



# Dutchess Dirt

A gardening newsletter from:



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Dutchess County

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## **A LITTLE DIRT NEVER HURT!** **Garden Greetings from New CCEDC Executive Director Michael Woods**

Greetings Dutchess County Gardeners

I have been looking forward to this opportunity to draft my first Dutchess Dirt article as the new executive director for CCEDC. Despite these trying times--I wish my first communication with you could be delivered under better community circumstances--I'm still excited and honored to be selected to lead this dynamic organization. While we are certainly at a point of change for our community on many levels, I am so grateful for all the support and encouragement many continue to provide during this transition. We all owe a tremendous amount to Ruth Moore [former executive director] for her years of commitment and strong leadership that has left CCEDC poised for continuous improvement and a bright future.

I only recently arrived in the Hudson Valley from Jacksonville, Illinois and my prior position as the inaugural Professor and Program Coordinator of Agricultural Business Management for Illinois College. Still, I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself, as well as share what is happening within the CCEDC family.

Horticulture and plants have been my constant passion since I was a small child growing up in northern Illinois. I love sharing this obsession with gardens, plants, and the beautification of the communities in which I live. One of my favorite quotes seems more appropriate now



than ever, “When one plants a garden, they plant hope.” Gardens offer a vast array of opportunities and mean many things to different people. I suspect that to many of us, they are places of optimism, peace, and solace—something we definitely need during these turbulent times. For years now, the Master Gardener Volunteers, staff, programs and resources have been a source of knowledge and shared beauty. It saddens me that you are unable to share in these delights as often as you once were able. But please know that CCEDC will be here for you as soon as we can reestablish the vibrant services provided to communities across Dutchess County.



The CCEDC team and I realize the vast shutdowns have taken a toll on more than our collective efforts and social interactions. Many of you and your families are hurting and experiencing the added burden of keeping your loved ones protected and healthy, while also keeping businesses solvent and our communities beautified. We are not impervious to these added burdens either. The timing of the pandemic could not have been worse to impact every one of the associations’ revenue streams simultaneously. Despite these dramatic impacts, I am pleased to report that we have been able to band together to maintain unique and impactful programs available to many of our stakeholders.

While we all await the end of this time apart, I promise we will do our best to find ways to extend our services to the community, provide learning opportunities to connect you with the natural world, continue our passion for all things growing, and prepare the Farm and Home Center to welcome you back to celebrate the milestones, individuals, and harmony to lift your spirits within our beautiful setting. In the meantime, we are working to create opportunities for you to experience the Master Gardener programs remotely and enjoy virtual activities designed to engage you in the coming spring and summer.

If the mood inspires and the circumstances allow, please feel free to contact me if I may be of service now and in the future. On behalf of the entire CCEDC family, we thank you for your continued support of the association, the Master Gardener program, and I look forward to opening the doors of the Farm and Home Center as soon as we can responsibly and safely do so. I’ll be there to meet and greet you with a proper farm boy handshake and gardeners’ smile. Until then, be well, be safe, and keep gardening.



Take time to smell the flowers.  
Michael Woods



## FROM ZERO TO SIXTY

By Anjali Nandedkar, CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteer

It is always fun to see before and after photographs where a thing of beauty and utility is created. It is exhilarating when you get a chance to create one from scratch. A garden.

My mother was a fabulous gardener. She had a green thumb and tropical weather that made virtually all her plants live a long healthy flowering life. She did not need a greenhouse. In the Mid-Hudson area, the story is much different. I tried developing plants under lights. Some did well, others did not. I am proud of some Geraniums, Jasmines, Hibiscus, Bougainvillea houseplants that are now 25 years old.

When I joined the Master Gardener Volunteer program, I started gathering not only the knowledge, but also some practical tips. I started experimenting with the choice of plants, the timing for planting, re-potting, pruning and other care. However, everything was on a small scale. Then came the "Lightning Rod". Last summer, CCEDC donated 100 plants left from their plant sale to the Hindu Samaj and Jain Temple in Wappinger Falls. The Hindu Samaj and Jain Temple complex has large grounds. Much of it sported a lovely collection of knee-high weeds. There were volunteers, but not a well-defined plan. We had work to do.



We formed a team led by three MGVs - myself, Durga Soma and Kulwant Pandey. The first job was to clean the grounds. We found many rose bushes struggling under tall weeds. Volunteers donated time and equipment. We weeded, cleaned, amended soil and spread mulch. There were debates: Do we use cloth ground cover or not? What shall we plant? Who will water them? Why can't we use toxic weed killer? Such questions were encouraging as it demonstrated the enthusiasm. (We do not use

cloth ground cover or toxic weed killers). We created some layout by analyzing an aerial view of the temple grounds and placing tiles as a walk way. We divided the huge garden into smaller sections and asked volunteers to adopt a section. Each volunteer was then responsible to keep their section clean and weed free. We installed soaker hoses to make watering easy.

The summer of 2019 was a success. Visitors were pleased to see clean grounds. There was some doubt whether the volunteers could manage this job. Did we need to hire professionals? But we were determined to set even higher goals for the 2020 summer. In fall of 2019 we planted hundreds of Daffodil and Tulip bulbs. Then we found some storage racks in the temple basement which were perfect for developing an indoor winter garden project. We sterilized them and installed tube lights and timers. We took hundreds of cuttings from the garden outside. Volunteers signed up to water the cuttings and subsequent potted plants, followed by seeds and seedlings. Experimenting with new varieties of plants is great fun. Last year it was tall Nicotiana

and Tithonia. This year, it was Silver Leaf Sunflower which grew over ten feet tall in two months. You can see it at the back of the picture on the prior previous page.



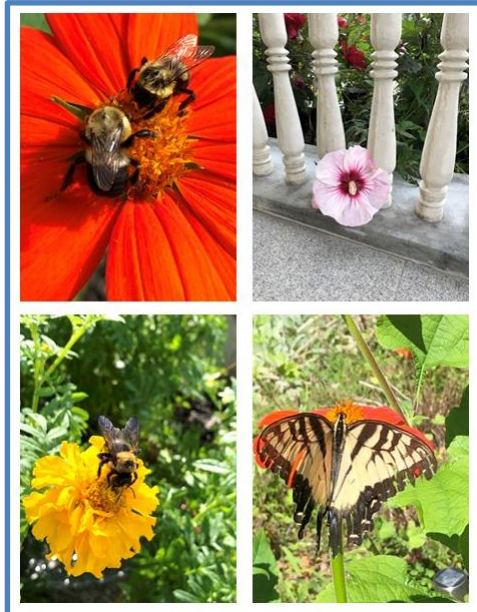
Then came Covid. The temple was closed. What do we do with the plants? The trustees were kind enough to provide us access. It was time to step up to the challenge. My husband Sanjeev and I started visiting the temple every second day. We would water the plants, prune them, clean them, fertilize them and send their pictures to the community. We received encouragements and thanks from many. It was a 'stress relief' to water the plants while thinking of a beautiful summer garden

Early spring the Daffodils showed up, followed by Tulips. It was unfortunate that there were no visitors. But we made sure to send all the pictures.





Then Memorial Day came. From nurturing the plants, it was time to bring them into nature. We hardened the 1200+ plants by moving them in and out for a week. Volunteers joined the effort. Planting was done in one week. Weeding team members visited their adopted sections once a week through the summer. Sanjeev and I continued watering every day (it was a dry summer). Tender perennials like Geraniums, Hibiscus, Firecracker plants were in containers. We placed them on ledges near the temple steps. Nicotiana formed a curtain of white and purple fragrant flowers, despite taking some damage from the mid-summer wind storm.



We trained the volunteers to recognize good weeds like Milk Weeds and keep them for Monarchs to lay eggs. We planted Tithonia again (Mexican Sunflower) which attracted butterflies and bees.

In mid-summer, we started seeing Monarchs and Tiger Swallowtails. They were feasting on the sunflowers. There were bees, many kinds of birds including the hummingbirds feasting on the flowers and seeds. It was wonderful to see a part of nature completely unaware of Covid 😊

As the cold weather approached, we started taking the cuttings again. We also collected seeds. Each plant has its own peculiar way of forming pods and seeds. You also have to compete with the birds and collect seeds before they eat them. With over 75 varieties of plants in our gardens, both annuals and perennials, it is quite a challenge. Lots of new stuff to learn.

Our Fall sale of plants was a big success. Tender perennials like Geraniums, Firecracker plant, Holy Basil, Curry Leaf Plant are very popular. All of them are treated as house plants and flourish for years indoors in containers. We set up a table with plants in the lobby and placed a box for cash and checks. Buyers are on their honor to pay by cash, check or online. Once a day I replace the plants that are sold.



I was watering the plants last week when the temple priest's six-year old son came to me. His family lives on the temple grounds. He stood at a distance watching me for a minute or so. Then he said, "I see many people taking pictures of the flowers. You must have done a good job". I had my reward for our services to nature.

## HOORAY FOR THE DUTCHESS COUNTY FAIR (VIRTUALLY)!

By Joyce Tomaselli, Community Horticulture Resource Educator

The September issue of this newsletter traditionally reports on our activities at the DC Fair. This year the Master Gardener Volunteers decided to present a virtual horticultural experience instead. Photos of vegetables and flowers were submitted for “judging” or just sharing. This month we will report on a few of the “Ask the Master Gardener” questions received at our office over the summer rather than those we would have answered at the fair. We trust you will enjoy this virtual review of the fair and hope to see you in person next year.

**Is this a Giant Killer Hornet?** No. It is a [Cicada Killer Wasp](#). We often see them in late summer when the cicadas are singing. The female wasp paralyzes the cicada, then bring to their tunnels to feed the larvae when they hatch. The wasps are large and surprising, but do not sting people.

The wasps like dry sandy soil, so one approach is to water the area where they nest, or improve the condition of the lawn so they will move elsewhere. A spray is ineffective. The tunnels are very deep and sprays don't reach the bottom. They are very slow flyers - one article recommends swatting them away with a badminton racket.

[This link](#) gives information about the Giant Asian Hornet found only on the West Coast and compares it to the large wasps we have in the North East.



**What is this weed?** That is [Jimsonweed](#). It is an invasive from Southern US & Mexico which spreads by seed. It's pretty common around here and quite noticeable this time of year for its size, large white flowers and prickly seed pods.



It is of concern to livestock who may graze on it. All parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested. The leaves can be a skin irritant – wear gloves when handling it. The seeds can survive in soil over 40 years, so removing the plant before it set seeds is important. The seeds often show up in purchased soil.

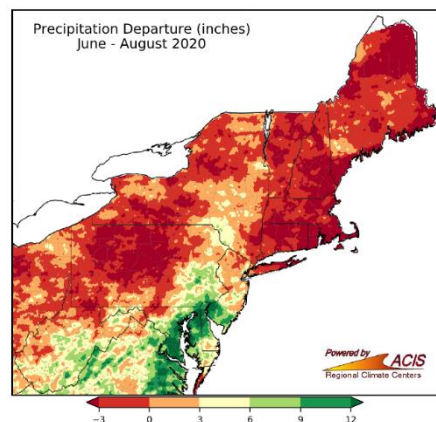
Small plants are easy to pull by hand. When it gets really big it's pretty hard to dig out. But it's an annual. So it can be down. The roots will freeze over the winter.



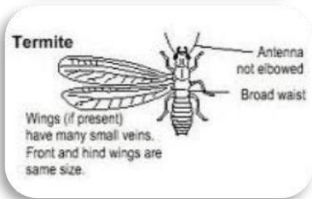
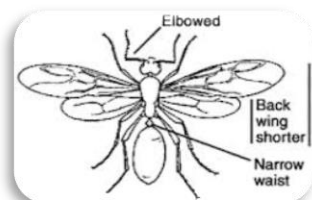
If it has set seeds you want to remove and discard them. The seed pods are big and prickly. The whole plant with the stems and seeds could be placed on a tarp and covered with black plastic to solarize it. When the leaves and stems are dried they can be disposed of with the seeds in the garbage. Monitor the area in the spring and hand pull seedlings when they are little.

**Why are trees looking so stressed?** Some deciduous trees this summer had damage from insects resulting in holes or galls which were rarely serious. Less calls were received about fungal pathogens since the summer was so dry. White pine trees had some yellowing of needles early summer which might be caused by a series of fungal pathogens described in this fact sheet from the University of Massachusetts [Dieback of Eastern White Pine \(\*Pinus strobus\*\): Pathogens, Pests and a Changing Climate](#) which also rarely cause a tree to die. Yellowing of older pine needles in autumn, which then drop off is a natural part of their life cycle.

The most common cause for tree questions this summer was the heat and drought. Trees use a massive amount of water every day. Usually mature trees have a deep and wide enough root system to provide what they need. But newly established trees and shrubs do not. They need at least an inch of water a week, or 10-15 gallons, either from rain or from people. The watering should be deep and infrequent e.g. half an inch twice a week at planting, then an inch every week or two depending on the weather. It should be applied slowly such that it sinks deeply into the ground. Shallow frequent watering encourages shallow roots which will not survive winter well. [Read more in The Cornell Guide for Planting and Maintaining Trees and Shrubs.](#)



**What are these ants? Are they damaging my home?** Large ants are usually carpenter ants. When they are in a reproductive stage, carpenter ants have wings. [Carpenter ants](#) nest in moist wood. Sometime they are seen in a home when they are scouting for a new nest site. If carpenter ants are identified in your home, you should determine the source of the moisture and fix it. There might be a plugged gutter or a leaking faucet. You need to find where moisture is collecting and why, then fix the problem. Also you need to eliminate the ants that are nesting here. This can be done with baits labeled specifically for carpenter ant control. The fact sheet says “Fresh sugary baits that are applied to ant trails are most effective, and are preferred to contact insecticides that kill only some foraging individuals.” Always read and follow label directions.



Winged insects that look like ants could be termites. [Termites](#) can cause damage to the wood in your home. If termites are identified, you should call a professional exterminator.

Small ants are usually merely a nuisance. They are difficult to identify without a microscope. For example [Pavement ants](#) are identified by the two nodes on their back, the three-segmented club on the end of their antennae and small grooves on their head. Their food is arthropods, honeydew, seeds, and pollen. They cause no harm.

[Click here](#) for more information on ants from Cornell's NYS IPM site.



**Why are my cucumbers producing flowers but no fruit?** It's the weather – the average temperature and the nighttime temperature. Cool temperatures produce female flowers; hot temperatures produce male flowers. Read more in this [article from Rutgers](#).

**Why weren't my pepper tomato and pepper plants setting fruit this summer?** It's the weather. Night temperatures above 75° F. or day temperatures above 95° F. can cause pepper flowers and small fruits to drop. Tomato flower and fruit production diminish when temperatures are above 95°. Plants often stop producing blossoms and fruits during mid-summer if temperatures are high. Fruit production then resumes on healthy plants in late summer and early fall. Read more in this [article from the University of Maryland](#).

And finally, **Why didn't my Hydrangeas bloom?** You know the answer to that by now. Otherwise [click here](#).

## CCEDC ARLINGTON CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES

The arrival of autumn does not mean you need to stop gardening. Learn about great fall garden activities from CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteers. Two series of classes are offered; each is four weeks and will be delivered online. Each series is \$40 and is from 6:00 to 7:30 pm. They will be delivered via Zoom. [Register online](#) or call 845-486-4860 ext. 32102.

Course # 6431 - Gardening for Baby Boomers, Thursdays October 8 – 29, 10 Ways to Garden Smarter as We Get Older

Course # 6231 - Gardening Activities for Autumn, Tuesdays October 13 – Nov 3

- Bulbs for all Seasons
- Root Cellaring for Year-Round Fresh Produce
- An Introduction to Seed Saving for the Home Gardener
- Putting your Garden to Bed in the Fall

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, October 6, 6:30 pm, East Fishkill Library Online, “Putting Your Garden to Bed”** by CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteer Chris Ferrero. For more information, visit <https://eflibrary.org/>

**Saturday, October 10, 2:30 pm, Adriance Library Big Read online, “A Celebration of Trees”** by CCEDC Community Horticulture Resource Educator Joyce Tomaselli. For more information, visit <https://poklib.org/events/2020-big-read/>

**Tuesday, October 13, 6:30 pm, Pleasant Valley Library, via Zoom, “Composting at Home”** by CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteer Kathy Smith. For more information, visit <https://PleasantValleyLibrary.org/>

**Thursday October 15, 6:30 pm, LaGrange Library online, “A Celebration of Trees”** by CCEDC Community Horticulture Resource Educator Joyce Tomaselli. For more information, visit <http://www.laglib.org/>



**Monday, October 19, 6:00 pm, LaGrange Library** online, “**Sustainable Gardening**” by CCEDC Community Horticulture Resource Educator Joyce Tomaselli. For more information, visit <http://www.laglib.org/>

**Tuesday, October 20, 10:00 am, Stanford Free Library**, via Zoom, “**Home Composting**” by CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteer Chris Ferrero. For more information, visit [www.stanfordlibrary.org](http://www.stanfordlibrary.org)

## **SUBMIT UPCOMING EVENTS**

Would you like information on an upcoming gardening event to be shared in this newsletter? Send an email to Joyce Tomaselli [jdt225@cornell.edu](mailto:jdt225@cornell.edu) by the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month to be included in the next month’s newsletter. Please include the date, time, location, a short description, cost and contact information for more details.

## **BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SPOTTED LANTERNFLY**

[NYS IPM Spotted Lanternfly Information](#)  
[Spotted Lanternfly Checklist to Prevent Spread](#)  
[PSU Ailanthus altissima, Tree of Heaven Removal](#)

## **WEBSITES TO VISIT**

[NYS IPM The ABCs of School and Childcare Pest Management](#) also useful for home gardeners  
[NYS IPM Biocontrol Resources](#)  
[Cornell releases 3 new apples with crunch and complexity](#)  
[American Hog-peanut, \*Amphicarpaea bracteata\*](#)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Due to COVID-19 our office is not open to the public. We not accepting soil or diagnostic samples to be brought to the office without prearrangements. Please email Samantha Vacchio at [sv453@cornell.edu](mailto:sv453@cornell.edu) for forms and instructions.

***Need Soil pH Testing? Need Lawn or Plant Diagnosis?  
Have any gardening questions?***

The **Horticulture Hotline**, (845) 677-5067 is open April to October each Wednesday from 9am to noon but during travel restrictions it may not be staffed. Messages can be left for Joyce Tomaselli at 845-677-8223 ext 134. Written questions can be submitted to our website at [www.CCEDutchess.org/gardening](http://www.CCEDutchess.org/gardening). Click on Contact Us and select the topic of Gardening. Questions can also be emailed to Joyce Tomaselli at [jdt225@cornell.edu](mailto:jdt225@cornell.edu). If a photograph is included, please ensure it is focused and as close up as possible.

## MONTHLY ID QUIZ



This annual native vine is usually low-growing and blooms occasionally when it twines up taller plants. It is American hog-peanut, *Amphicarpaea bracteata*.



The vine on this tree is a common one. But can you identify the tree? They are both natives.

**HELP SPREAD THE DIRT!** Please forward a copy to anyone you think might be interested. To be added or removed from our e-mail list, or submit upcoming gardening events, contact Joyce Tomaselli at [jdt225@cornell.edu](mailto:jdt225@cornell.edu), [www.ccedutchess.org](http://www.ccedutchess.org)



Websites mentioned in Dutchess Dirt are provided as a courtesy to our readers. Mention of these websites does not imply endorsement by Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension or by the author.

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