

JULY 2019

BEWARE! A certain amount of WHINING directly ahead!

If you are looking for me on Saturday morning, you will find me with our plants at the AG CENTER FARMERS' MARKET on Centerton Road. For whatever reason, things were a little quiet here and I decided to go where the action is. My beautiful basil and lovely lavender were needing to find a home.

I was considering having this be my LAST NEWSLETTER. After all, as much as I enjoy writing and, hopefully, you enjoy reading, the basic purpose is to generate a certain amount of business. I would hope that, in the course of a year, most of you would wander in and buy one or two plants. This doesn't seem to happen. If, however, I don't get to vent frustrations and share knowledge (and the occasional anecdote) there is a chance my head may explode. So here is your newsletter, for better or worse.

OLD NEWS first. The goose eggs didn't hatch. Perhaps they were shaken in the mail.

So no goslings this year.

DEER eat a lot of my plants. They are part of life. Funny about thing about coneflowers though. They love the leafy part of the leaves, not so much the stems, but they don't care for the flowers. Why? Grab onto a fully open coneflower bloom. I think it must be a bit like grabbing a hedgehog, quite hard and almost prickly. So I have these big tall blooms with nothing but a bunch of stems at the base.

Also on the subject of DEER, my son Mark in WV (You remember Mark) has had good results with a very simple, cheap deer repellent recipe. Mix half milk and half water, allow to sour, and spray your plants, or spray on a hot day so it sours almost instantly. He has fairly heavy deer pressure and has even kept his hostas. Re-spray after rain, but it is cheap!

We don't generally think of PETUNIAS as a cut flower, but a long stem with buds will continue to develop new blooms for an amazing amount

of time. So when you cut your regular petunias back, as you will need to do, make a bouquet.

Do you have CATNIP? Why not? No cats? Let me tell you about catnip, other than making your cat crazy (or extremely mellow). Butterflies and bees love blooming catnip. Activity is constant. With all the flap about helping pollinators by planting natives, don't forget other popular cultivars. Bees are particularly fond of the tiny flowers of LEMON BALM. By the way, both lemon balm and catnip make a pleasant soothing tea for people.

Why are there no recipes calling for RAW SWEET CORN? It tastes about as good raw.

Had to water market. We had three BUCKEYES on the 'Wisteria Lane' butterfly bushes. I am always happy to see one buckeye, one of our prettiest medium sized butterflies. Very exciting.

I don't like seeing hawks kill or get after my poultry, but they are fascinating birds. We have COOPERS HAWKS here. I can tell one is close-by when the blue-jays make a big fuss. They are primarily bird hawks after all. I came home from a meeting a few months ago to find a large Coopers sitting on top of our flagpole. What nerve!

We should have lots of RED ADMIRAL butterflies. I see them in the stinging nettles, which is (are?) their food plant. And do we ever have plenty of nettles!

We had many really nice LOVAGE plants a few weeks ago and I was going to put in a great recipe for lovage soup, but we had a huge influx of black swallowtail caterpillars and all that is left are short stems. We actually had to go to the Ag Center and cut fennel for them (with permission, of course).

ANTS are generally considered neutral as far as plants are concerned, not harmful, not beneficial, but I have changed my mind on that. Ants love aphids and scale because of the sticky stuff they make. No, they don't eat them, they farm them. We have been fighting scale on our oak trees and the ants are fighting back by moving them around to make new

colonies. They also are working with those horrible yellow aphids that get on milkweed.

About those YELLOW APHIDS, watch for them vigilantly. They will ruin all of your milkweed and make it inedible for your monarch caterpillars. If you have lots of milkweed, as we do, pull the affected one out, check very carefully for all sizes of caterpillars to move and put your foot on it. If you have limited milkweed, crush the aphids with your fingers (ugh!). Spraying obviously is not an option, you will kill what you are trying to protect.

When I speak to Garden Clubs and other groups, I always have an assortment of the HANDOUTS which I have generated over time. I realized that most of you have never laid eyes on this information. I will attempt to remedy this situation. The next page starts with one of these, which I call:

I have almost decided to give up on FRENCH TARRAGON. We gave it special bigger pots, pruned and babied it and it still looks like something the cat dragged in. In fact, I think the cat has dragged in better looking stuff

Our HERBS seem to have enjoyed the strange weather more than we have. most of them are looking wonderful.

Keep an eye on your LAVENDER. Excessive rain causes fungus infections. This can do them in fairly quickly. Be sure to keep the base and middle cleaned out. If necessary, prune some out of the middle to open up the plant for light and air.

I have been battling CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME for a while and it is winning. Surgery in August. This shouldn't affect you in any way, just a pathetic try for sympathy.