June 2014 Newsletter

With the warm weather comes plenty of biting and stinging bugs. Reduce mosquito problems by turning over any pots, lids or saucers that might collect water and create a breeding site. Use Bt dunks in ornamental ponds, rain barrels, and other contained areas that collect water.

Hornets and wasps, including yellow jackets, are active building nests now. Bees are also very active. See our section on stinging insects for more information.

Click here for more tips for June.

Featured Plant for June: Coral Honeysuckle
Lonicera sempervirens

You can have hummingbirds sipping nectar, when you grow the tubular flowers of this showy native vine. Clusters of blooms appear in spring and continue for weeks. Each 1-2” flower blends coral, pink and yellow tones, fun to match with other flowers. The way the blue-green leaves encircle and hug the stems is interesting in itself. Red berries add a little late season bonus. This woody vine is not too heavy to adorn a mailbox or light trellis in sun or very light shade and average soils. Don’t confuse it with invasive Japanese honeysuckle. This native beauty earns more fans all the time.

More Featured Plants

Grow100 Submissions Show Promise

If you are interested in our 100 square foot growing competition, you still have a couple weeks to sign up and send us your first check in update. Due date is June 15 and then sign up is locked!

We’ve got some good check-in updates already that we’ll share with you here. On the week of the 15th, we will make a Grow It Eat It blog post sharing more highlights and announce the winner of the first $25 gift certificate to High Mowing Organic Seeds.

Laura in Carroll County has entered into the 4-Rs category and employs her own homemade compost, a cold frame made of spare windows to lengthen her growing season, and a nearby rain barrel system. She’s doing a great job reducing water use, re-using materials, and recycling nutrients!
Ellis in Kent County is a new gardener and just built two new 8x4’ raised beds in the front yard for best light. He just planted his cucumber, tomatoes, tomatillos, and okra starts in early May, so we look forward to seeing his progress in the coming check-in periods!

Pam in Montgomery County is going for maximum production and we can tell she’s got her strategy all planned out. “I meticulously map out the garden each winter so I can replant lettuce behind vertical cucumbers and tall kale plants to get max yield.” Raised beds, PVC deer coverage with doors, and a manifold and soaker hose system with controls for individual beds make it clear she’s got great gear to grow a lot of greens.

Fern Valley
By Sara Tangren

Fern Valley is the name of the National Arboretum’s 4-acre woodland garden. Sections demonstrate plants native to parts of the Eastern US, and are named accordingly: the Piedmont, the Coastal Plain, the Southern Mountains, and the Northern Forest. A half-mile trail, known as the Outerloop, winds through each of these geographic regions. If you visit, allot plenty of time to stop and enjoy the peaceful woodland scenery, and to photograph plant species and planting combinations that will inspire your own garden work. Gardeners will be particularly interested to observe the plants the ferns have been paired with. Every bend in the path reveals a new combination: cinnamon ferns with spotted touch me not, intermediate shield ferns and wild ginger, or broad beech ferns with sedges.

Species are often displayed in the same circumstances as they would occur in nature. For example, a floodplain floor is carpeted by New York ferns, and lush clumps of Christmas fern cling to steep banks above stream channels. Some of the ferns were planted, while others occur in the woods naturally. An example of the latter is Rattlesnake Fern. Garden master Joan Feely says it’s often a matter of making the most of what you’ve got.

There are so many fern species in this garden, it’s much more than just a place to go for a walk or admire another’s horticultural prowess. With all the species being labeled, it’s an ideal location for the novice to practice fern identification. In addition to the species listed above, you will also see cinnamon, Christmas, ostrich, lady, interrupted, sensitive, maidenhair, Royal, intermediate, shield, marginal wood, and bracken ferns.

For those who prefer cultivars, there are special paths through the center of the woods where these are on display. The garden entrance is at 24th and R St., NE, in Washington DC. The garden is only open to the public on weekends (Friday through Monday). For more information, or a virtual tour, visit www.usna.USDA.gov.
Please tell me what insect this is. They are causing tremendous damage in my perennial bed. They don’t seem to be eating the leaves but are causing bleached-out spots that eventually turn black. This is a butterfly garden so I do not want to use any pesticides that would harm pollinators. Though I am afraid these pest are going to ruin my garden. Do you have any suggestions as to what I can use to control these insects?

The pest invading your butterfly garden is the four-lined plant bug. In a short period of time they can cause severe damage on a large number of host plants. Fortunately, they are active for only a few weeks in May or early June and there is only one generation a year.

Four-lined plant bugs are quick and usually not seen. Often you only find the damage they left behind. Because of this they are difficult to control with contact insecticides like insecticidal soap or horticultural oil. Plants tend to outgrow the damage. Some perennials like Rudbeckia and Joe Pye weed can be pruned back to below the damage. They will grow back in time to bloom during the season. Annuals may need to be replaced if damage is severe.

Growing UME’s Value

A video created for 2014 College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Convocation showing some of the great projects and people involved with UME.

Watch the video