

A Report on Some of our Bare Root Sales

The Chisago County Master Gardeners just finished a very successful weekend at the Almelund Threshing Show. We have more than 500 people come to our booth and between 150 to 200 questions were asked, most of which were answered. People from all over the United States came to this show and all gardeners have problems of some kind. One gardener from Vermont said that her blossom end-rot on tomatoes looks just like ours.

We sold 400 bare root asparagus plants and from time to time I have seen some who bought plants from us. The plants we sold were two year old plants and I remind gardeners not to start harvesting until the plants are at least five years old. When they do start to harvest they should only take one crop for a year or two. I think the two biggest mistakes asparagus gardeners make is to begin to harvest when the plants are too young and when they do start to harvest they harvest too hard. Remember, neither asparagus plants or rhubarb should be harvested after July 1, no matter how old they are.

One who bought asparagus plants contacted me and said he had asparagus beetles. This was unusual since he had never raised asparagus before. I stopped over to his place and not only did he have asparagus beetles, but they had already caused some damage. His young plants had Shepard's Crook, which is the direct result of asparagus beetles. I know some prefer organic gardening, however, in this case, I suggested Eight to gain control.

We sold 1,000 bare root strawberry plants and from all reports it was a great spring for starting strawberries. Strawberries make floral buds when the days shorten in mid-August. Floral buds may start forming earlier if the weather turns cooler. Therefore, it's too late to mow the tops of the berries. You want the new plants to have a full canopy when the plants start forming floral buds in August. A strawberry plant can't form floral buds without leaves.

Keep the plants fertilized throughout August and into early September. Strawberries continue to grow until frost, and late nitrogen rarely hurts the plants.

We sold 300 blueberry plants this past spring. Like most woody plants, blueberries stop growing toward the end of July. The last buds that form on the new growth will become next spring's floral buds. Blueberries are different than plums and cherries, where the floral buds are at the base of the new shoots.

In order to assure that your blueberry plants form large numbers of flower buds, there are some things that should be considered. Never cut the tips of your blueberry plants. Avoid all nitrogen fertilizers in July and August. Too much fertilizer can cause the plants to start growing again. Keep watering your plants and keep the weeds away without damaging the roots.

We sold 2,200 bare root raspberry plants, most of them were ever bearing with some summer bearing Killarney. In most cases, once you get raspberries established you have them for life. However, the first couple of years can be real tricky. The summer bearing Killarney seem to be the easiest to start as they grow and spread quickly. Established Killarney will finish bearing by the end of July. Next spring prune out the dead canes as they are the ones that produced this summer. Prune the new canes back no lower than waist high.

We sold two new varieties of ever bearing raspberries. Polano is a variety was developed in Poland and will begin to bear by the 1st of August. Autumn Britten is a very popular new variety of berry that starts production around the 15th of August.

I planted both varieties for the first time this spring. They are already producing and the berries are very sweet but not as firm as the Heritage. Gardeners that are disappointed with their new stand should continue to keep the plants watered. Keep the weeds out but don't let your hoe or shovel come in contact with any of the roots. By not disturbing the plants, you may be surprised by how they begin to spread later this fall and for sure next spring.

It's the time of year when County Extension Offices around the state are taking applications for the Master Gardener training program to be held in early 2007. Chisago County residents interested in becoming Master Gardeners can get more information and an application by attending our monthly meeting at 6:30pm on 9/26 or 10/24, at the Senior Center in North Branch. You can call the office at 651-674-4417 for directions.

Submitted by Jerry Vitalis
Chisago County Master Gardener

IN YOUR YARD AND GARDEN: Late August is the start prime time for lawn repair. If you lost patches of your lawn from drought, August and early September are the best times to fix them. Even if you're not sure how much of your lawn is truly dead, overseeding won't hurt.

The first step is to water a day or two before you begin your rehab project so it's actively growing or not drought-stressed.

If you plan to core aerate, dethatch and over-seed: core aerate first, then fertilize if you're going to, then dethatch to break up cores, then seed. Good soil to seed contact is vital so when you're done overseeding, run a vertical mower (dethatcher/power rake) making a pass perpendicular to first pass you made earlier, when dethatching, to improve soil to seed contact. Just before giving the lawn a good drink, "rake" the area with a lawn rake with teeth inverted to firm the soil.

The end of August is a good time for the first fall fertilizer application. Apply one pound per thousand square feet with 1/3 to 1/2 of the fertilizer in a slow release form. Then, water it in with 1/4 to 1/2 inches of water. For good turf health, lawns need at least 3/4 inch of water per week. Phosphorus is banned from routine home lawn fertilizer. However, you may apply phosphorus if you are reseeding a thin or dead lawn. It doesn't have to be bare ground to be legal. If in doubt about your soil's fertility, do a soil test now so you'll have your test results back by Labor Day. Get the form and instructions at your local Extension Office or at: <http://soiltest.coafes.umn.edu/submitti.htm>

Keep your mowing heights high-close to 3 inches. The last couple of mowings at end of year can be lower. Remember, the higher you cut, the greater the root mass the grass plants will have and the deeper the roots will be.

UPCOMING CLASSES: There are a few spots left in the preservation classes in our fall class--call 651.674-4417 for more info. The brochure is available online at: www.extension.umn.edu/county/chisago

PLANT CLINICS: Volunteer Master Gardeners will be available Mondays from 4-7 at the Extension Office in North Branch at 38780 Eight Ave. and at the Lindstrom Farmers' Market on Saturdays from 8 A.M. to noon in the Parking lot of ST. BRIDGET'S CHURCH at 13060 LAKE BLVD. to answer your gardening questions. You can also call 651-674-4417 on Monday from 4-7 to speak with a Master Gardener. Samples can be dropped off during the day on Monday if you cannot stop in during clinic hours. Please note MONDAY is the only day you can drop off samples, as there is no longer staff at the North Branch Office who can answer gardening questions.

VOICE MAIL: You can leave a question for a volunteer Master Gardener at 651-674-4417. Depending on the volume of calls, they try to respond within a couple of days. During office hours ask for the Master Gardener voicemail, after hours, select ext. 18. You can also get your question answered on the web at: www.extension.umn.edu/askmg