



CROW WING COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Ask the Master Gardener

JUNE 2016 COLUMN

Dear Master Gardener:

I would like to take advantage of all the fresh produce the summer has to offer, but I have no room for a garden in my yard. Is it OK to plant herbs and vegetables in containers?

No space? No problem! Container gardening is ideal for those with little or no garden space. Gardeners limited to a balcony, small yard, or only a patch of sun on their driveway can produce a wide variety of vegetable crops in containers. Basil, chives, thyme, and other herbs are also quite happy growing in pots, which can be set in a convenient spot right outside the kitchen door.

You can grow vegetables in individual containers—from large pots to 5-gallon buckets or half barrels, the largest of which will accommodate a single tomato plant or several smaller vegetables such as broccoli or cabbage. Dwarf or bush forms of larger vegetables such as tomatoes, pumpkins, and winter squash are most suited to container gardening.

Theme gardens also are fun to try. Plant a salad garden with colorful lettuces, dwarf tomatoes, chives, and parsley. Or perhaps try a pizza garden, with different types of basil, plus tomatoes and peppers. Or plant a container with edible flowers such as marigolds, pansies and nasturtiums.

Dear Master Gardener:

I would like to have a red, white and blue theme with my annuals this year because we are having a big Fourth of July party. What flowers make a good red, white, and blue combination?

Starting with sun-loving plants...

Some annuals that come in the color red include *Calibrachoa*, canna, dianthus, gazania, geranium, lantana, moss rose, nasturtium, pentas, petunias, phlox, salvia, strawflower, and verbena. White flowers to consider include alyssum, bacopa, *Calibrachoa*, gazania, pentas, petunia, cleome, cosmos, dianthus, geranium, lobelia, phlox, salvia, verbena, vinca (Madagascar periwinkle), and zinnia. It isn't easy getting the blue color in flowers, but here are some annuals that come in the color blue: ageratum, bachelor's button, blue lace flower, browallia, larkspur, lobelia, pimpernel, salvia, and *Scaevola* (blue fan flower).

For shady areas the best options for both red and white are begonias and New Guinea impatiens. Blue colored flowers that can take part shade are browallia and lobelia.

Dear Master Gardener:

One of my neighbors planted some honeyberries. Are they edible and hardy here?

Honeyberry plants (*Lonicera caerulea*) are a deciduous shrub in the honeysuckle family and are extremely cold hardy, with some being hardy to USDA Zone 2 (-50°F). They are also known as Haskap. These plants are very long-lived, easy to grow and quite adaptable. You will usually get honeyberries the first year you plant your shrub and will be at full production by the third year. A mature plant can produce up to seven or eight pounds of fruit each year. Honeyberry plants produce clusters of unique, blue, elongated berries that have high levels of antioxidants and vitamins with a sweet flavor that tastes similar to blueberries. The berries are delicious eaten fresh (some cultivars are tastier than others) or they can be used to make jam or jelly.

Unlike blueberries, which can be difficult to grow due to pH requirements, honeyberries thrive in almost all soils. Their root system is not deep, so it is important to pay attention to moisture. Water new plants weekly the first year and give mature plants extra water during fruiting. Honeyberries, because of their strong growth habit are heavy feeders. They need to be fed twice annually, early spring and after fruiting with a well-balanced 10–10–10 fertilizer. Prune after fruiting is over to encourage new growth. They perform best in full sun. Honeyberries require cross-pollination between different, unrelated varieties that flower at the same time. Pollination is achieved by insects moving pollen from flower to flower.

A word of warning - birds love honeyberries. To protect your crop you may want to net the bushes.

June Garden Tips

- Prune early spring flowering shrubs like lilac, forsythia, spring blooming spireas after blooming. This will give them time to produce next year's flower buds for another spectacular display.
- Conserve moisture by watering lawns and gardens early in the day when temperatures are lowest and winds have not yet picked up. Try to water at the base of the garden and landscape plants.
- Move houseplants outdoors to have them put on abundant growth. This is like giving them an extravagant meal after having been on half rations for the winter.
- It is tempting to get rid of unattractive leaves left behind when tulips, daffodils, and other spring bulbs have finished flowering. If you want them to bloom well again, it is important not to remove the leaves (or even tie them together) until they are no longer green. Instead, fertilize. The foliage helps gather energy to store in the bulbs for new growth.
- As temperatures rise, allow your lawn to grow taller before mowing. Taller grass blades help shelter the crowns from heat and wind, protecting them from drying out, and roots grow deeper when the grass is taller.
- Stay on top of deadheading to encourage prolific flowering and to keep your garden container looking tidy and neat.

- Anthracnose is a fungal disease that shows up almost every year on ash, maple and sometimes oak trees. It's most common after prolonged wet weather in spring. Anthracnose causes large dark blotches on leaves, many of which drop, but it rarely damages trees severely. Rake up fallen leaves and dispose of them. Don't have these trees sprayed with fungicide unless they were badly defoliated several years running.

University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners are trained and certified volunteers for the University of Minnesota Extension Service. All information given in this column is based on university research. To ask a question, call the Master Gardener Help Line at 218-454-GROW (4769) and leave a recorded message. A Master Gardener will return your call.

