting annuals and vegetables, be gentle with the root ball. These plants have small root masses that are easily damaged.

9. Weed around the bases of trees and shrubs and apply a 2 to 3 inch layer of mulch but do not place it directly against the trunk.

10. Lay soaker hoses in flower and shrub gardens.
White grub biocontrol workshop: from beneficial bacteria to peonies for Tipha

Come to learn about the biocontrol toolbox for white grub management. The tools include *Bacillus thuringiensis* bacteria, beneficial nematodes and Tipha parasitoids among others. We will show you how to use these biocontrol agents. Then watch in the field a fascinating and beneficial interaction between peonies and Spring Tipha parasitoids. Find out how we can help these parasitoids as they help us control white grubs.

**Free Outdoors Workshop * Pre-registration is required.**

To register send an e-mail to ana.legrand@uconn.edu. Space is limited. Pick any of the two available dates. Dress for the outdoors but we will have some indoor time too.

**When:**
Saturday May 21 (rain date May 22) 9:30 am – 12:00 pm or
Tuesday May 24 (rain date May 25) 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

**Where:**
UConn Plant Science Research and Education Facility
59 Agronomy Road, Storrs. Agronomy Road is off Rt. 195 (Storrs Road) and in between Flaherty Rd. and E Rd.

**From I-84:** Take exit 68 (Route 195), head south on Rte. 195, towards the UConn campus (this is a right turn if coming Hartford and a left if coming from Massachusetts.) Travel 8.8 miles on Rte. 195, pass through the UConn campus, then turning left onto Agronomy Road, the farm is at the end of the road. Landmarks: Second left after Liberty Bank.

**From Route 44:** Travel to Rte. 195, towards the UConn campus, (this is a right turn if coming from Hartford and left if coming from Poquonn.) From the junction of Rte. 195 and Rte 44, travel 3.0 miles on Rte 195, pass through the UConn campus, then turn left onto Agronomy Road. The farm is at the end of the road.

**From Willimantic and points east:** At the intersection of Rte. 195 and Rte. 6, travel 5.3 miles north on Rte. 195 and turn right onto Agronomy Road. The farm is at the end of road.

This program is sponsored by the UConn IPM Program and USDA NIFA.
**Garden Master Classes** (open to all, fee, [http://mastergardener.uconn.edu/](http://mastergardener.uconn.edu/))

**Pond Management, Part II** Thursday, May 19, 2016 6 to 8 pm. Litchfield County Extension Center. Deadline for registration: May 13th. Instructor: Robert Gambino.

**Wild Grasses** Friday, May 20, 2016 from 9 to 11 am. Middlesex County Extension Center. Deadline for registration: May 13th. Instructor: Lauren Brown.

**Extension Center/Bartlett Arboretum Fairs/Plant Sales:**

**Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens** in Stamford. Saturday May 14, 2016 from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm. Plant sale – natives, herbs, heirloom vegetables and more. [www.bartlettarboretum.org](http://www.bartlettarboretum.org)

**Tolland Master Gardeners Plant Sale** Saturday May 21, 2016 from 9 am to noon at the Tolland Agricultural Center in Vernon. Master Gardeners will be available to answer gardening questions. Great prices on perennials, herbs and vegetables. Information on pollinators, bring ½ cup soil for a free soil pH test, free demonstrations.

**Bethel Gardening Fair** Saturday June 18, 2016 from 10 am to 3 pm at the Fairfield County Extension Center in Bethel, CT. The theme this year is Sustainable Solutions. Join them for demonstrations, walks, presentations, a plant sale and farmers’ market. [http://www.bethelgardenfair.org/](http://www.bethelgardenfair.org/)

**UConn Blooms – Best Geraniums in the State!**

That's not only our feeling but also that of our customers who travel up to 60 miles to get here! Big and beautiful geranium plants are grown right here on campus. In three shades of pink, two of red and classic white, our geraniums are priced at $4.99 each and they are twice the size of box store plants! UConn Blooms also has a very good selection of herbs (oregano, basil, chives, rosemary), annuals (begonias, fushias, petunias), and vegetables (Check out our tomatoes of all different colors and shapes).

With the cold weather finally leaving, now's the time to start your summer gardening. Mother's Day, Graduation, and Memorial Day begin the planting season. Come in before the end of the month for your best selection. Stop by our store located in the Floriculture Building on Rt. 195 to see what we have to offer. Order online at uconnblooms@uconn.edu or by phone at (860) 486 – 6000. **UConn Blooms operates in two locations, inside the UConn Co-op and its main storefront in the Floriculture Building.**

UConn Blooms is located in the Floriculture Building on Route 195 (1395 Storrs Road) across from the yellow barn. Parking is available alongside our greenhouses in the driveway. We are open from 10:30 to 5:00 Monday through Friday and we will deliver on campus. Look for us online at [https://web9.uits.uconn.edu/uconnblooms/](https://web9.uits.uconn.edu/uconnblooms/) or email uconnblooms@uconn.edu.
KNOWLEDGE TO GROW ON!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Green light for plant-based food packaging

Bored people reach for the chips

Compared to the rest of the world, the **US spends more money on pizza than anyone else.**

**Feeding the world without further deforestation is possible**

**Eating dark chocolate as a daily snack could help boost athletic performance**

**Fresh fruit associated with lower risk of heart attack and stroke**

**Green tea and iron don’t mix**

**CLIMATE CORNER**

**CT's Changing Climate** *(from DEEP – Decade after decade CT Springtime is getting warmer)*

Recent warmer winters may be cooling climate change concern

**WHO KNEW?**

Earth may be home to one trillion species

More exposure to vegetation linked with lower mortality rates in women

Public health study: Private gardens are more restorative than lounges

Fertilizer's legacy: Taking a toll on land and water

Lifestyle has a strong impact on intestinal bacteria, which has a strong impact on health

**UConn PLANT DIAGNOSTIC LAB WEBSITE:** [www.plant.lab.uconn.edu](http://www.plant.lab.uconn.edu)

**UConn SOIL NUTRIENT ANALYSIS LAB WEBSITE:** [www.soiltest.uconn.edu](http://www.soiltest.uconn.edu)

**UConn EXTENSION WEBSITE:** [www.extension.uconn.edu](http://www.extension.uconn.edu)

**UConn FOOD SAFETY WEBSITE:** [www.foodsafety.uconn.edu](http://www.foodsafety.uconn.edu)

**UConn SUSTAINABLE LIVING WEBSITE:** [www.sustainableliving.uconn.edu](http://www.sustainableliving.uconn.edu)

**CT 10% Campaign: Take the pledge!**
Pledge to spend 10% of your food dollars locally at [http://www.buyctgrown.com/ct-10-percent](http://www.buyctgrown.com/ct-10-percent). Locally grown food sustains CT’s farming community but more importantly, locally grown and raised food will also increase food security in our Northeast region and support local economies.
Mystic Illusion is an absolute rock star in the landscape. Its lemon yellow blooms pop against the dark foliage, creating quite a show even when viewed from a distance. The plants are quite resistant to powdery mildew, making them easier for you to manage. Standing 18-36” tall, they also make fantastic thrillers in combination containers. Fine Gardening Magazine Trial Garden Recommendation.

Mystic Illusion *Dahlia hybrid* 'Knockout' USPP 18,339
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If you do enjoy our efforts to keep you informed about horticultural and College-related items, please consider showing your support by liking us on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/pages/UConn-Home-Garden-Center/136211899745967, checking out our weekly blog www.uconnladybug.wordpress.com, or subscribing to our printed, 20-page quarterly newsletter for $12/year (new price starting March 1st) or sign up for free email version. Find the subscription form at http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu/newsletter/index.html

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