

YELLOWSTONE MASTER GARDENER



NEWSLETTER

Volume 16, Issue 2 • March/April/May 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

**MEET SCOTT MEYERS:
YELLOWSTONE ARBORETUM
AMBASSADOR...1**

**MANAGING LARGE ORNAMENTAL
GRASSES2**

**WINTER SEED SOWING
SUCCESS.....3**

**FREE EVENTS AT THE SEED
LIBRARY...4**

**RECIPE: SPRING GREENS WITH
CHOKECHERRY VINIAGRETTE...4**

**GROUND COVER AND POPULAR
VARIETIES.....5**

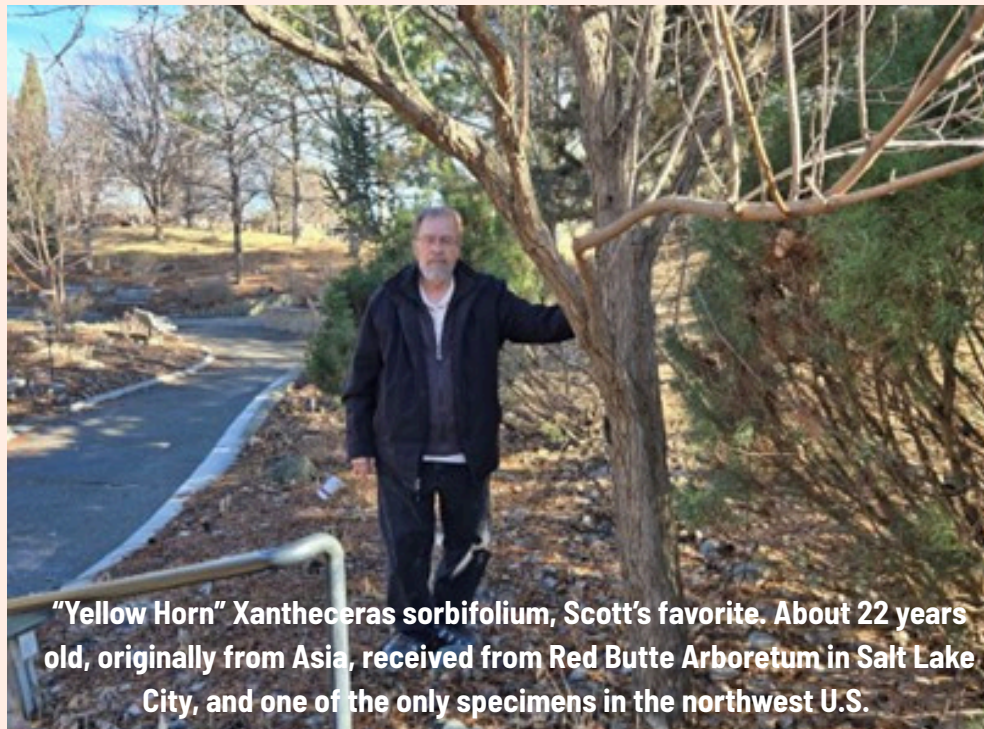
**BOOK REVIEW: FOOD
FREEDOM.....7**

**NORTHERN GARDENING
TIPS.....8**

**SPRING VEGETABLE GARDEN
PREP.....9**

**OTHER FUN WORKSHOPS AND
EVENTS.....10**

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS
FOR THE NEWSLETTER TO
[YMASTERGARDENER
@GMAIL.COM](mailto:YMASTERGARDENER@GMAIL.COM)
BY MAY 1ST
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE.**



"Yellow Horn" *Xanthoceras sorbifolium*, Scott's favorite. About 22 years old, originally from Asia, received from Red Butte Arboretum in Salt Lake City, and one of the only specimens in the northwest U.S.

Meet Scott Meyers: Yellowstone Arboretum Ambassador

BY Laura Estes

After 45 years in retail, Scott Meyers decided it was time to retire and seek new adventures. One day he accompanied his partner, Nancy, to ZooMontana to volunteer in the gardens. He was struck by the variety of trees growing throughout the grounds.

It rekindled memories of his childhood in northern Illinois, where his family often went on nature-inspired field trips. Tours of the Morton Arboretum in Chicago and the Mitchell Park Domes Conservatory in Milwaukee were his favorites and cultivated his lifelong appreciation for trees. In 1994, Scott made a career move to Billings. Years later, while visiting friends in Uppsala, Sweden, he learned about Carl Linnaeus, the "father of modern taxonomy," deepening his appreciation for the science behind the trees.

ZooMontana's vision always included botanical gardens and an arboretum. Numerous trees were planted in the early 1990s, but development stalled without a curator. Scott's curiosity led him to discover tree accession records in the Zoo's basement in 2017.

Continued page 2...

Winter Seed Sowing Success

By Anthony Sammartano

Thoughts of gardening must have been floating along in this warm winter weather, because the Billings Community Seed Library's winter seed sowing workshop filled up the community room of the Billings Public Library with over 70 people! Most, if not all, brought the requested clean, 1-gallon milk jugs, and some even brought extras to share! It was great to witness a community come out to participate in a workshop, as the room was full of master gardeners and regular community members. Patti Doble (Yellowstone County Master Gardener) and Jacquelin Marsh (City of Billings/Amend Community Garden) did a great job of organizing and leading this workshop, and if you get a chance to meet them, please thank them for the wonderful work they do to support gardening in Yellowstone County!

Once the audience had settled into their chairs, and after I turned on the microphone, Patti Doble spoke to those gathered. She shared the mission of the Billings Community Seed Library, all the resources and aid that this group has to offer and introduced Jacquelin Marsh. Jacquelin taught the science behind using the milk jugs as an insulated structure to plant within, and what to look for when selecting plants that need to be winter sown. In a surprise guest appearance, Wayne Burleson, Deb Yate and Lisa Guy all spoke briefly to the audience about their experience with winter seed sowing. I don't know if they knew they were going to be guest speakers at this event, but it was great to have experience gardeners present to share what has worked best for them. Wayne Burleson even brought an example of successful germination of winter sown veggies that he had started a few weeks prior to February 4th.

After the introduction presentation, audience members who wished to participate began preparing their milk jugs. Using scissors, Exacto-knives, and what looked like wood burning tools, participants cut their milk jugs to size and moved to the planting stations where they received potting soil and their choice of seeds. In outward appearance, the 70 + individuals moved with the coordination of a colony of ants, all working to get their seeds planted and secured in their containers. Aside from a brief librarian's panic about the smell of burning plastic, the Winter Seed Sowing Workshop was a great success, and it has gotten me excited for the Seed Swap on March 7th.

I encourage you to stop by the Seed Swap on March 7th to join in the fun! Some of my favorite people and organizations in Yellowstone County are coming to participate, and I am excited for you to meet them. §



Meyers

continued from page 1...

He began updating records for more recently planted trees and organized volunteer days for planting, pruning and cleanup, breathing new life into the arboretum.

Building on this foundation, Scott recognized that accreditation would give the Yellowstone Arboretum independent status and help ensure its longevity. ArbNet, founded by The Morton Arboretum, is the only international accreditation program for arboreta. In 2017 Scott partnered with local nurseries to survey the grounds, cataloging and identifying more than 100 species within the first few days. The impressive biodiversity at the Zoo was officially recognized in 2018 with full accreditation. It opened doors to local and international research partnerships and access to valuable resources. The Arboretum was formally recognized as a living museum devoted to the study and stewardship of trees and woody plants.

In 2026, Scott continues to pour his heart and soul into the Arboretum. His current initiatives include:

- Organizing an upcoming pruning workshop and tree forum (see article in this newsletter for more details)
- Mentoring two interns (one from MSU B and the other from Rocky) for their capstone projects
- Working with School District 2 to plant trees on school campuses in the Heights
- Forging a partnership with Bailey Nurseries to use the Arboretum as a trial garden for new plant introductions.

As every gardener knows, upkeep and maintenance never end. Recently, Tom, a retired certified arborist, stepped forward to offer his expertise in overseeing pruning at the Arboretum. This will allow Scott to dedicate more time to curation and education.

“Every tree has a story,” Scott says. He has dedicated his retirement to collecting and telling those stories both individually and as part of the Arboretum’s larger narrative. Scott’s passion for trees and woody shrubs is evident in his dedication to this work.

For those who share his enthusiasm, there are opportunities to get involved. If you are interested in volunteering at the Arboretum, you can contact him at billingsbotanical@gmail.com



ARBORETUM: ...a living museum of trees and woody plants, grown and cared for by an organization committed to their stewardship.

Master Gardener Spring Tip: Managing Large Ornamental Grasses



Cutting back large clumps of ornamental grasses can be challenging. MG Claudia Janucek recommended using jumbo twist ties, available at most hardware stores. To use them, gather the grass and secure with the tie. I cut above the tie first, then below the tie to clean it up and it worked great! An added bonus is that ties can be reused over and over.

Billings Community Seed Library's Free Events

Seed Swap

March 7th, 11:00am - 1:30 pm

Community Room of Billings Public Library

Description: Join the Billings Community Seed Library for a seed swap social in the Community Room of the Billings Public Library. Come peruse the assortment of donated fruit, veggie, and flower seeds and visit with local community groups and gardens who offer fun gardening, educational, and volunteer opportunities.

Tree Care Workshop

March 14th, 10:00am – 11:30am

Community Room of Billings Public Library

Description: Join the Billings Community Seed Library for a Tree Care Workshop featuring Sarah Eilers, Montana State University Master Gardener Coordinator. Sarah is an ISA Certified Arborist who has worked in the green industry for over 20 years. She will talk about how to properly care for urban trees, how to select the proper tree for a particular site and connect participants with community resources. Be sure to come with questions and photos of your own trees!

Caring for Garden Tools

April 8th, 1:00pm – 11:30am

Community Room at the Billings Public Library

Description: Let's make sure our tools are in good condition and ready to work in the garden this season. Master Gardeners Pam Haggerty and Jerry Dalton will lead a discussion about garden tool organization and show you how to maintain your trusty tools. Bring your favorite garden tool (or a photo) for a show-and-tell with the group. *(Obsidian Sharp Edges will be available after class to sharpen garden tools such as shovels, pruning shears, and mower blades. See their website for prices: www.obsidiansharpedges.com.)*

Seedling Swap

May 30th, 9:00am – 11:00am

St. Andrews Church and

Community Gardens (180 24th St. W)

Description: Join the Billings Community Seed Library at St. Andrews Church and Community Gardens for a seedling swap. If you grew too many flowers or veggie starts (or not enough), come share in the bounty of a community of gardeners. Please be sure to label your seedlings so everyone will know what you brought to share.

Questions? Please email the Billings Community Seed Library at billingsseedlibrary@gmail.com

Spring Salad with Chokecherry Vinaigrette

By Corinna Sinclair

This winter has been more than mild. My salad burnet stayed green the entire time, and maybe you have some greens still going, too - or why not get some leafy greens going in the cold frame and enjoy a little freshness?

You can adjust the amounts in this recipe to taste. I use my dressing cruet with measurements marked in to mix the vinaigrette, and my dad's homemade chokecherry syrup. This will just get you started – use what you have!

- 2 cups chopped greens (arugula, spinach, butter lettuce, beet tops, chard, etc.)
- ½ cup chopped salad burnet or parsley (or your favorite leafy herb)
- 2 tbsp chopped fennel or dill
- pinch of fresh crushed rosemary, oregano, or mint
- 3 tbsp pine nuts, chopped almonds, cashews, or roasted walnuts
- ¼ cup shredded hard cheese or crumbled soft cheese
- ¼ cup chopped apple, sliced strawberry, or pear
- Chokecherry Vinaigrette
- 3 tbsp water
- ¼ cup vinegar
- 1/3 cup chokecherry syrup
- ½ cup oil

Toss in a large bowl, add dressing at the table. Add your favorite toppings like bacon bits, croutons, or sunflower seeds. For variety substitute your favorite fancy vinegar and different fruits and vegetables. Dressing stores in the cupboard, oil will gel if refrigerated.



Ground cover: Valuable for Any Garden

By Suri Lunde

Ground cover plants are low-growing spreading plants that fill the gaps in your garden and carpet the soil with attractive foliage, flowers, or both. An underrated arsenal for cold climate gardens, here are why you should grow some in yours.

1. They protect your soil from harsh weather. Ground covers act like a living blanket from snowmelt and heavy rains. They insulate soil against extreme freeze-thaw cycles, and help keep soil structure intact over time.

2. They help in preventing soil erosion. Their sprawling roots are excellent for reducing erosion by holding the soil firmly in place, especially on slopes or areas prone to runoff. This stabilizes the landscape and improves long-term soil health.

3. They suppress weeds. Once established, ground covers outcompete weeds before they even get started, saving time and energy from weeding.

4. They conserve moisture. Ground covers serve as green mulch by reducing evaporation, keeping roots cooler during heat spikes, and helping maintain more consistent soil moisture.

5. They are low-maintenance, reliable, and resilient to cold, wind, and poor soils. Ground covers generally require minimal watering, trimming, or fertilizing once established. Many are drought-tolerant, extremely hardy, bounce back year after

year and can thrive in areas where plants struggle to grow.

6. They fill challenging spaces beautifully. In shady areas, slopes, between stepping stones, or under trees, their spreading habit enables them to thrive making the garden look intentional instead of patchy.

7. They support pollinators early. Many ground covers bloom early in spring which is beneficial for pollinators coming out of winter with limited food sources.

8. They reduce garden upkeep long-term. As a lawn replacement, ground covers often require less work than traditional turf. After the first year or two, less mulching, watering, and replanting are needed.

9. They provide year-round aesthetic appeal. Ground covers can bloom at different times ensuring seasonal color in the garden. They also fill gaps between larger plants by adding color, texture, and height contrast.

Growing ground cover plants offers numerous environmental, practical, and aesthetic benefits, in addition to making your garden tougher and your life easier. Make use of them! \$



dragon blood sedum



ground covers on a path

Easy-to-grow Ground Cover Plants

A good ground cover plant can be characterized as either a clumper or a carpenter/creeper. Clumpers tend to be more polite, while carpenters typically cover an area quickly. When choosing a ground cover plant to grow, be aware of the site's soil type, sun exposure, and location, as well as the plant's growth habit and rate. Although generally well-behaved, a ground cover can spread aggressively in ideal conditions, so periodic control may be needed to prevent invasiveness.

Sedum: It is one of those reliable, versatile, adaptable, and pollinator-friendly plants that quietly does everything right as a ground cover. Low and compact, sedum comes in a variety of foliage colors; some varieties even keep winter interest with dried seed heads. If you want a ground cover that gives you beauty, durability with almost zero maintenance, and can survive neglect, bad soil, cold winters, this is it.

Popular varieties:

Dragon's Blood • Angelina • Sedum spurium 'Tricolor' • Blue Elf



angelina sedum

Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*): *Ajuga* forms dense, colorful carpets of green-purple-bronze foliage with blue or violet flowers in late spring. Tolerating both shade and partial sun, it thrives in moist soils but can withstand brief dry periods. It is relatively resistant to diseases and pests like deer and rabbits.

*Popular varieties: Chocolate Chip • Purple Beauty
Black Scallop • Bronze Beauty*



Creeping Phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*)/**Moss Phlox** (*Phlox subulata*): A fast-spreader, this sun-loving plant forms a dense mat that can cover a wide area. Few pests and diseases bother creeping phlox, and it is even tolerant of moist soil. In spring, it produces flowers that attract pollinators while providing a spectacular carpet of color. Its evergreen foliage remains attractive and neat throughout the year.

*Popular varieties: Emerald Blue • Purple Beauty
Candy Stripe • Snowflake*



Dead Nettle (*Lamium maculatum*): *Lamium* is valued for its shade/partial shade tolerance, showy foliage, and early-season blooms. Many varieties have attractive variegated leaves, adding year-round interest even after the flowers have faded.

*Popular varieties: Purple Dragon • Beacon Silver
White Nancy • Pink Chablis*



Other ground cover plants to consider:
cranesbill geranium • creeping jenny (can be invasive) • creeping thyme • lamb's ear • pachysandra • snow-in-summer • sweet woodruff • vinca minor • wild strawberry §

Important Links

Yellowstone MG Newsletter Submissions ymastergardener@gmail.com

Montana Master Gardener Program <https://www.montana.edu/extension/mastergardener/index.html>

Montana State Master Gardener Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/MTMastergardener>

Master Gardener Links and resources <https://mtmastergardener.org/linksandresources/index.html>

Schutter Diagnostic Lab (plant diseases, insect damage, environmental plant problems, how to send samples)
<https://diagnostics.montana.edu/>

Montana Frost/Freeze/Precipitation Data By County <https://mtmastergardener.org/linksandresources/frostfreezedata.html>

Yard and Garden MontGuides <https://apps.msuextension.org/montguide/index.html>

Yellowstone MG Newsletter Archive <http://www.ycmgamt.com/newsltrpage.php>



BOOK REVIEW: FOOD FREEDOM by Robin Greenfield

Reviewed
by Ann Guthals

In 2011, Robin Greenfield was living an un-examined “normal” American life when he read books like *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* by Michael Pollan and watched videos like “Food, Inc.” It opened his eyes and mind to the food system he was participating in, where food often travels thousands of miles to our plates and is raised using many synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. He decided to look for alternatives and has been on that journey ever since.

One might label Robin an “environmental activist” because he not only chooses new ways of living, he comes up with imaginative and startling ways to illustrate his beliefs for others. For example, for a month he wore every bit of trash he produced in a “trash suit” of his creation to show people the problems with solid waste. But Robin does not do his experiments and adventures just for show. He is deeply honest and truly striving to live what he believes and wants to communicate these beliefs and findings to others. He continues to pursue this path to this day. He is one of the most committed people I’ve ever encountered.

While pursuing ways to live more sustainably including what he eats, Robin decided to try an experiment of living for a year on only what he could raise in gardens and forage in the wild. In his words, “I would be my own farmer...my own grocery store... my own pharmacy...my own processor, my own distributor and my own chef.” (P. 4).

He picked Florida as the site of his experiment because of its year-round growing season, but he lets us know it was no walk in the park to garden in Florida as he dealt with sandy soils and heat, not to mention his lack of experience in gardening. He emphasizes how important community was to his success—he could not have been successful on his own.

Robin grew gardens in front lawns and backyards of friends he made (helping them learn gardening as he went and leaving them with a thriving garden at the end of the year) and he foraged in both Florida as well as Wisconsin during a trip home mid-year.

Here is a sample list of 300 foods he grew and foraged:

Florida garden: starches like sweet potatoes, perennial greens like sorrel, annual greens like kale and arugula, veggies like carrots and potatoes, fruits like bananas and papayas, herbs and spices

Florida forage: fruits, greens, veggies, mushrooms, nuts, fish

Wisconsin forage: fruits, many greens, fish and deer, mushrooms, nuts, herbs, wild rice

Other: harvested honey and made salt from seawater

This is not only a great story, it is a how-to book. What Robin doesn’t explain in his detailed descriptions, he provides extensive lists of resources for further information (people, books, YouTube videos, other online resources, etc.).

Robin’s experiment was an extreme undertaking. He did not choose to try this experiment thinking others would emulate him because he understood how difficult that would be. His intent was to encourage us to closely examine our food choices—where our food comes from and the impacts of how it is raised and transported—and to explore viable alternatives such as growing at least some of our own food, buying locally, foraging at least a bit, and getting involved in our communities.

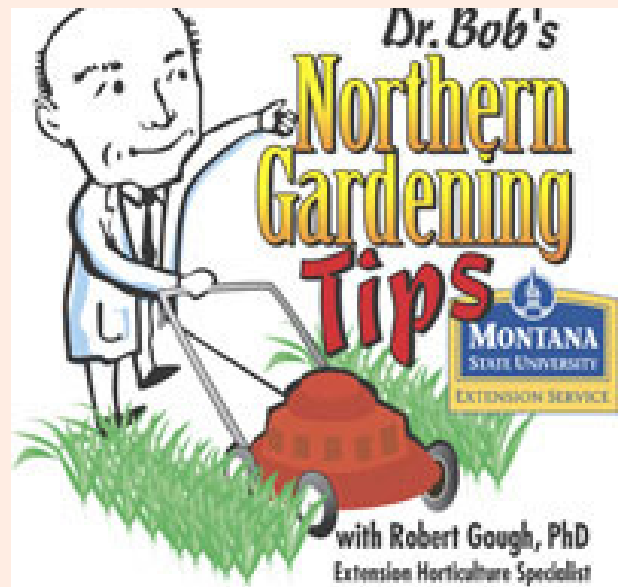
This is not a quick read. It is a story packed densely with information, ideas and suggestions. While you may not always agree with Robin’s ideas and conclusions, the book is so well-researched and well-thought-out and his adventure so well-lived, it is definitely worth taking the time to read. §

Northern Gardening Tips

By Anthony Sammartano

When I first started my position with Yellowstone County Extension, I was introduced to a man by the name of Taylor Brown. If you live in Montana and haven't heard of Taylor Brown, you would be in the minority. He is the owner of the ever-popular Northern Broadcasting System, which houses the Northern Ag Network, Northern News Network, and the flagship radio station KGHL AM-790 and FM 94.7. This network of radio, television, and digital content spans Montana and the Northern Great Plains, broadcasting out of 85 stations and covering 4 states. I recommend you visit this website, www.northernbroadcasting.com, to learn about some of their programming, as they aim to keep their audience informed about news related to Montana, agriculture, weather and country music.

Taylor Brown asked me to help create content for a show he was broadcasting, called "Northern Gardening Tips". This show was already established, but Taylor was currently playing reruns of old shows that were submitted by the former hosts. These two-minute segments play at 8:45 am, and again after 5pm, and provided gardening advice to those living in the northern region. From watering advice to dealing with fungus gnats, this program covers it all. To ensure I didn't make too much of fool of myself, I decided to do a deep dive and research this show. In doing so, I learned some interesting Montanan horticulture history, which I will share with you today. Some of you may know of the people I will mention, but for those new to this program, it is a fun bit of horticulture history.



Northern Gardening Tips was started by the late, great Dr. Bob Gough around 1994, when he was the Extension Horticulture Specialist at Montana State University. He created two-minute segments that would run daily and would aim to be specific to the time of the season in Montana. When Dr. Bob made the move to be the associate dean for the College of Agriculture in 2004, his wife, author Cheryl Moore-Gough, took over his position of horticulture specialist and program creator of Northern Gardening Tips. She ran the program for the next 16 years, continuing to broadcast after her retirement in her in home recording studio until 2020.

And now it is my turn to try and host Northern Gardening Tips! As I slowly begin creating my own two-minute segments, you will begin to hear them being played in between Cheryl's old shows. Hopefully as the years progress, you will hear me more frequently!

If you wish to listen to the program online, visit <https://northernbroadcasting.com/northern-gardening-tips/>.

Otherwise, turn your radios to AM-790 or FM 94.7 . 8



Spring Vegetable Garden

Prep

By Ann McKean

Proper garden bed prep sets you up for a successful season of healthy production.

Starting now, sharpen your tools and make repairs to hardscape, including fences, paths, raised beds and irrigation. Remember to wait until soil is dry enough to be crumbly; working in wet soil can cause permanent damage.

Horticulturists and many gardeners have discovered that no-till gardening is better for the soil and results in a healthier and more naturally productive garden, so if you haven't made the switch, this spring would be a great time to start. Every season going forward, your garden will require less labor and be more full of life because creating a healthy and fully functioning ecosystem results in higher quality and higher yields.

Late winter is a good time to do a soil test if you haven't checked in a few years. This will give you time to make any adjustments before planting. If you did not plant a cover crop in the fall for spring growth, it's not too late to throw out some seeds right now. First, scout for cheat grass seedlings which sprout in the fall and remove them; the easiest time to remove weeds is when they are young. Add a light layer of clean compost to improve your soil quality.

Cut down green manure plants before they go to seed, cutting and spreading them over the garden with a layer of straw or other brown material on top to create a natural mulch which prevents weeds and adds nutrients. Dead decaying organic matter brings new life, so leave it there (minus any seeds). Be sensitive to the beneficial animals living in your soil. Many insects, including some bumblebees, hibernate and nest in the ground or in plant stems, while beneficial mycorrhizae build networks in the soil; tilling and even hoeing can destroy those insects and networks (and uncover latent weed seeds) so try not to disturb the soil more than you must.

Clear areas for walking or planting, leaving enough room for new seedlings to thrive. I use a swoe, which looks like a sharpened golf putter and slides parallel to the soil surface just below the soil line, cutting weeds at the neck. If you've been mulching faithfully, there shouldn't be too many. Watch out for self-sowing plants that you want to keep and move them if you need to.

Mulching walking areas thickly and using sheet mulch can reduce weeding. Sheet mulch also warms the soil. I have visited commercial gardens where cut crops were left in place and woven landscape fabric used as row cover was placed right over them. (Never mulch weed seeds or diseased material.) It was reported that the cut plants were completely composted in three months' time. I've used a torch to burn holes in the woven landscape fabric and plant right through the holes. Take it up in fall and plant your cover crop for next spring. Your soil will have better texture, drainage and nutrient availability every year. If you just have a small garden or raised beds, you won't need sheet mulch.

As we continue to garden in challenging conditions, working with nature and not against her will allow us to benefit from the wisdom of evolution and the systems of the natural world, ultimately resulting in easier gardening and healthier and more productive plants. Enjoy a great season! §



Other Fun Workshops and Events

Plan Your Yield – FCS Program

March 26, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

4-H Building at MetraPark

Description: In this workshop, you will learn practical information and skills to help you grow a garden that will last you all year long. MSU Extension Horticulturist Anthony Sammartano and MSU Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Agent Erin Gregory are teaming up to help you plan your garden based on what you hope to process and preserve. In the first half of the workshop, we will cover topics like what to start from seed and what not to start from seed, what yields twice in a season, and what yields all year long. In the second half of the workshop, we will work through expected plant yields, preservation processes, and how to make the most of what we grow.

Seed Starting Workshop

March 27, 10:00am – 11:00am

LIFTT (1241 Crawford Dr,
Billings, MT 59102)

Description: Join Yellowstone County Horticulture Agent, Anthony Sammartano, for an hour-long program on the different ways to start seeds. Visit the campus of Living Independently For Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT), explore the resources they offer, and see what they are growing in their community garden.

Master Gardener Symposium

Cost: \$62

March 28, 9:00am – 3:30pm

Carroll College

Campus Center (1290 N. Park Avenue,
Helena, MT, 59601)

Description: Join the 9th Annual Gold Country Master Gardener Symposium for a day full of Master Gardener – level continuing education presented by top speakers on the hottest topics! Visit goldcountrymastergardener@gmail.com for details.

Basic Tree Management for Fruit Production

Cost: \$30

April 3rd, 9:00am – 1:30pm

USDA Bridger Plant Materials Center (98
S River Rd, Bridger, MT 59014)

Contact grace@ceda.org to rsvp

Description: Join Ravalli County Economic Development Authority, MSU-Western Ag Research Center, and Carbon County MSU Extension for an introductory

[tree management]

course on fruit tree maintenance and management. The course will cover pruning, wildlife conflict management, vertebrate pest management, insect management, timing overview, nutrient management, and fruit tree maintenance for commercial and backyard producers. This course is a combination of hands-on and in-classroom education.

Arbor Day Tree Giveaway (Conservation District)

April 24th, 11:00am – 1:00pm

Yellowstone Conservation District
(1670 S 48th St W, Billings, MT 59106)

Visit the Yellowstone County Conservation District office to get a free tree and meet your local natural resource agencies and specialists.

Two Moon Park Earth & Arbor Day Volunteer Event

April 25th, 9:00am – 1:00pm

Two Moon Park (850 Two Moon Park,
Billings, MT 59105)

Description: Volunteer help is needed to pick up litter and plant native grasses and wildflowers in areas recently cleared of invasive species. Please email Anthony Sammartano (anthony.sammartano@montana.edu) for details.

Houseplant Care Workshop w/Monet's Garden

April 30th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

4-H Building at MetraPark

Details to be announced at a later date.

Houseplant Swap

May 8th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Community Room of the Billings Public Library

Description: Join Horticulture Extension Agent Anthony Sammartano and Monet from Monet's Garden for a quick houseplant care class, followed by a public house plant swap. Bring your extra plants or make cuttings to share!

Pollinator Festival

June 20th, 11:00am – 3:00pm

Pioneer Park (301 Parkhill Dr, Billings,
MT 59101)

Description: Join us for an immersive and hands on event celebrating the importance of pollinators. Activities at the festival include games, face painting, inflatable obstacle course and food trucks!

Montana Spider Survey at ZooMT (Citizen Science Project)

See attached flyer for more details. Please email entoquest@proton.me for questions or to sign up to volunteer. Be sure to type "Spider Survey" in the subject line.



EXTENSION

P.O. Box 173150
Bozeman, MT 59717-3140

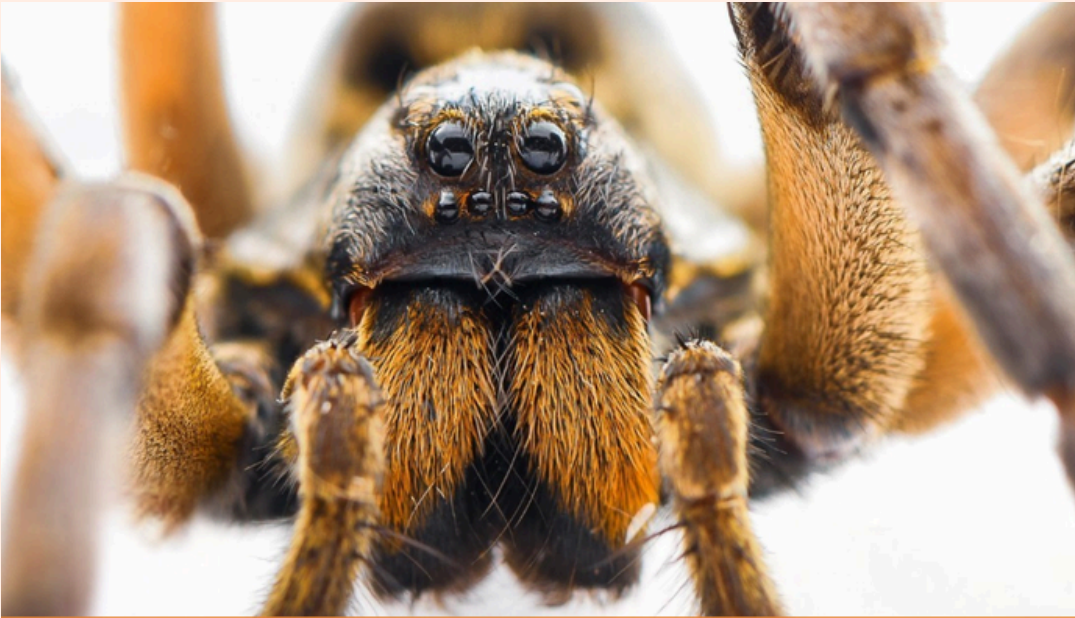
Sarah E. Eilers
Montana Master
Gardener Coordinator
Phone: 406.994.2120
sarah.eilers1@montana.edu

Abiya Saeed
Extension Specialist
Phone: 406.994.6523
abiya.saeed@montana.edu

Anthony Sammartano
Horticulture Extension Agent
Phone: 406.256.2828
anthony.sammartano@montana.edu



**Yellowstone County
Extension Office**
2320 3rd Avenue North
Billings, MT 59101
Office hours: 8am–5pm



TAKE A WALK
ON THE WILD SIDE



DEBORAH BANDROSKY MONTANA SPIDER SURVEY

COMMUNITY SCIENTISTS WANTED!

ZooMT, in partnership with the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, is launching Yellowstone County's first-ever spider biodiversity survey in May, 2026, in honor of MT naturalist, Deborah BanDrosky.

Over the course of the 2026 field season, participants will conduct sampling efforts across ZooMT grounds, learning how to collect, handle, curate, identify (and appreciate!) our local spider fauna, resulting in valuable data that will help inform scientific research, land management agencies, and public awareness.



If you are interested in participating, want more information, or have questions about survey schedule or requirements, please email Marian at **EntoQuest@proton.me** and type "Spider Survey" in the subject line! We would like to fill the volunteer roster by March 25, 2026.

Emerald Ash Borer

By Ann McKean

The Emerald ash borer, also known as EAB, is a narrow, 1/3-1/2" long, jewel green beetle from eastern Asia that has devastated *Fraxinus* species in north America since its discovery in the eastern US in 2002. No longer confined to the east coast, it is moving westward and has been found as far west as North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, and even Oregon. Cities, scientists and citizen scientists in the west are monitoring their ash trees closely for any signs of infestation. Once an ash tree is infested, it will lose most of its canopy within two years and will succumb within another one to two years. While the insects don't travel far on their own locomotion, the movement of infested wood, especially firewood is the most likely cause of its continued spread west. Montana has a state quarantine on the movement of firewood.

Having a one-year life cycle, EAB adults emerge in spring, feed on ash foliage briefly and mate. They live an average of 13-21 days, with females living longer to lay 60-90 eggs on the bark. Eggs hatch in 7-10 days and the first instar tunnel through the bark into the phloem where they create S-shaped galleries and overwinter till pupating in early May and emerging in late May to early June to repeat the cycle. While the threat of infestation is real, research has revealed that hope for the survival of American ash

trees isn't dead yet. A few straggler surviving trees are being studied as well as possible ways to combat the beetle itself. Although costly and impractical at scale, if the beetle is found in an area, individual healthy trees within a thirty-mile radius can be treated prophylactically on an ongoing annual schedule with injected pesticides. Minnesota is experimenting with a native

fungus that has been found to attack and kill the beetles. Many other states are running bio-control programs, which may or may not translate to Montana, but it is early days for research.

As homeowners, we should be monitoring our ash trees, keeping a watchful eye for damage starting in the canopy (they target one- to two-year-old wood) and removing all damaged branches as soon as possible. Pay attention to increased woodpecker activity and check for small D-shaped holes with possible frass beneath them; you are unlikely to see beetles. While there are native wood borers, including other ash borers, which leave round holes, the emerald ash borer leaves small, distinctive D-shaped holes. Maintaining good health through structural pruning, light feeding and adequate watering is recommended to help all

Cont'd page 13...



Emerald Ash Borer

Yellowstone County Master Gardener Newsletter MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Yellowstone County Master Gardener newsletter is to "educate and inform," not to advocate or persuade. The Newsletter Editorial Board takes no position endorsing or opposing, approving or disapproving, any of the assertions or arguments in the contributed information. Information submitted to the newsletter is for your interest only.

Newsletter Editors

Suri Lunde - Ann Guthals
Ann McKean - Laura Estes
Sheri Fredericksen - Corinna Sinclair

Contributors

Anthony Sammartano - Sarah Eilers

Emerald Ash Borer - *cont'd from page 12*

your trees resist many diseases and predators. Because they have brittle wood, if an ash dies for any reason, it should always be cut down within three years for safety reasons. If you suspect you have discovered emerald ash borer, please notify your extension agent immediately so your tree can be examined. Citizens are our first line of defense.

Urban foresters are taking a hard look at their historical planting practices and making efforts to diversify their plantings. Although Montana presents challenging growing conditions for many trees, there are some good alternatives to the *Fraxinus* species. Check your city planting lists and watch for ongoing updates. Check the state and county extension for other suggestions. Visiting the arboretum at the Billings Zoo is inspiring. Consider your own location and microclimate when making choices and do your part to maintain diversity when planting new species. Although it is inevitable that the EAB will eventually come to Montana, we have time to prepare so that when it does arrive, we have already planted the roots for our future urban and wild forests. §

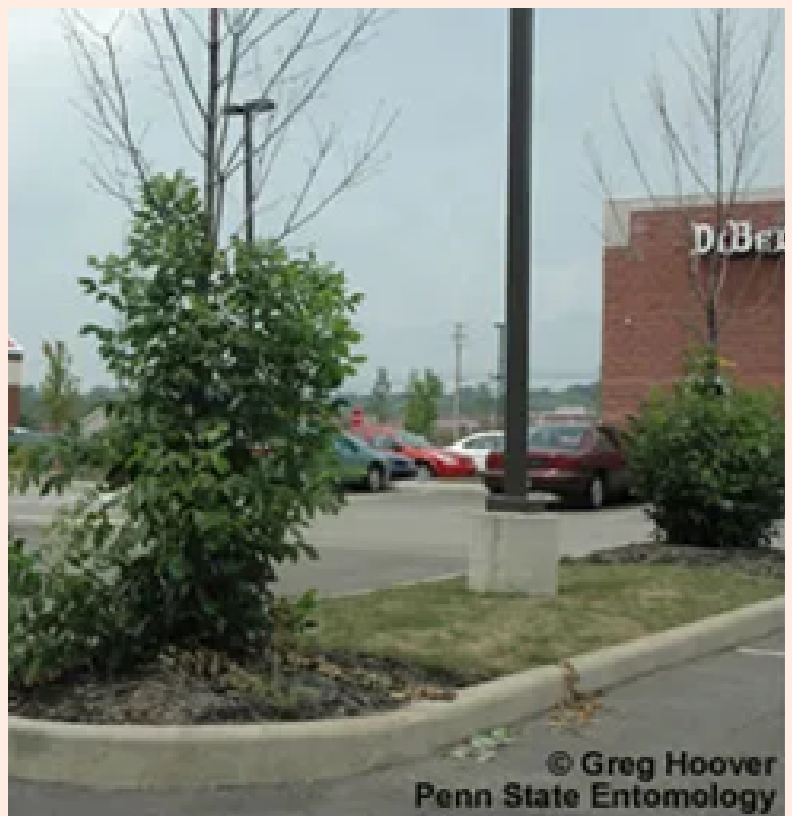
<https://extension.psu.edu/emerald-ash-borer>

<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/terrestrial/invertebrates/emerald-ash-borer>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/eab>



The characteristic D-shaped emergence hole left behind by the adult stage of emerald ash borer on a green ash tree.



Emerald ash borer infested green ash trees in a non-residential landscape in Butler County, Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania.