LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Elbert County Extension Update
May 3, 2021

Greetings from the extension office. Things are busy with planning and doing. 4-H is in full swing with the Elbert County Fair is just around the corner. The Elbert County Fair is July 31st through August 8th and the theme is Meatin' at the Fair. (Please see page 7 for more information.)

Soil Properties
Many of our population centers are on heavy clay soil. These soils have poor aeration that limits root growth. Thus the ability of plants to replenish water loss brought about by low humidity and wind is limited. Adding more water to such soils further complicates the problem because the water added reduces the amount of air in the soil, causing oxygen starvation to the roots. Little can be done to modify humidity and wind, so the obvious solution is to improve the soil. See fact sheet 7.235, Choosing a Soil Amendment. https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/garden/07235.pdf

Information for soils testing and analysis can be found at http://www.soiltestinglab.colostate.edu/ and https://servitechlabs.com/Services/Soil/tabid/63/Default.aspx.

We have a soil probe here at the office for public use for soils samples. Call or e-mail for details 303-621-3162 and coopext_elbert_mg@Mail.Colostate.edu

Please see the included update for information regarding the Demonstration Garden project at the Kiowa Library . (See page 8)

Elbert County is pleased to participate in the Grow and Give project for more details please go to: https://growgive.extension.colostate.edu/

Master Gardeners will continue their virtual hours through May and will have in office hours starting June 1st Tuesday and Thursdays 1-4:30 pm. Please call, e-mail, or come by with any gardening questions. The Elbert County Master Gardeners are here to offer guidance for your growing and gardening challenges.
Thank you.
Elbert County CSU Extension

Two - Tailed Swallowtail Papilio multicaudata
By Raylene Owen, Colorado Master Gardener - Elbert County

Photo by Raylene Owen

Many of these large yellow and black striped butterflies float gracefully in flight through Elbert County. It has two tails and beautiful blue markings on each hind wing.
The caterpillars feed on our native chokecherry, ash, willow, cottonwood, and poplar. This butterfly is a veritable golden gift from nature as it feasts on the pollen and nectar of a sunflower. In 2001 it officially became the State Butterfly of Arizona.

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LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

By Lesley Roper, Colorado Master Gardener - Elbert County

I saw a bumper sticker recently that said "I'm not a Colorado native but I got here as soon as I could". We could say that for many of our plant species as well, that is, transplanted from many other parts of the country. A Colorado native perennial is defined as any plant that existed in Colorado prior to European settlement.

If you have been a gardener in Colorado for any length of time you know it can be a challenge....low humidity, 70 degrees one day and 30 the next, alkaline/clay/stick to your shovel soils, did I mention wind, and (bite my tongue)....hail. Gardeners that select the right plant species for their locale, assist with soil development, consider their microclimates, irrigate appropriately, and can endure trying circumstances with patience will be a successful gardener in Colorado (maybe).

Selecting native (indigenous) plants well suited to an area can provide numerous benefits. Native plants create wildlife habitat for birds, mammals (yes, I'm sorry that includes deer), butterflies, and insects. Native plants contribute to biodiverse habitats that otherwise would be lost. Native plants are also naturally adapted to our climate, soils and environmental conditions and will require less water, generally less maintenance, less pesticides and fertilization. Native plants selected for a specific site generally do not require extensive soil amendment, as they are adapted to native soils, however many natives will require a well-drained soil. Successful establishment of native planting will require supplemental watering initially but can be reduced as plants become established. Typically, native plants do not need any fertilization or pesticide applications.

Colorado is a diverse place in its elevation, topography, rainfall, sun exposure and soils. It is important to consider your site's life zone(s) and select native or plants well suited for your area(s). There are also many plants that are not native but are adapted to Colorado's climate and can be utilized as long as they are suitable for your site's moisture, light and soil conditions. Consider utilizing Plant Select for selecting adapted plant species as well.

When gardening with native plants select plants that match the light, soil, and moisture requirements of your location. Group plants with similar light and moisture requirements together. Consider bloom times and select plants with overlapping bloom times, this will provide flowers and forage for pollinators throughout the season. Consider the mature size of the plants and plant in groups or mass for visual impact.

Consider utilizing these resources at ext.colostate.edu to assist with plant selection and successful gardening in Colorado.
CSU Extension Fact Sheets

- Native Herbaceous Perennials for Colorado Landscapes #7.242
  https://extension.colostate.edu/?s=native+herbaceous+perennials&submit=
- Native Shrubs for Colorado Landscapes #7.422 https://extension.colostate.edu/?s=native+shrubs&submit=
- Native Trees for Colorado Landscape #7.421
  https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/native-trees-for-colorado-landscapes-7-421/

Plant Select ® is a non-profit cultivator, distributor and educator of plants designed to thrive in the high plains and inter mountain region https://plantselect.org/

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LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Monarda Fistulosa, AKA Bee Balm

By Cathy Ramsey, Colorado Master Gardener - Elbert County

This is one of my favorite native plants. It is dainty, fragrant, and loved by pollinators.

Monarda fistulosa, commonly called wild bergamot, is a native perennial that occurs in dryish soils on prairies, dry rocky woods and glade margins, unplanted fields and along roads and railroads. It is a clump-forming, mint family member that grows typically to 2'- 4' tall. It naturalizes readily especially in open woods and prairies. Please note that the “fistulosa” species in the native version. While other species have brighter colors, the fistulosa is the best one for pollinators.

It works well in many types of gardens. It provides color and contrast for the herb garden, wild garden, native plant garden, meadow or naturalized area. It is easily propagated from seed. This little beauty is also resistant to deer and rabbits.

Bee balm is easy going when it comes to cultural conditions. It is deciduous and has a clumping habit. Six or more hours of direct sunlight per day is preferred but it can take partial shade. This plant requires good drainage, likes to be moist but can be occasionally dry. There are no serious insect or disease problems but powdery mildew is possible. It is hardy in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 3 – 9.

As its common name implies, honeybees and native bees love this plant. It blooms in mid to late summer. It also attracts butterflies and hummingbirds who draw nectar from the blooms.

The monarda fistulosa is a great native plant for Elbert County. Its flowers are tubular shaped and come in pink and pink/lavender colors. It is fragrant and can be used in a cut flower arrangements. (Why would you, though, given that bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds love them so much?)The leaves and stem are highly fragrant as well; they are gray/silver to green in color.

Sources:
Bee Balm - Gilpin County Extension (colostate.edu),
https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/monarda-fistulosa,
https://web.extension.illinois.edu/

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LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Native Plants in Our Gardens
By Jesse Donnelly, Colorado Master Gardener- Elbert County

Native plants are making a comeback to our yards and garden spaces.

Describing a native plant can often get confusing. Google defines a Native Plant as "a plant that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem". And from the Ladybird Johnson Center "A population of plants within a defined geographic area that exist there without direct or indirect human introduction" Andrea De-Long Amaya. Or "A plant occurring naturally in an area and not introduced by man; indigenous" from GardenWeb. The list of definitions goes on and on but basically, we are looking for a plant that has naturally grown here for a long time. As these plants naturally grew only the adapted are still here today, our high pH soil, infrequent rains, and damaging high winds rooted out the weak.

This means native plants contribute to our landscapes aesthetically and can provide hardy, reliable, long lasting beauty, and decease free gardening. No need for fertilizers, or excessive watering. These plants provide sustainability, water conservation and wildlife habitat. This is a really good thing for our native food web. Colorado's high desert setting is challenging. Insects, pollinators and birds rely on plants that evolved alongside them over hundreds of years for food, reproduction and shelter. Adapting to provide these native plants with pollination symbiosis that only few can provide.

With this new appreciation, the green industry is giving customers a large variety of new and interesting plants that will improve our landscapes. The choices are endless; seeds, bare root and potted plants can all be purchased. After a few years our once thirsty turf can be transformed into a drought tolerant wildlife habitat. Additionally, 4 seasons of interest can be visually appealing on a cold winter day when the birds are still visiting to pick seeds or hide in the juniper trees. The bugs and bees are also over wintering in the landscape. This can be exciting knowing you are providing for the spring soon to come.

www.wildflower.org

If you are interested in adding natives to your yard, here are some online resources to begin your journey.
https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/native/FrontRange.pdf
https://conps.org/gardening-with-native-plants/
https://rockies.audubon.org/habitat-hero/resources/native-plant-retailers
https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/java/
http://www.bonap.org/
https://jenniferackerfield.weebly.com/flora-of-colorado.html
I am also including a 2021 listing of retailers. We do not indorse any retailer just provide resources for you to use.
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1U7WoN3AeulUIrlvC9QRD6Qksde0qBBAUTrJ-_QQZ9yA/edit#gid=0

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LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Noxious Elbert County Weeds — **Submitted by Cathy Ramsey**

The following weeds are listed as noxious weeds in Elbert County. Contact the CSU Elbert County Extension Office at 303-621-3162 if you think you have any of these and would like some help in methods for controlling it.

Leafy Spurge

Euphorbia esula

Russian Knapweed

Centaurea repens/ Acroptilon repens

Spotted Knapweed

Centaurea maculosa

Diffuse Knapweed

Centaurea diffusa

Canada Thistle

Cirsium arvense

Musk Thistle

Carduus nutans

Field Bindweed

Convolvulus arvensis

Dalmatian/Yellow Toadflax

Linaria dalmatica/vulgaris

Downy Brome

Bromus tectorum

Flixweed

Descurainia sophia

Houndstongue

Cynoglossum officinale

Common Mullein

Verbascum thapsus

It is the duty of all persons to use integrated methods to manage noxious weeds if the same are likely to be materially damaging to the land of neighboring landowners.

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ELBERT COUNTY MASTER GARDENER
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

How to Help Bluebirds

By Cathy Ramsey – Colorado Master Gardener, Elbert County

1. Make your backyard bluebird friendly by planting native trees, fruit-bearing shrubs and plants that attract bugs (which will attract bluebirds). 2. Provide live mealworms in an open, shallow dish (plate or small tin can). 3. Offer a birdbath. 4. Keep cats indoors. 5. Eliminate the use of pesticides. 6. Install a bluebird nest box that can be regularly monitored. 7. Watch for and keep House Sparrows out of that nest box. 8. Learn about bluebirds and share your experience and knowledge with family, friends and neighbors (From The Colorado Bluebird Project (Denver Audubon Society))

Generally, bluebirds in Colorado will begin nesting by the end of March or early April, so now is the time to inspect and maintain those boxes before the nesting activity starts. The North American Bluebird Society recommends that all nest boxes be maintained to ensure that boxes remain in good condition to protect the contents: • Ensure that the entrance hole size is not enlarged. • Repair or replace cracked or rotten wood. • Check to make sure that the nest box continues to resist water intrusion. • Clean the interior after each brood has fledged to reduce parasites. Use a paint scraper to remove dried droppings stuck to the walls.

Although styles and designs can vary, all nestboxes should provide the birds with a safe and secure nesting site. The following are some tips for a good bluebird box; see our Nestbox Recommendations factsheet or web page for more information on nestbox dimensions (www.nabluebirdsociety.org/bluebirdfacts.htm):

- **The best materials for bluebird box construction are ¾- to 1-inch wood or exterior grade plywood. Redwood often splits when it dries so it should be avoided in dry areas, and most pine boards will warp over time. Do not use treated lumber or interior grade wood (including OSB board). When possible, use scraps salvaged from construction sites, or where it is available, use environmentally sound, certified lumber from sustainably managed forests. Cardboard, plastic jugs, milk cartons, and large tin cans provide little insulation (especially against heat) so should not be used. Cardboard boxes and milk cartons are also easily accessed by predators.**
- **Bluebird boxes made from good quality wood do not need to be painted, but to help them last longer, some bluebird trail operators coat the outside of boxes with linseed oil, or stain or paint the outside of their boxes with a good quality exterior stain or latex paint. Use a neutral color in northern areas, and a light color in hot areas to reduce overheating. Do not paint the inside of the box. Western and Mountain Bluebirds use a 19/16" round opening or 13/16" slot entrance. Because there are no undesirable species that can access 19/16" holes that cannot also access 1½" holes, some monitors in Eastern Bluebird territory use 19/16" holes.**
- **Assemble the box with screws or galvanized nails. Screws are more expensive but make construction easier and make it easier to replace or tighten parts.**
- **One panel (top, front, or side) MUST open to allow for monitoring and cleaning. Make sure the panel fits snugly to prevent rain from blowing in the seams.**
- **If plywood or smooth boards are used, etch shallow saw kerfs on the inside of the front panel, just below the entrance hole. Although young bluebirds are fairly adept at exiting most boxes, this roughness provides an extra toehold for them. If using hardware cloth, be sure the material is pressed tight against the wood so the birds won't get a toe caught.**
- **Perches encourage predators and undesirable House Sparrows. Do not build or purchase a nestbox with a perch.**

Mountain and Western Bluebird boxes should be 200–300 yards apart. Most bluebirders have found that pairing the boxes will allow both species to nest side by side in relative peace. Boxes should be mounted on a smooth metal pole at a height that is convenient for monitoring and maintenance. Bluebirds tolerate a box mounted as high as 15 feet and as low as 3 feet from the ground. However, a box mounted lower than 4 or 5 feet is at greater risk of predation. The nestbox should be mounted so the entrance hole faces away from prevailing winds to reduce the amount of rain that might be blown into the box. The box opening should also face away from direct sun exposure. A nearby tree will provide young bluebirds with a place to fly to when they first leave the nest, and shelter from the elements and predators. Boxes mounted along roads should always face parallel with, rather than be perpendicular to, the road so that the birds (especially the fledglings) are more likely to fly along the road ditch, rather than out across the road and into the path of oncoming traffic. For more information, please see the NABS factsheet, Getting Started with Bluebirds (www.nabluebirdsocidrty.org)

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LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Get Ready for Your Elbert County Fair
By Audrey Steffan - Colorado Master Gardener, Elbert County

Are you ready for some fun? Do you want to put to use the things you learned during your Covid-19 isolation? Well, here is your chance to show off those newly learned skills, be they gardening, sewing, photography, crafting or even baking that show worthy cake or pie among other things.

Our county fair is going to be held July 31 through August 8, 2021 at the Elbert County Fairgrounds in Kiowa. The fair theme this year is "Meatin' at the Fair".

There is a class for a "Fair Theme" entry under Flower Arrangements so put your imagination to work!! And best of all, the entry fee is only $5.00 for as many entries as you want to enter. What a deal!!!

The Open Class day is to be announced later. It is open to all Elbert County residents, young or old alike. Your Elbert County Master Gardeners will be there to help you enter your Horticulture and Floriculture items on Tuesday morning. They will also be there to help with the judging in the afternoon. Feel free to come and listen to the judges as they judge the entries and determine those award winning flowers or squash. So as the snow or rain continues to fall, get those flower beds and garden patches planned out and ready to plant when the sunshine comes out.

The Open Class is a fun way to show off your skill set. There are so many different classes that there surely is a class for everyone to enter something. Let's make this one of the biggest and best fairs yet.

The Master Gardeners will be available from August 4 through August 8 at our Fair Booth to answer your questions about anything that grows (or doesn't) in Elbert County. They can also identify those pesky bugs or weeds. So please come visit their booth.

The Master Gardeners will also have their Silent Auction at the fair again. This is a great time to come check out the fun and varied items that can be bid on. This is the annual fund raiser for this group. These funds are used to bring in guest speakers for seminars, to purchase seedlings among other things to help the county residents.

Please see the Elbert County Fair page for all the entry information, classes and times at Elbertcountyfair.com.
See you at the Fair!!

Opening Weekend Festivities
- Highlands Cattle Show -
(first time at the Elbert County Fair)
Saturday, July 31.

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LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Library Demonstration Garden Update

By Margaret Koops - Colorado Master Gardener, Elbert County and Willie Wilkens - CSU Extension, Elbert County

Monday May 10th will be a prep and irrigation workday.

Margaret will be bringing a large rock to put in place, the more the merrier for help.

Library work day will be May 22nd and 23rd from 10 am - 1 pm.

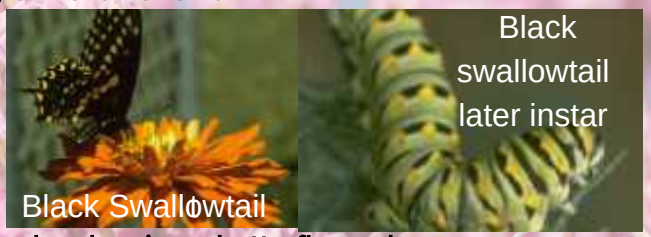
This work day is open to the public and will include planting, digging, and some miscellaneous activities.

Plants will be set aside from JC's greenhouse and any leftovers after the library planting will be sold.

Proceeds will go towards the signage for the library project.

The trees from Pine Lane Nursery will be delivered and planted on May 24th between 8 and 10 am.

If you are interested in helping please contact the extension office at (303) 621-3162 or email willie.wilkins@colostate.edu

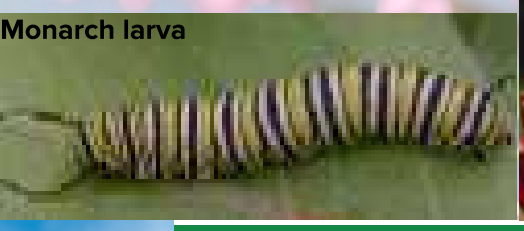


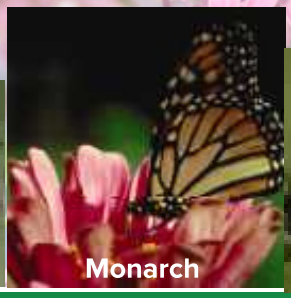
Attracting Butterflies to the Garden

Submitted by Cathy Ramsey - Colorado Master Gardener, Elbert County

Quick Facts...

- **Many kinds of butterflies can be found in Colorado. Encourage butterflies by planning a butterfly garden.**
- **Butterflies seek out areas with food plants for the caterpillar stage. Adult butterflies also feed on fluids such as nectar from flowers.**
- **Butterfly visits increase when environmental needs are met.**
- **Gardening practices to attract and retain butterflies often differ from regular gardening practices.**
- **Dozens of butterfly species are commonly found along the Front Range and Eastern Colorado and are a welcome garden addition for many people.**
- **Butterflies often appear to be just passing through, occasionally stopping for a drink of nectar. You can prolong the stay of these colorful insects and draw in others by providing the food and shelter they need.**
- **See CMG Fact Sheet 5.504 for more detailed information at: Attracting Butterflies to the Garden - 5.504 - Extension (colostate.edu)**





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LETTUCE INFORM YOU

2021 ELBERT COUNTY SUMMER ISSUE

MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER

Thoughts from an Elbert County Coloardo Master Gardener:

My name is Janet Turbett and I have been a Master Gardener since 2014. In addition, I have lived and gardened in Elbert County since 1989. I love gardening, canning, preserving and enjoy sharing my experiences with others. I have experienced many joys but also many difficulties in growing in Elbert County. Some of these include wind, hail and severe climate changes. I have also dealt with freezes after Memorial Day and before Labor Day. I have experienced various insects in vegetable and flower gardens and on my trees. One year I planted tomatoes in large pots and the wind blew them over, so I installed a small greenhouse with raised beds and have had success for years with tomatoes, green peppers and cucumbers.

I also plant vegetables outside the green house and found the key to success is to buy an automatic water timer and water at least twice a day. I usually set the timers for early morning and late evening when the wind is hopefully not blowing. I never give up as when it all works it is so worth it. I have learned better and more efficient ways to plant. I have found in being a Master Gardener that I do not always know everything but have been given the resources to look things up.

TEENY TINY ARACHNIDS OF ELBERT COUNTY: PSEUDOSCORPIONS
By Raylene Owen, Colorado Master Gardener - Elbert County

Pseudoscorpions, or false scorpions, usually go unnoticed because of their tiny size and their secretive nature. They are very tiny, 2 to 8 mm in length. Remember that a millimeter is about the width of the wire of a regular paper clip.

When someone does notice one, they are impressed by the sight of this tiny animal with the long pedipalps (mouth parts) ending in huge pincers. Like all Arachnids they have two body parts, cephalothorax and abdomen, four pairs of legs, and one pair of relatively large pedipalps (pincer-like claws), used to capture prey.

These are arachnids (related to spiders, ticks, mites, and true scorpions) but unlike their namesake, the true scorpions, pseudoscorpions are not at all toxic or dangerous.

Pseudoscorpions feed mostly on other tiny arthropods, such as mites and book lice. They have been found in some libraries where they are feeding on book lice or silverfish, which in turn are eating and damaging the books. Normally, however, they are found outdoors in leaf and wood debris and are only occasionally reported as an indoor visitor.

Congratulate yourself on your acute powers of observation if you are lucky enough to find one of these tiny wonders of nature.

For more information go to: Scilogs: 10 Facts about Pseudoscorpions ,
http://www.scilogs.com/expiscor/ten-facts-about-pseudoscorpions/

To plant a seed is a noble deed. Propogation is conservation. By Norman C Deno

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