

June 2021

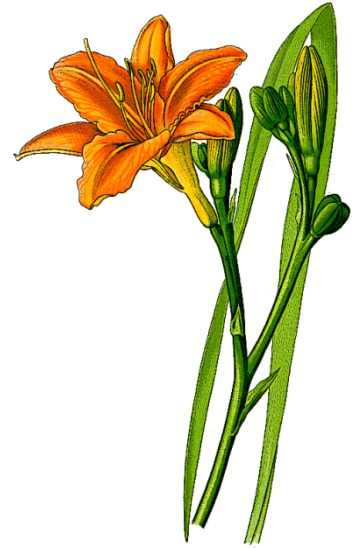
South Schuylkill Garden Club

Third Tuesday of the Month at 6:30

Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Schuylkill Haven

www.southschuylkillgardenclub.com

www.facebook.com/soschuylkillgardenclub.com



Cultivating the Community Newsletter

Weather Folklore: “A **cow with its tail to the West** makes the weather best; a cow with its tail to the East makes the weather least. The louder the frogs, the more the rain. Wind in the East, the fish bite the Least; wind in the West, the fish bite the Best.

June Club Meeting

The June Club Meeting will be held at Nancy Russial home outside of Schuylkill Haven at 6:30 PM.

Watch the transformation of a field converted into wildlife supportive landscape. This will be outdoor, and chairs should accompany you. Nancy address is 1222 Schuylkill Mountain Road, Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972.

Plant Sale

South Schuylkill Garden Club held the plant sale at the Schuylkill Haven Recreation/Senior Center on Saturday, **May 22**. A lot of hard work by

members went into the plant sale and a BIG THANK YOU to all who participated. SUCCESS is the word that best describes the plant sale. We were not sure if after a year of not having a plant sale that the public would be back to buy plants. Due to the success of getting the word out to the public about the plant sale along with the proven success of past years, the sale went off without a hitch. To put it in the words of one buyer, “I buy my plants from the club because, I always have success with replanting them in my gardens.” Thank You to all who worked tirelessly in their gardens and on this two-day event. Two-day event you say? Let us not forget Friday set up and all the hard work that goes into

setting up the Plant sale. Speaking of tirelessly, let us not forget those who grew the Annuals for the sale. Kaye and Nancy way to go!

Spring Plant Sale was quite a success as bills and related costs are be subtracted from the take-in for the day. Thankfully, the year of COVID did not dampen the spirits of gardeners who are again looking for color and vegetables to enhance their yards.

Quite a hit were the hardy annuals ready to be placed in the ground, thanks to the working team of Kaye Moyer and her husband. Kim Morgan brought an abundance of household planters of spider plants and wonder Jews, plus a few exotics. Nancy Russial tried her hand at seed planting with petunia hanging planters and an array of annuals and perennials.

New was Porcupine Pat sitting with his offer of horticulture books for a donation and a table of garden accessories. Helen Moyer dropped off her wide selection of succulents. Carol Haldeman came through with heirloom tomatoes and peppers which are a special draw. All of the other abundance of plants came from the many gardeners which make the Plant Sale a success.-**Jane**

National Garden Week from June 6-12 will be observed by planting a tree.

June 23 **District II/III** meeting in Montrose will also be virtual. Montrose is the northern most club in our district. If you desire to attend, let Jane Kruse know by the June meeting.

National Garden Club will be issuing their magazine online **only** to all garden club members. South Schuylkill Garden Club, by way of membership in the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania, is a member.



A couple of copies have already been issued from the National Garden Club via email. Hard copy subscription will no longer exist.

Equally, the Keystone Gardener will be an online version except for every two-year new presidential issue and yearly convention issue. Cost is the may factor in these moves.

Community Gardens need of cleaning, weeding and preparation for another season of color and interest. Review your commitment. They are visible examples of garden clubs' members' commitment to enrich their communities.

Clematis is a wonderful vine to grow for color though the summer months. They can grow on a trellis, across the ground or among other plants such as tree or shrubs. They can handle sun, but do not like to get dry. Plant them 2 inches below the given soil line to encourage more shoots. Mulch or surround by other plants to help shade the lower stem system. Use a wire or narrow trellis for the leaves to grab as they ascend.

There are three groups of clematis which determine the time of blooms and pruning and preparation of the next season.

Group 1

Bloom in spring on old wood and do not require pruning to flower next year.

Examples:

Clematis montana

Clematis alpina

Clematis macropetala

Clematis Armandii

Group 2

Bloom in early summer, first on old wood, then on new wood, and can be pruned after flowering.

Examples:

Bees Jubilee Nelly Moser

Vyvyan Pennell Perle D'Azur

The President Henryi

Ramona

Group 3

Bloom in late summer on new wood.

This is the one group we cut down each winter, anywhere from 6 to 24 inches, depending on the maturity of the plant.

Examples:

Clematis Jackmanii Clematis viticella

Clematis texensis Prince Charles

Madame Julia Correvon Clematis

terniflora (invasive)

Ernest Markham

Hagley Hybrid

Old-Fashioned Garden Sayings

Old-fashion gardening sayings as true as the year they work. An early above ground spring may not always correlate with ground temperature; different cultivars may prefer variations on warmth. Still the sayings may not be that far off. It makes for good fun.

- Plant **potatoes** when **dandelions** bloom.

- Plant **peas** in spring when the **daffodils** or **forsythia** bloom.
- Plant **bush beans** when the **apple** trees bloom.
- Plant **pole beans** and **cucumbers** when **apple** blooms finish.
- Plant **melons** when **iris** bloom.
- Plant **cold crops** including beets, carrots, spinach, and lettuce when **lilacs** first leaf.
- Plant tender **annuals**, beans, cucumber, and squash seeds when **lilacs** bloom.
- Plant **corn** when **oak leaves** are the size of a squirrel's ear. Others say a sow's ear.
- It's time to transplant **nightshades** including eggplant and peppers, plus **melons** when **iris** flowers.
- Plant **melons** when **peonies** flower.



Pat Pipkin Gardens

Pat has shared some photos from her gardens. **Hope others will also share from their gardens as well.** Thank You Pat for sharing.





Mulch - A Survey of Available Options

A gardener has many choices when it comes to mulch. This article covers the pros and cons of various types of organic, non-organic, and living mulches.



Straw mulch on peas. Photo credit: Diane Diffenderfer

For some gardeners, applying mulch to garden beds in the spring is one of the most satisfying aspects of gardening. Why?

Because in certain climates, fresh mulch means warmer days are ahead and soon fall-planted bulbs and cool season edibles will emerge, thus signaling another gardening season has begun!

In landscaped beds, mulch adds texture to and highlights the edges of the beds and certain design features, it also draws attention to woody ornamentals thoughtfully and artfully installed in the bed. In a vegetable garden, mulch is applied to keep the plants and edibles clean and reduce erosion by covering the soil. Mulch also helps to conserve soil moisture, moderate soil temperature, and suppress weeds in all types of gardens.

There are various types of mulch available to the gardener. While the decision tree is not endless, it is larger than it was a few short decades ago. Gardeners are now faced with decisions such as what type of mulch to purchase; organic, synthetic, or living? Dyed mulch or natural? By the bag or in bulk? Free from my local municipality? Cost and time spent applying the mulch should also be evaluated. Where is the mulch coming from? For example, from a local nursery or garden center, from a big-box store or a hardware store, or a farm and garden store? Even some grocery stores now carry mulch.

If the local municipality does offer free, bulk mulch/compost, the natural materials in the product may include pesticide (herbicide,

insecticide, fungicide) residues. Is this acceptable?

Given the vast assortment of mulches, the purpose of this article is to survey the types of mulches available and considerations when deciding upon which mulch best suits the intended purpose.

Organic Mulches

Shredded bark, bark chips, pine needles, compost, rice hulls, various nutshells, shredded leaves (intact leaves may form a mat that prevents oxygen and water movement and may stymie beneficial biological activities), straw, and cardboard are all organic mulches. Plastic sheeting is also available in a biodegradable form. However, it may take up to three years for this plastic sheeting to completely decompose and during that time, the remaining pieces of sheeting may be visible in the garden.

In addition to conserving water, moderating soil temperature, and suppressing weed growth, organic mulches improve soil health as they decompose. Since organic mulches decompose over time, they must be reapplied from time-to-time. Prior to adding a new layer of organic mulch, the old mulch may be removed or, in the case of vegetable gardens, in particular, may be incorporated into the soil. Mulch removal in an ornamental bed is important because the mulch layer should be limited to three to four inches deep. A mulch layer greater than three to

four inches deep may threaten plant vigor by reducing the amount of oxygen and water available to the plant.

Free mulch may be available from local municipalities. One potential drawback in using these mulches is not knowing if any type of pesticide was applied to the grass, shrubs, trees, or other vegetative matter included in the mulch as these mulches are rarely tested.

Follow this link for a short video of a tub grinder making mulch: [Tub Grinder Making Mulch - YouTube Video](#)

In instances where too much mulch has been applied to trees, these mulch volcanoes are a serious concern and have been the topic of many articles. Included here are articles from the Pennsylvania State University and the Ohio State University, both are land-grant universities. Land-grant universities are tasked with providing research-based information to the general public. [Mulch Volcanoes are Erupting Everywhere!](#) written by Penn State Extension Educator Sandy Feather and [Treemergency: Mulch Volcanos are Erupting in Landscapes!](#) written by Joe Boggs of Ohio State University Extension for the *Buckeye Yard & Garden* *onLine* publication. Both referenced articles include mulch-related photographs: mulch volcanoes, tree and moat, girdling stem root, and an image of the proper way to mulch a tree/shrub or vegetable.



mulches. Plastic sheeting and woven landscape fabric may be installed directly on the soil and subsequently covered with an organic mulch for aesthetic reasons.

Plastic sheeting and woven landscape fabric create impermeable and semi-permeable (respectively) barriers. These barriers prevent worms, water, and soil microbes from freely traveling throughout the soil. Limiting this movement interferes with the normal and customary biological soil activities. Over time, these barriers will increase soil compaction and form a secondary barrier of living roots above and below the inorganic barrier itself. These barriers, a combination of living and synthetics, can become very difficult to remove. Rocks and gravel absorb heat during warm days and can transfer the heat to the soil. The increase in soil temperature and reduced soil moisture may harm beneficial insects and microbes living in the soil.

Results of volcano mulching. Photo credit: Sandy Feather

Organic mulches for vegetable gardens and edible landscapes may include salt hay (no seeds), straw (fewer seeds), hay (seed heads intact). In addition, paper mulch and, as mentioned above, biodegradable plastic sheeting is also available for vegetable gardens and edible landscapes.

Synthetic Mulches

Rocks, gravel, plastic sheeting, woven landscape fabric are examples of synthetic

Synthetic mulches are often more expensive than organic; however, they generally have a longer life span than organics and do not need to be replaced as frequently.

Living Mulches

Living mulches offer an outstanding opportunity for gardeners to build soil health below the ground and enhance design aesthetics above the soil line. Living mulches are particularly useful around fruit trees. Crimson clover, borage, yarrow,

lemon balm, and even kale can be used to create pollinator-friendly living mulches. As these plants grow, their leaves shade the soil and their roots create air and water pockets, necessary elements for good plant health.

In addition to adding select herbs as living mulch around fruit trees, native plants can also be designed into landscaped beds as living mulch. As noted in [Living Mulch](#) (Part One) on the Edge of the Woods website, "... by using native plants to create plant communities in your landscape, your gardens will be more attractive and hospitable to songbirds, butterflies, bees, pollinators, and other creatures."

Dyed Mulches

According to an article by Ruppert Landscape [The Evolution of Hardwood Mulch](#), dyed mulch became popular in the 1960s. Dyed mulch can be found in a range of colors and textures. In answering a query about [colored bark mulch](#) the University of Massachusetts Amherst states that dyed bark is not toxic, but there are considerations when opting to apply dyed mulch to ornamental beds. This mulch is rarely used in gardens growing edibles. The wood used in dyed mulch is frequently recovered from used pallets and construction and demolition (C&D) sites. From a production perspective, the cost of using recycled wood, rather than fresh wood, for dyed mulch is significant. Recycled wood is less expensive than fresh wood and dried

wood readily absorbs the dye while fresh wood does not. However, determining if recycled wood from C&D sites and used pallets has been treated with Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) or used in the transport of toxic materials is nearly impossible.

Much of the recycled wood collected from C&D sites and old pallets dates to pre-2003. This is relevant because in late 2002, a law was passed preventing the lumber industry from using CCA to treat lumber, effective January 1, 2003. Lumber produced beginning in 2003 was treated using a process that does not include arsenic.

The dye used in black mulch is derived from carbon-based material and the dye used in red mulch is derived from iron oxide. Each of the ingredients in these two forms of dye are not considered to be toxic to plants. However, according to the University of Massachusetts article, if colored mulch is preferred for a landscape, every effort should be made to determine the origin of the wood used. The carbon-based dye is similar to that used in cosmetics and ink and may lose its color when exposed to water, e.g., rain and irrigation, over time.

Summary

In summary, the three primary benefits of applying mulch to landscape and edible gardens are weed suppression, soil moisture retention, and temperature moderation. Organic mulches decompose over time and

may need to be refreshed and add organic matter to the soil as they decompose. Synthetic mulches may not need to be refreshed and do not add any organic matter to the soil. Synthetic mulches may compact the soil and reduce microbial and worm activities required for healthy soil biology. Dyes used in producing shredded mulch are not toxic to the plants. However, the recycled wood (from old pallets and C&D sites) may contain CCA. In 2003, CCA was prohibited in the manufacturing of pressure-treated lumber. Finally, more mulch is not always better for the plants. Mulch volcanoes represent a true threat to the health of trees and should be avoided. Mulch applied around trees should be no more than two to four inches deep and should be applied three to four inches from the trunk of the tree and extend outward to the drip line.

Stay Safe by staying socially separated from others by at least 6 feet. Wash hands frequently and above all don't touch your face, but with clean hands.