Yellowstone Master Gardener NEWSLETTER

Volume 16, Issue 4 • September/October/November 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

Sandi Blake Gardens from the Heart 1

Book Review: The Rocky Mountain Native Plant Primer..2

Book Review: MSU Extension MontGuide..... 4

Recipe: Favorite Fall Salad..... 4

Plant Select: A Great Resource for Waterwise Gardening in the West 5

Tough Plants for Your Garden..... 6

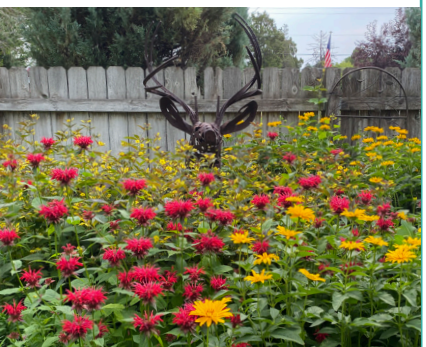
Sowing Native Seeds, Growing Patience ... 7

Why We Should Love Spiders 8

Upcoming Educational and Event Dates 10

YCMG Garden Projects at MetraPark..... 10

We want to hear from you!
Send your submissions for the newsletter to
ymastergardener@gmail.com
by November 1st for the next issue.



THE INTERVIEW *by Ann McKean*

Sandi Blake, Gardens from the Heart

Sandi Blake, the co-founder of Blake Nursery in Big Timber, Montana, grew up in Pennsylvania where she received a BA from U Penn. Her first childhood gardening memory involved a "disastrous" attempt at growing flower and vegetable seeds on a wooded hillside in a Philadelphia suburb, but her next memory was magical and formative. As a teenager, she vividly remembers lying sprawled on soft grass, all her senses filled with the colors and scents of spring. She knew then that this was her happy place. She spent two summers on ranches in Wyoming and Alberta, Canada, falling in love with the western landscape. Later, she and her sister had an "extraordinarily wonderful" summer job with the American Museum & Gardens at Claverton Manor. Just outside of Bath, England, the manor is a beautiful Georgian house surrounded by incredible gardens. The joy she felt in the garden that spring day in Philadelphia flooded back, and she was completely "smitten by the beauty of plants" for the rest of her life. Some years later, after she married, she lived and worked at a nursery in Gloucestershire where she fondly remembers the camaraderie of English gardening culture and the generous daily sharing of knowledge among gardeners. Sandi concedes that England was the major influence on her love of horticulture.

When her husband, who studied agriculture and farming in England, completed his studies, they made the decision to return to the states and purchased land in Montana to start a ranch where they still reside. Though there was a steep learning curve in such a different place, she knew immediately that planting natives was the most natural approach. Because almost no one was growing natives for Montana at that time, those



Sandi at the nursery

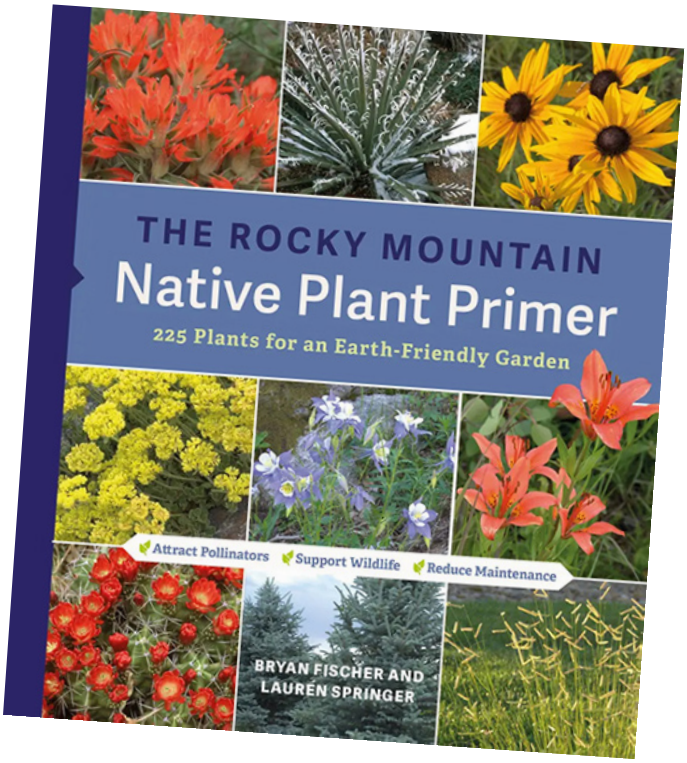
continued on page 3

BOOK REVIEW *by Ann Guthals*

The Rocky Mountain Native Plant Primer

225 Plants for an Earth-Friendly Garden

By Bryan Fischer and Lauren Springer



This is one of the most practical, readable, and helpful garden books for our region I have had the pleasure of reading. If you are interested in successfully incorporating native plants in your landscape design, you will be well-served to start by reading this book.

The two authors – Lauren Springer and Bryan Fischer – are well-known and well-respected horticulturalists from Colorado with decades of experience between them. The Rocky Mountain region their book covers runs from New Mexico to Montana and the Dakotas to Utah.

The first section of the book identifies and describes the biological regions (biomes) found in this large area and also covers the more specific subjects of hardiness zones, soils, sunlight, and wind. Of particular interest to me was the last part on Planting with Wildfire in Mind (as wildfires rage in Washington, Oregon, Canada, and Montana). I read this section aloud to my husband and we are implementing some changes in our landscape after considering their suggestions.

Some examples of advice from this first section include picking native plants that would live in your biome if there was no human presence; mix in some plants from biomes your biome intergrades with; and consider including a few trees or shrubs from biomes south of yours to prepare for the northward march of plants and animals due to climate change.

One of the most helpful bits of advice is to match the plants you choose to your soils rather than trying to make your soils meet the plant's needs. Many of our native plants require very little moisture and do better in native soils like clay and sandy soils rather than moist soils amended with a lot of organic matter.

Next comes an in-depth section on how to design and implement a landscape using native plants, whether starting from scratch or revising an already-planted area. I found two suggestions on design to be unique and imminently helpful:

1. Take black and white photos of gardens and wild areas to see the structure and forms more easily without the distraction of color; and
2. Spend time in wild areas near where you live to help with plant choices and combinations of plants.

Here are some more ideas I found useful in the other sections on implementing a native garden:

- Planting natives is different than the way we are used to planting – basically you shake off any potting soil and get the root in contact with the native soil and you don't add amendments in the planting hole. This helps develop a hardier, more drought-tolerant plant.
- Tailor mulches to your conditions whether you use organic (like wood chips), inorganic (like gravel) or living mulches. Mimic soil coverings in nearby wild areas. Planting densely and minimizing soil disturbance can also be functional methods of mulching.
- A native plant garden requires maintenance, just a different sort. For example, there will be plants you do not want to grow amongst your chosen plants (these are called weeds) and you will need to choose how you get rid of these unwanted guests. Sometimes your chosen plants are such successful self-seeders you will have to curtail their growth to keep them from dominating your landscape. And you may start with short-lived wildflowers and plan a transition to long-lived ones. There is a significant section devoted to managing your plantings.

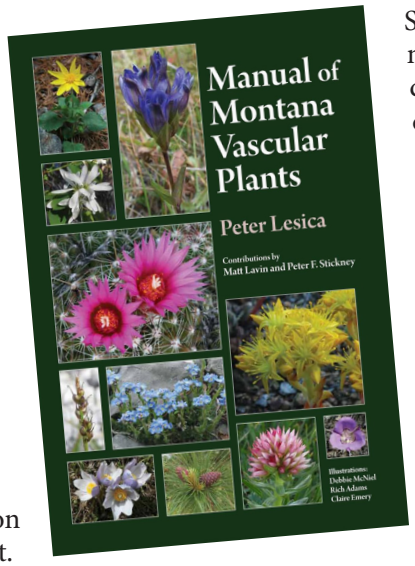
In the section on pests and diseases, I like this suggestion: "…smelly plants, hairy plants, and plants with thorns are generally least appealing." P. 51 (Meaning least appealing

continued on page 3

SANDI BLAKE *continued from page 1*

early days were challenging. She is grateful that she found someone in Helena who was growing them for the love of it and she began her native plant journey in earnest. It wasn't long before her husband urged her to follow her passion and start supplying native plants for her area.

Almost 50 years later, her area stretches from Billings to Missoula, and Red Lodge to Helena. Blake Nursery has grown to offer full design and installation services (don't expect any weed barrier) as well as the best selection of native plants in this part of Montana, and her youngest son is continuing what she started all those years ago. She embraces the joy of learning and says she is still learning something new every day. It also brings her joy to share her knowledge, believing that education is extremely important. She believes sending her customers home with the knowledge they need to be successful is as important as sending them home with plants. She urges everyone to follow the universal principles of gardening by taking the time to become familiar with the space where they will be planting so that they have a sense of their soil, precipitation and wind conditions as well as sun exposure; this information will help them choose the correct plants for their landscape and ensure success. She also reminds them that regardless of how drought tolerant a plant is, it will still need to be watered for at least the first year after it is freed from its pot and planted to ensure proper healthy establishment.



She is convinced that natives are our best defense against a changing climate, and she highly recommends the new MSU Extension MontGuide on natives. She also enjoys participating in the Native Plant Society activities where she is always learning. For a deeper dive, one can hunt down a copy of the *Manual of Montana Vascular Plants* from online booksellers.

Sandi believes that if gardening comes from the heart, it is pleasurable forever. Just being outside in nature, being physically active, and creating is her joy. It is her deepest wish that everyone, no matter how old or young, can have the opportunity to experience that joy.



Claverton Manor, where Sandi was well and truly smitten by the beauty of plants

Postscript:
I encourage everyone who is able, to make the trip to Blake Nursery and experience the joy of learning and gardening with native plants. You can learn more on their website: https://www.blakenursery.com

---

BOOK REVIEW *continued from page 2*

to pests.) The advice on dealing with pests and disease I found to be based on common sense and benign approaches to solving problems caused by these influences.

The majority of the book is devoted to Plant Profiles, detailing the attributes and needs of 225 plants native to the Rocky Mountain region. This section is organized as follows: Short-lived wildflowers, Long-lived wildflowers, Grasses, Cacti and Yuccas, Shrubs, and Trees. The plants within each section are each well-illustrated with a photograph and in-depth, very helpful information including common name, scientific name, habitat, appearance and uses, needs, and what animals this plant feeds. The information provided in the profiles will go a long way to helping you match plants to your growing conditions and your overall design.

Last is a Resources section mostly detailing where to source seeds of native plants. An earlier chapter describes how to propagate natives from seeds and plant starts, as the authors recognize that native plants are not always widely available. It is their hope that propagation will help fill in the gaps in availability.

I think if you choose to read this guide, you will not only have a better understanding of how to introduce and incorporate native plants in your landscape, you will also find yourself a better gardener in our increasingly hot and arid region as we learn how to adapt our gardening to our changing and demanding conditions.

BOOK REVIEW *by Ann Guthals*

MSU Extension MontGuide:

Native Plants for Montana's Home Gardens

By Abi Saeed, Andrea Berry and Noelle Orloff

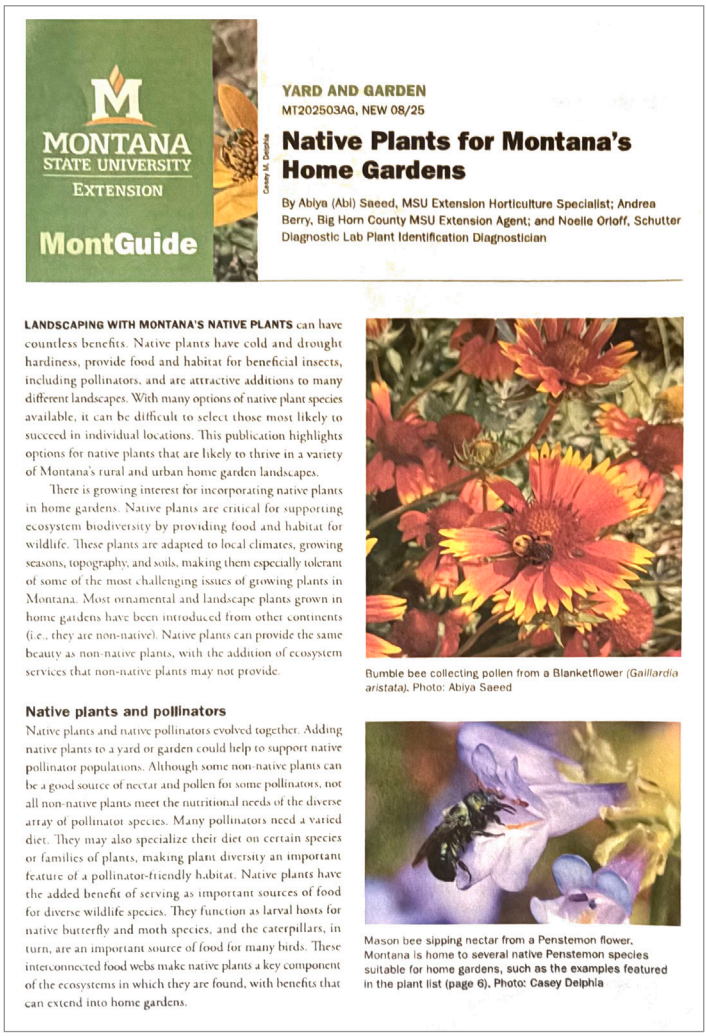
One of the newest MontGuides in the MSU Extension MontGuide library features information helpful in adding native plants to our gardens and landscapes.

The guide begins with information on why we would want to choose to plant natives and continues with information helpful in getting natives to grow in our gardens. Topics covered include seeds vs. nursery-grown plants, soils, watering, how to plant, and how to select plants.

The second half of the guide is an extensive table of native plants that includes a plethora of information about each plant. Listed are perennial forbs, annual/biennial/short-lived forbs, graminoids (grasses, sedges, and rushes), shrubs and trees.

Combined with the Rocky Mountain Primer of Native Plants, these two publications will provide a Montana gardener with plenty of necessary information to choose and plant natives in their landscape.

The MontGuide is available at https://extension-store.montana.edu/category/yard-garden



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION MontGuide

YARD AND GARDEN
MT202503AG, NEW 08/25

Native Plants for Montana's Home Gardens

By Abiya (Abi) Saeed, MSU Extension Horticulture Specialist; Andrea Berry, Big Horn County MSU Extension Agent; and Noelle Orloff, Schutter Diagnostic Lab Plant Identification Diagnostician

LANDSCAPING WITH MONTANA'S NATIVE PLANTS can have countless benefits. Native plants have cold and drought hardiness, provide food and habitat for beneficial insects, including pollinators, and are attractive additions to many different landscapes. With many options of native plant species available, it can be difficult to select those most likely to succeed in individual locations. This publication highlights options for native plants that are likely to thrive in a variety of Montana's rural and urban home garden landscapes.

There is growing interest for incorporating native plants in home gardens. Native plants are critical for supporting ecosystem biodiversity by providing food and habitat for wildlife. These plants are adapted to local climates, growing seasons, topography, and soils, making them especially tolerant of some of the most challenging issues of growing plants in Montana. Most ornamental and landscape plants grown in home gardens have been introduced from other continents (i.e., they are non-native). Native plants can provide the same beauty as non-native plants, with the addition of ecosystem services that non-native plants may not provide.

Native plants and pollinators

Native plants and native pollinators evolved together. Adding native plants to a yard or garden could help to support native pollinator populations. Although some non-native plants can be a good source of nectar and pollen for some pollinators, not all non-native plants meet the nutritional needs of the diverse array of pollinator species. Many pollinators need a varied diet. They may also specialize their diet on certain species or families of plants, making plant diversity an important feature of a pollinator-friendly habitat. Native plants have the added benefit of serving as important sources of food for diverse wildlife species. They function as larval hosts for native butterfly and moth species, and the caterpillars, in turn, are an important source of food for many birds. These interconnected food webs make native plants a key component of the ecosystems in which they are found, with benefits that can extend into home gardens.

Bumble bee collecting pollen from a Blanketflower (*Gaillardia aristata*). Photo: Abiya Saeed

Mason bee sipping nectar from a Penstemon flower. Montana is home to several native Penstemon species suitable for home gardens, such as the examples featured in the plant list (page 6). Photo: Casey Delphia

RECIPE *submitted by Sheri Kisch* *Source: www.gimmesomeoven.com*

Favorite Fall Salad

2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2" cubes
1 tbsp oil
Salt & Pepper
Toss to mix and place on roasting sheet. Roast at 400°F till browned and caramalized. Cool.

5 oz. baby kale or spinach
1 avocado, peeled and diced
1/2 cup crumbled goat or feta cheese
1/2 cup lightly toasted pecans or almonds
1/3 cup dried cranberries

Dressing
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 small garlic clove, minced
1/2 tsp sea salt
1/4 tsp pepper
Whisk all ingredients together in a bowl (or shake together in a mason jar) until combined.

Assemble sweet potatoes with the rest of the ingredients, drizzle with the dressing, and toss until combined. Serve immediately.

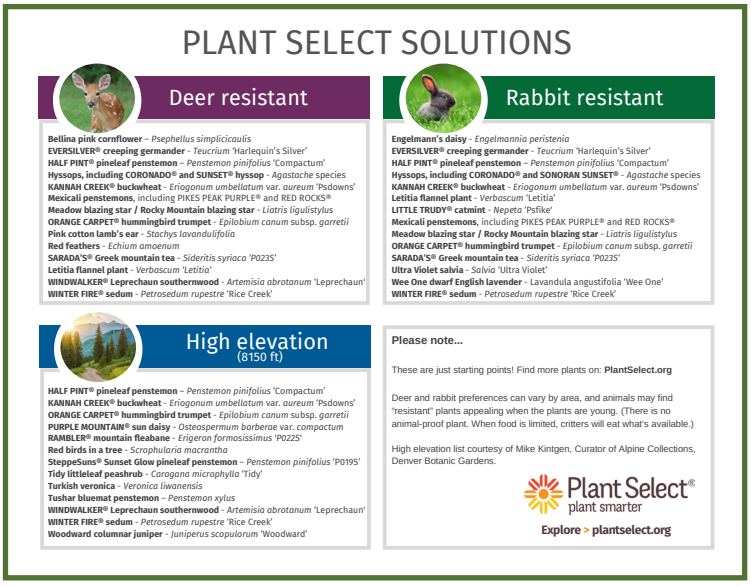


Plant Select: A Great Resource for Waterwise Gardening in the West

by Ann Guthals

In the 1980s Colorado saw a large influx of people moving in from other regions. These new residents soon found that plants from other regions such as the eastern U.S. would not survive in Colorado's harsher environment. From the Plant Select website: "You may be dealing with low rainfall, erratic precipitation, low humidity, alkaline soils, extreme heat, large temperature swings, higher altitudes and howling winds." Sounds like gardening in Montana!





In 1997 a collaboration of the Denver Botanic Garden, Colorado State University (CSU) and local horticulturalists recognized a growing need for helping people to grow waterwise gardens and landscapes, and developed the Plant Select Program to facilitate the use of native and drought-tolerant plants. At the time, such plants were difficult to obtain (e.g. natives are harder to sell than showy annuals with lovely blooms). The program's mission was to evaluate and identify plants that were at the time primarily natives and would thrive in the harsh, dry western environment.

The program would select plants to be put into trials for 3 to 5 years in member facilities and every year would choose several successful plants that would be tagged as Plant Select plants. At this point, about 160 plants are so identified. In Billings, ZooMontana features a Plant Select garden started about nine years ago, which offers a selection of labeled Plant Select plants and informational brochures. New plants are added annually to the garden.

The Plant Select program does not itself grow plants. It works with member nurseries who grow and offer plants and seeds with the Plant Select tag. They are available in nurseries throughout Colorado and neighboring states. These nurseries are listed on the program's website. The program receives a small royalty from these sales to help fund their work.

From the start, members have been growers and landscape planners. Three years ago the program added an individual membership category so that individuals could help serve as promoters of the program, help fund the activities, and enjoy certain benefits such as access to a photo library, invitation to their winter webinar series, receipt of a membership badge, and early invitations to events.

The Plant Select website is a wealth of information. There are descriptions of all the program-recommended plants, a printable guide to selecting plants for various criteria such as deer resistance and pollinator attraction, a history of the program, a complete list of where Plant Select plants are sold, and more. There are also many wonderful educational videos on YouTube produced by the program.

The Plant Select program has filled a real need in western horticulture and continues to be a great practical and educational resource for western gardeners. If you are not already aware of what this program offers, I hope you will check out their website, sign up for their newsletter, and watch their great videos on YouTube.

Tough Plants for Your Garden

by Suri Lunde

The much hotter and longer duration of summer heat the past few years in our area has motivated gardeners to look for plants that can handle extreme summer heatwaves (100+°F) and still survive Zone 4 winters (-30° to -20°F). Typically, these are cold-hardy perennials and shrubs with extensive, deep tap roots or built-in drought resistance.

Below are some dependable perennials that can literally take the heat and even drought, and withstand Montana winter.

Bee Balm (*Monarda*) • **Black-eyed Susan** (*Rudbeckia hirta*) • **Catmint** (*Nepeta*) • **Coneflower** (*Echinacea*) • **Cupid's Dart** (*Catanache caerulea*) • **Daylilies** (*Hemerocallis*) • **False Sunflower** (*Heliopsis helianthoides*) • **Gas Plant** (*Dictamnus*) • **Globe Thistle** (*Echinops*) • **Hardy Hibiscus/ Rose Mallow** (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) • **Hyssop** 'Lavender' (*Agastache foeniculum*) • **Ornamental Perennial Grasses/Feather Reed Grasses** 'Karl Foerster', 'Overdam' (*Calamagrostis*) • **Peony** (*Paeonia sp.*) • **Russian Sage** (*Salvia yangii*, previously *Perovskia atriplicifolia*) • **Perennial Salvia/ Meadow Sage** (*Salvia nemorosa*) • **Sea Holly** (*Eryngium*) • **Stonecrop/ Sedum** (*Hylotelephium*) • **Shasta Daisy** (*Leucanthemum superbum*) • **Tickseed** (*Coreopsis*) • **Yarrow** (*Achillea*)

Some heat-tolerant annuals to try: Bougainvillea • Canna • Cleome/ Spider Flower • 'Defiance' Coleus • Cosmos • Marigold • Moss Rose/ Portulaca • 'Supertunia Vista Bubblegum' Petunia • 'Maguerite' Sweet Potato Vine/Ipomoea • Zinnia

Planting strategies for summer heat

Plant in late spring to give time for roots to grow deep before peak summer heat. • Add a 2–3-inch layer of mulch to keep root zones cool and retain moisture. • Encourage roots to dive deeper into the soil profile by watering deeply.

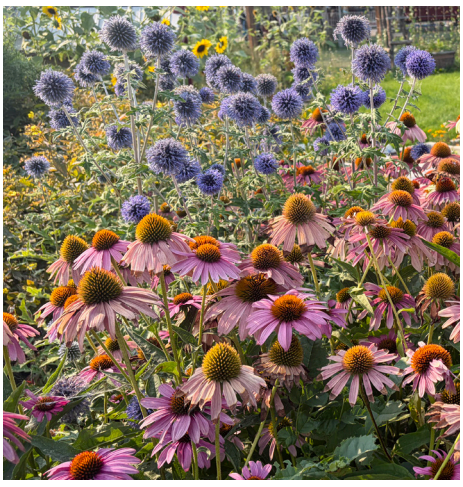
Choose native plants which are naturally heat-resilient and drought resistant (*see Perennial suggestions above; see Book Reviews in this issue*).

Grow plants in pots so that they can be moved to shaded areas during extreme temperature days. Place bigger pots on rolling caddies to move and reposition easier.

Plant shrubs and trees in, around, or near flower beds. They provide sunlight as they are leafing out in the spring and provide shade during summer.

Incorporate tropical plants which love heat (e.g. canna, elephant ears, bougainvillea) in flower beds. These can be planted in the ground (dug up if overwintering) or in pots that can be placed within garden beds.

Many plant brands like Proven Winners, Syngenta Flowers, and Danziger consistently introduce new or improved cultivars to the market. Look for plants that are bred to adapt to our environmental and soil conditions, more resistant to disease or pest problems, and plant injury or losses over winter (*see Annual suggestions above*).



Coneflower and Globe Thistle

Rule of thumb: the best way to keep plants to last through periods of brutal summer is to start with the right plants in the right location, checking and fertilizing them regularly, and watering consistently.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
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

MASTER GARDENER • MONTANA

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

Sowing Native Seeds, Growing Patience

by Anthony Sammartano

The evolution of our local plants has created unique flora that are resilient to local climate stressors and are beneficial to pollinators and surrounding wildlife. While store-bought plants can provide food and shelter for our backyard inhabitants, native plants have perfected their symbiosis to provide the maximum benefit to wildlife.

Native plants are attracting attention from gardeners and land managers alike. They are slowly becoming available at our local nurseries, and if you are up for a day trip, I recommend a trip out to Big Timber to visit Blake's Nursery. These nurseries sell live native plants, nativars (see definition at the end of this article) and sometimes seeds.



I have had the most success in gardening with native plants by using seeds to get plants established. Using seeds isn't for those who need instant gratification. Some seeds will wait in the soil for 3+ years before germinating, and when they do germinate, they can spend a year or two only growing leaves and roots, leaving a yard or garden space full but flowerless. If you can grow some patience as you grow your garden, you won't be disappointed! Once the plants are established, they will flower for multiple years before perishing, giving you ample time to collect and share the seeds produced.



It is important to note that Montana native plants have evolved to go through winter. Extended periods of moisture and cold are needed to wear down the hard seed coat that protects seeds from germinating too early. This process is called cold stratification, and if seeds don't experience a long enough or cold enough winter, they will stay dormant in the soil until their specific needs are met. For those of us planting seeds, this leads to frustration, as the climate sometimes doesn't behave accordingly. To hedge your bets on the winter weather, you can artificially create the extended cold period by using your refrigerator! Store your seeds in a refrigerator that stays between 33–38°F until you are ready to plant. For both seeds and plugs, we have found that there is greater establishment success in planting in fall (mid-September–November), rather than in spring. Plants that germinate in the fall can establish roots, allowing them to wake up in the spring ready to grow, and the seeds that need a little winter weather are (hopefully) able to receive what they need to begin to germinate in the spring.



Refrigerator stratification

Finding seeds can be tricky, but I encourage you to find as close to a local source as possible. The volunteers of the Billings Community Seed Library have started a native seed collection, and I encourage you to visit the library in the fall to pick out some locally grown native plant seed.



To really expand your seed sources, visit the Montana Native Plant Society's website at https://mtnativeplants.org. Halfway down the page is a button labeled "Where to buy native plants". You will be redirected to a guide listing all the nurseries in Montana where native plants are sold. This guide is a little out of date, but it is a great start to find plants close to home.

A nativar is a cultivar that has been created from a native plant species. Often these species have been tweaked to enhance a desirable characteristic (larger or different colored flowers, different leaf sizes or shapes, etc.) that are not often seen in the wild.

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

Sheri Fredericksen • Ann Guthals
Sheri Kisch • Suri Lunde
Ann McKean

CONTRIBUTOR

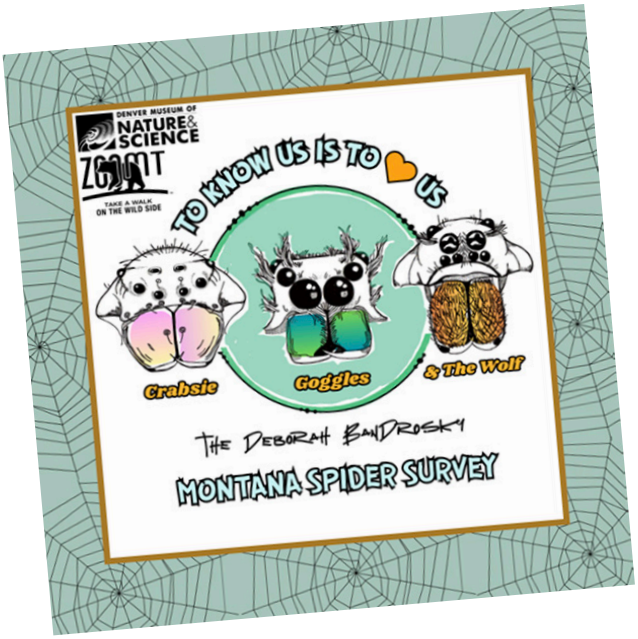
Anthony Sammartano

Why We Should Love Spiders

by Ann McKean

Participating in the Deborah BanDrosky Montana Spider Survey at ZooMontana this summer, I have had the privilege of spending time with people who love spiders as much as I do. Aside from the fact that spiders are fascinating and beautiful, there are many important reasons to appreciate these oft-maligned animals.

While there are over 53,000 known species of spiders in the world, it is believed that there could be up to 100,000 species altogether. Spiders perform valuable ecosystem services on every continent except Antarctica by consuming an estimated 400-800 million tons of prey per year. Some of the billions of insects they consume include disease carrying mosquitos and flies, many crop pests, and home pests such as roaches, aphids, and even fungus gnats. In turn, they provide an important food source for other insects and animals, including people in some parts of the world. Most birds depend exclusively on arthropods (the group of animals which includes insects and arachnids) to feed their young, and some birds (think hummingbirds) even incorporate spider silk into their nests. Historically, humans have used spider silk, which is stronger than steel pound for pound, in the construction of clothing and nets, and studies are being conducted to harness its strength in industrial and possibly medical settings. Scientists are also experimenting with spider venom in the development of new drugs



to treat cancer, Alzheimer's, heart disease, high blood pressure, muscular dystrophy, and even chronic pain.

Spiders are an order (Araneae) of invertebrate animals in the Arachnida class of the phylum Arthropoda (animals with an exoskeleton and jointed legs). The arachnid class encompasses eleven orders including scorpions, ticks, mites, and harvestman, so while all spiders are arachnids, not all arachnids are spiders. Spiders have eight legs, an even number of anywhere from zero to eight eyes, two body parts, fangs, and spinnerets to make silk. The silk, which is a protein, is held in liquid form in a gland and transforms into thread form when pushed through the spinnerets (sort of like silly string). Most spiders use their silk to make some kind of web, though some hunt without using webs. Once subdued by a venomous bite, their prey is injected with liquifying digestive enzymes and sucked up. While some can survive up to two months without food, spiders can eat up to four times a day when prey is plentiful. Eating habits vary by size, age, and species.

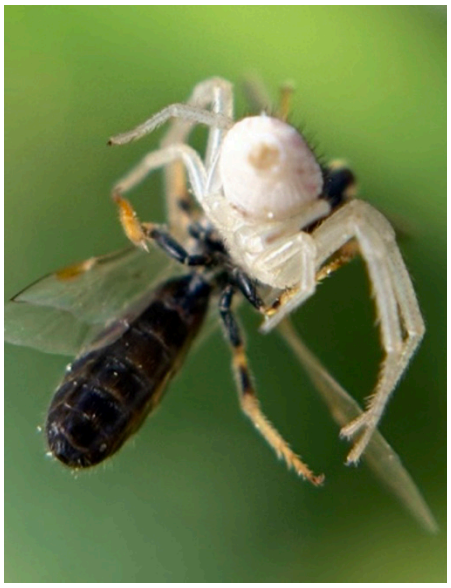
continued on page 5



Left: Spider Survey project participant Delaney Johnson with a non-aggressive wolf spider
Below: Closeup of the wolf spider

Photo credit Marian Kirst

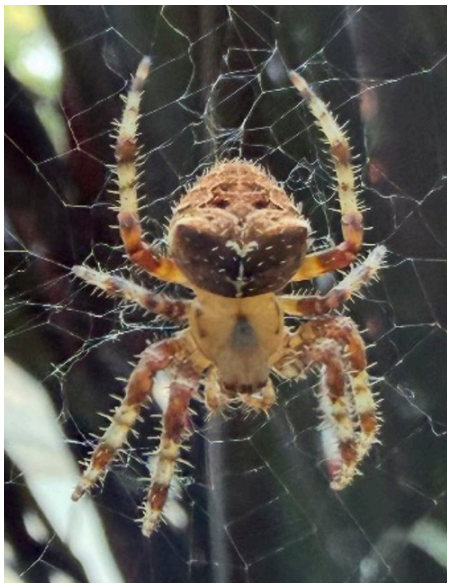




Crab spider with prey
Photo credit Deb Carter-Drain



Garden spider – you can see the spinneret
Photo credit Ann McKean



Cat spider
Photo credit Ann Guthals

SPIDERS *continued from page 8*

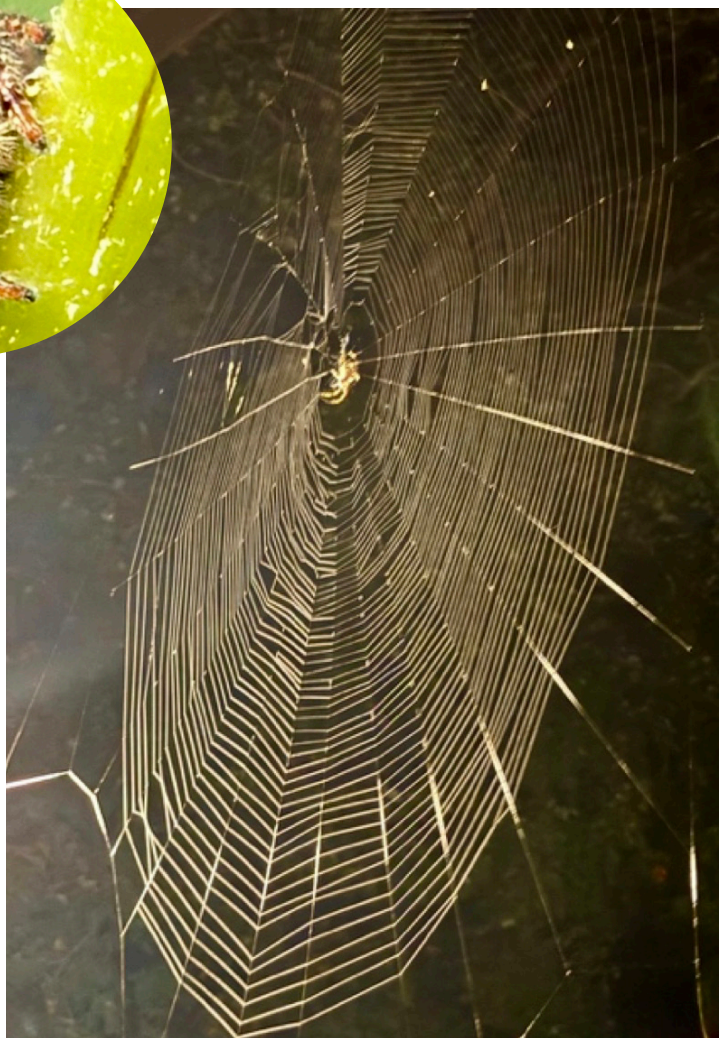


Jumping spider – so cute!
Photo credit Deb Carter Drain

Although many people fear them, most spiders are harmless to humans. While the myth of hobo and brown recluse spiders survives in Montana, hobo spiders are harmless and to date, no established populations of recluse spiders (which live in the southern US) have been documented in Montana. Of the hundreds of species of spiders in Montana, the only spider of medical significance is the western black widow, which is a shy and non-aggressive spider who will only bite if accidentally trapped against the skin. When my daughter was a 10-year-old, she kept one as a pet for six months (caught in the fall and released in the spring); the spider was beautiful and mesmerizing.

Many spiders are sold in pet stores. Tarantulas have been a common pet for a long time, but the latest craze is with jumping spiders; check on Facebook or Instagram! There is a strong consensus that they are adorable, and I love watching them scoot around in the garden or gaze at me from the ceiling. I do not kill (or usually even remove) spiders in my house. The little jumping spider that lives on my windowsill has generated heaps of fungus gnat and fly skeletons. I wouldn't dream of disturbing her!

Just think of the good work spiders are doing in your house and garden too! It is my fervent hope that more people will keep an open mind and an open heart and come to fearlessly appreciate spiders for the immense value they bring to our world. To know them is to love them!



An orb weaver web
Photo credit Tracy Frink

Upcoming Educational and Event Dates

by Anthony Sammartano

Seed Saving Workshop
September 12th • 10–11:30 am
Community Room of the Billings Public Library
The Billings Community Seed Library is hosting this Seed Saving Workshop where we will learn how to collect, save, and store heirloom vegetable and native plant seeds with Abi Saeed, Montana State University's Extension Horticulture Specialist. We will discuss the plant life cycle, hybrids versus heirlooms, harvesting techniques, and germination tricks for the next growing season. Saving seeds from your garden is a great way to help you continue to have a bountiful harvest every year, and lets you save your favorite cultivars of flower, fruits, and veggies. Some of our native wildflowers need to be planted in the fall in order to germinate and are a great way to help support your local pollinators.

Master Gardener Ice Cream Social
September 18th • 6–7:30pm • 4-H Building @ MetraPark
This event is open to all gardeners and a great opportunity to meet other gardeners and swap stories about your garden. Please RSVP to Bob Wicks: text to 406.670.6146 or email to bobwix@hotmail.com.

Growing and Using Herbs with the Billings Community Seed Library
November 5th • 1–2pm • Community Room of the Billings Public Library
Join our knowledgeable grower, Ann McKean, to learn tips and tricks for growing and harvesting herbs suited to Montana's growing season, what the Billings Community Seed Library (Elizabeth Waddington) can provide for your garden, and how the Yellowstone County Extension office (Anthony Sammartano) can support your success. Also, enjoy a bit of culinary wizardry with the Yellowstone County's Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent (Erin Gregory) who can wield a knife to create precise chiffonade and tasty treats to sample. We will share herb handouts, recipes, and possibly plants to take home.

Gardener Potluck
November 13th • 5:30–8pm • 4-H Building @ MetraPark
It is time to give thanks for another gardening season. The Yellowstone Master Gardener Association is hosting a potluck for all the gardeners in Yellowstone County (and beyond!) to get together, share a meal, and celebrate all things gardening. Keep an eye out for an email from Anthony Sammartano for more details.

YCMG Garden Projects at MetraPark

photos by Suri Lunde

The wonderful results of hardworking Master Gardeners volunteers at MetraPark:
- Square Foot Garden
- Education and Demonstration Garden
- People's Garden





