Irene Knows Everything

By Marlene Hardick

At our Gardener Q&A event on beautiful June 19, someone said, “We will have to ask Irene.” Experienced gardeners knew who that was.

Irene Weisensel has been giving garden advice professionally for 22 years on the Northside. She began working for Olds Garden Center, then stayed on when Jungs came to the Northside. She sits at the customer service desk at Jungs four days a week and cannot be stumped on a garden question. Or if she is, she consults one of the numerous garden volumes surrounding her. Her advice is solid and down to earth. If she is working, the phone never stops ringing. Irene is at Jungs on M-T-Th-Sat from 9 am - 5 pm.

Irene commutes to the Northside from rural Sun Prairie, where her garden covers 1/4 acre (all our plots together are approximately 3 1/2 acres). This year she planted 90 tomato plants, 24 cabbage plants, rows and rows of onions, collard greens, and a little of almost everything else that will grow in Wisconsin.

“I get some help,” she says. “I give a lot of food to my 11 children and 24 grandchildren. I ship rhubarb to my daughter in Texas so she can make pies. My granddaughter is just waiting until it is time to make sauerkraut.”

At our Gardener Q&A session, there were lots of questions about bugs. Here are some answers:

In general, pick bugs off plants every day or two, put them in a jar of soapy water, shake it, set it in the sun. Or, gather bugs in a jar and feed the chickens. It makes their day. Be sure to crush orange eggs on the underside of potato leaves. These are the eggs of the Colorado potato beetle. Green worms are hard to see on cabbage family plants and are often hiding under the leaves. Be sure to look under flat boards, etc. That is where snails and slugs hide. If we all pick bugs, there will be no more in the garden. Bats and bluebirds are helping us a lot. Consider erecting a bird house in your plot.

If you don't recognize your bug, look it up in the garden book in the shed. Other than picking, these organic methods work:

- For **beetles** and **squash bugs**, Neem Oil is a miticide, bacteriacide, and fungicide. It won't wash off in a mild rain.
- **Japanese beetle** traps attract more beetles to your plants than they trap. Use a jar of soapy water method. Try Dipel Organic Powder for **cabbage loopers** and **tomato hornworms**. For **slugs** and **snails**, use the cheapest beer you can find. Bury a small saucer in ground and fill it with beer. Bugs try to drink, fall in and drown. **Ants** probably don't really do any harm. Diatomaceous earth works well. Earwigs like it damp. They don't harm people but eat some plants' leaves when numbers are large enough. Try diatomaceous earth or a product called Earth Tone Bug and Slug.

**Cutworms** literally cut off tomatoes and other single stem plants. Cut a paper towel cardboard core lengthwise, then into 2 inch lengths. Surround the stem, two inches below soil and two inches above soil. A collar of aluminum foil will also work.

Marlene Hardick is a gardener at Troy Community Gardens.
Late blight on its way back this year?

Below is an excerpt from a posting on the UW-Extension, Rock County, Horticulture Education Program website warning of the possibility of late blight hitting the area again this year (the entire posting can be found at [http://fyi.uwex.edu/rockhort/2010/06/23/late-blight-prevention-recommended-now/](http://fyi.uwex.edu/rockhort/2010/06/23/late-blight-prevention-recommended-now/)).

Both Troy Community Gardens and Troy Community Farm experienced some late blight last year. Please read on to learn more about the disease. In addition, an article about late blight, including pictures, was featured in last year’s September issue of Digging In ([http://www.troygardens.org/sites/default/files/troy-gardens/digging-in/digging-in-2009-sept.pdf](http://www.troygardens.org/sites/default/files/troy-gardens/digging-in/digging-in-2009-sept.pdf)).

Treatments to prevent late blight on potatoes and tomatoes should begin now, according to UW plant disease specialists. Untreated, infected plants in home gardens or farm fields pose a serious threat to the state’s commercial potato and tomato growers who could experience huge economic losses this season. According to Sharon Morrisey, Consumer Horticulture Agent for the Milwaukee County UW-Extension, “This is what is considered a community disease since everyone needs to control it for us to really have it under control.”

While the disease has not yet been reported in Wisconsin, there are confirmed cases in Michigan in the UP and Benton Harbor in the southwestern corner of the state. Sprays containing copper for organic gardeners are effective at preventing this devastating disease. Treatment must begin before infection occurs and applications need to be repeated as new leaves develop throughout the season.

Late blight disease is more active during cool, wet weather and progresses more slowly when it is hot and dry. Under ideal conditions, infected plants will die in 7 to 10 days. Spores move on the wind spreading the disease up to 40 miles at a time and leapfrogging to cover huge areas quickly.

Late blight should not be confused with other common diseases of tomatoes. Late blight causes pale or olive green blotches on the leaves that quickly turn brown-black, water-soaked and oily looking. Dark brown to black patches can also form along the stems. On the tomatoes themselves, the disease causes large, sunken, golden- to chocolate-brown, firm spots with distinct rings. A grayish fuzz can form eventually on leaves, stems and tomatoes.

The other two common diseases of tomato, septoria and early blight, have either small, circular spots with tan centers or larger brown spots with a bulls-eye pattern. These begin on the lower leaves, turning the leaves yellow at first and then brown and dry. They do not affect the stems and do not spread rapidly, seldom killing the plant. Fortunately, the fungicides recommended to treat late blight are also effective in treating septoria and early blight.

To read an updated Late Blight fact sheet from UW Extension, go to [http://fyi.uwex.edu/rockhort/files/2010/03/Gevens-Late-Blight-Tomato-2010-pdf.pdf](http://fyi.uwex.edu/rockhort/files/2010/03/Gevens-Late-Blight-Tomato-2010-pdf.pdf). A copy of this fact sheet can also be found in the binder of UW-Extension Bulletins in the yellow tool shed at the Gardens.

Savor the Summer Festival August 7

We invite all gardeners to donate veggies for the free Community Gardens Feast at Savor the Summer. Drop off your extra harvest to the tables under the tent at Troy Gardens on Friday evening, August 6, by 7 pm. We’ll pick them up and create a feast for Savor the Summer the next day!
Community Garden Leaders Gathering

Helping new gardeners succeed and
Plant disease identification and treatment

Monday, July 12, 2010, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Bridge-Lake Point-Waunona Community Garden

All current and aspiring community garden leaders, along with gardeners and community members, are invited to this two-topic gathering. A panel of new and experienced community gardeners will discuss gardening and organizational methods to help new gardeners succeed with their community garden ventures during the first hour of the gathering. Dr. Brian Hudelson from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Plant Pathology will share information about diagnosing and treating plant diseases during the second hour. Come and learn about common plant diseases found in vegetable gardens, methods to apply at your community garden to help ensure success for new gardeners, and spend time with other gardeners in a beautiful setting. Snacks and Hmong and Spanish translation will be provided.

RSVP by July 9 to Nicole Craig, 246-4730 x208, NicoleC@cacscw.org (habla español). For Hmong, contact Yee Ythao at 770-1074. The Bridge-Lake Point-Waunona Community Garden can be found at the 5000 block of Raywood Road near the south shore of Lake Monona, behind the Broadway PDQ. Parking is available on surrounding residential streets. Rain location is Bridge Lake Point Waunona Neighborhood Center, 1917 Lake Point Drive.

Upcoming Events

Olbrich’s Home Garden Tour (including Troy!)*
Fri. & Sat., Jul. 9 & 10 (Tickets are available at the Greeter Desk at Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Fellys Flowers, and Jung Garden Centers. For more information and ticket outlet locations visit www.olbrich.org or call 608-246-4550)

Community Gardens Leaders Gathering at Bridge-Lake Point-Waunona Community Garden
Mon., Jul. 12, 6:30 - 8:30 pm (see details above)

Community Gardens Work Day*
Sat., Jul. 17, 9 am - 12 noon

Community Gardens Bike Tour with Mayor Dave
Sat., Jul. 24, 9 am - 1 pm (contact Nicole Craig at CAC for details, nicolec@cacscw.org, 246-4730 x208)

Savor the Summer Festival*
Sat., Aug. 7, 3 pm - 7 pm (see details Page 2)

Outstanding in the Field Event at Troy Gardens
Mon., Aug. 9, 4 pm, $180/person (see http://outstandinginthefield.com/events/north-american-tour/?dinner_id=77 for details)

Martinis and Zucchinis: An evening celebrating the bounty of Troy Gardens*
Wed., Sept. 15, 5 pm - 8 pm (see details to the right)

*For more information about these events, please call the Community GroundWorks office at 240-0409.

Martinis & Zucchinis
an evening celebrating the bounty of Troy Gardens

Wednesday, September 15, 2010
5:00-8:00 pm
Troy Gardens, 500 Block of Troy Drive, Madison, WI 53704

Cocktails and delicious food by Marigold Kitchen/ Sardine, featuring locally sourced products like produce from our certified organic Troy Community Farm and spirits from Yahara Bay Distillery

Tickets: $65

Proceeds support Community GroundWorks’ work to nurture meaningful relationships between people and the land.

To purchase tickets or to get more information, please call 608.240.0409, or visit our website at www.communitygroundworks.org
Troy Gardener Observations

Fireflies or Lightening bugs are all over Troy Gardens. I love them and they always remind me of the Fourth of July. The flying beetle itself is harmless, but the glow worm or larval state is classified as a beneficial. I recently learned that glow worms eat insects and slugs that want to eat our plants. Another gardener reports that we have more bluebirds than usual in the Gardens and they are happily feasting on bugs. Remember that non-organic pesticides can kill the bluebirds and butterflies, as well as the bugs. They aren’t so good for people either.

The new communication board (white board) in the shed has its first message. New gardener asks, "What is eating the leaves of my arugula and how can I stop it?" Experienced gardener answered, "It is flea beetles. Use row cover or plant radishes to act as a trap plant. Bugs eat the radishes, and leave the arugula alone."

Another gardener tells me that something, probably rabbits, has cut off all his climbing beans near the base. Row cover is hard to use on a trellis, but maybe there is a way. Anyone else have any ideas?

Row cover has given me beautiful lettuce all spring. One day I forgot to put it back. Something, probably deer, chomped the top of two lettuce plants. Luckily, they were on their way to bolting.

If you have garden observations to share, write them on the white board in the shed or send them to Jill Schneider (see contact information at the bottom of Page 2) for inclusion in subsequent issues of Digging In.