

# "Lett-uce" Inform You



Extension

April 2010

## Come Learn with Us in 2010

On March 9, 39 eager Elizabeth gardeners attended the vegetable seminar held at the Elizabeth Middle School. Dr. David Whiting of CSU educated us on soil management and fertilization, raised bed gardening, block style planting, water needs of vegetables, cold frame gardening, and approximate frost dates for our area. All present are looking forward to warmer weather and digging in the dirt! If you missed this seminar, don't miss the next one on April 10th about planting bare root and potted shrubs and trees.

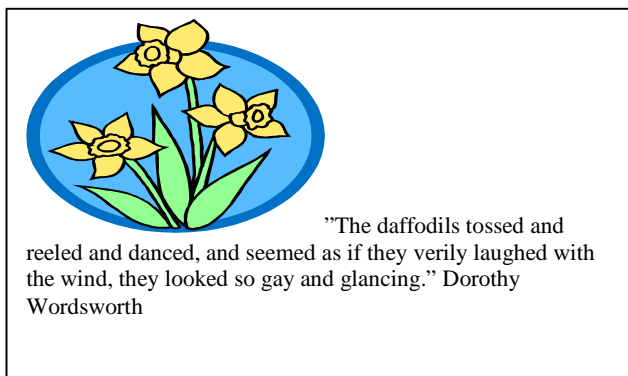
**April 10, Saturday, 9-11 a.m.** at the Carlson Building in Elizabeth (next to the library). The Elbert County Master Gardeners present: **Putting Down Roots in Elbert County**. This seminar is presented to help you with your new seedlings from the Kiowa Conservation District. Topics covered will include proper planting of potted versus bare root plants, use of weed barrier fabric, use of fertilizer, mulching and watering, and protection from wildlife. Come prepared to plant your bare root native plum seedling and take it home with you. The fee is \$10.00

**April 27, Tuesday, 7-9 p.m.** at the Elizabeth Middle School cafeteria. David Vande Castele presents his seminar on boundless blooms: **Creating a Continuous Blooming Garden**. David is a Master Gardener with Arapahoe County and brings over 20 years experience and knowledge in growing successful gardens of all types in Colorado's challenging climate. This seminar will help you with plant selection, design tips, and cultural practices. Attendees will receive 3 professionally designed garden layout samples to take home. The fee is \$5.00.

### In this Issue

Plant Select®	2
Medicinal Herbs in the Garden: Chamomile	2
Colorado's Toxic Plants	3
Dwarf Mistletoe	4
Daddylonglegs	5
Coyote Creek Concerts	6
Spring is finally here!	6
Winter Desiccation of Evergreen Trees	7
What to do with the Easter Lily?	7
To Our Clients: Please Help Us to Help You	8

**Please RSVP for each class by calling the Elbert County Extension Office in Kiowa (303-621-3162) or Simla (719-541-2361). There is a minimum attendance of 15 for the seminar to be held.**



# Plants for your Garden: The Colorado 2009 Plant Select® Program

by Audrey Steffan,  
Colorado Master Gardener

## Partridge Feather

*Tanacetum densum ssp. Amani*



Partridge Feather is a perennial that is a xeriscape plant once it is established.

This plant is a ground cover type, growing only about

3 – 5 inches tall and spreading approximately 3 – 4 feet wide in a slow manner. It has beautiful plush ever-silver feathery foliage with small golden yellow flowers that bloom for several weeks mid-summer. Deadheading the flowers will not increase or lengthen bloom time so it is fairly maintenance free. You will want to touch it and feel its soft foliage that has the appearance of feathers. Its delicate structure is an intriguing contrast to its strength. This plant does not like wet soggy soil but will tolerate moisture if the soil is well drained. It also does not do well in high humidity, it will “melt”. Yellowing leaves will be the first sign of too much moisture. Mulch around this plant should be rocks or gravel. Partridge Feather will thrive in full sun and dry conditions. This plant is deer resistant. Hardiness of this plant is USDA Zones 4 – 9, up to 8,000 feet.

This plant was introduced from Southeastern Turkey in the 1950’s by Peter Davis and has become quite a classic in the Denver area.

## Red yucca

*Hesperaloe parviflora*



Red yucca (which is really not a yucca) is a stalwart in the landscapes of the southwest. Its dark green rosette of long, thin leaves rise fountain-like from the base, providing an unusual sculptural accent. The long flower

spikes of bell-shaped flowers will bloom from May through October. This plant is incredibly tough, tolerating heat and cold and needing no attention or supplemental irrigation once it is established. Unlike yucca, the leaves are not spine-tipped and have fibrous threads along the edges. Red yucca has finer leaves than true yucca giving it a more grass like appearance.

Plant Red yucca in full sun where it has room to grow without needing to be trimmed or getting in the way of lawn mowers or weed eaters. Provide plenty of water for the first year, taking care not to overwater. Maintenance is easy. On established plants the older leaves eventually will die and lay on the ground. These can be cut off individually to create a neater appearance. Leaf trimming and removing the dead flower stalks are the only maintenance needed.

Red yucca is native to Central and Western Texas and Mexico. Red yucca is an instant magnet for hummingbirds and bees from early summer to autumn. Seeds pods are a ping pong ball sized capsule with multiple chambers and flat black seeds inside. Deer will munch on the foliage.

For additional information or to find retailers that carry the Plant Select® plants visit their website at [PLANTSELECT.ORG](http://PLANTSELECT.ORG).

## Medicinal Herbs in the Garden: Chamomile

by Laurie Wasmund,  
Colorado Master Gardener



Two types of chamomile are used in traditional medicinal remedies. The first is German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), which originated in Europe, Iran and Afghanistan, but is now grown around the world.



The second, Roman chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*), is also known as Russian or English chamomile and is native to Europe and North Africa. It is widely cultivated as a crop in Belgium, France and England. (Continued on page 3.)

## Medicinal Herbs in the Garden

(Continued from page 2.)

Historically, chamomile was used in ancient Egypt to treat fevers caused by malaria. In Rome, it was used to treat headaches. Elsewhere in Europe, it has been used as a diuretic and a tonic for pain and fatigue. Today, the oils of German chamomile, which are dark blue when extracted, are used in shampoos, lotions, soaps and perfumes. They are also added to candies and liqueurs.

Chamomile has tiny, daisy-like flowers that are less than an inch wide. In the wild, it grows close to the ground, but in cultivated areas, it can reach up to 3 feet high. A perennial, the herb features feathery leaves and grows in full sun. It is often found in dry or desert-like settings.

The flower heads can be dried and used in teas and capsules, or crushed and steamed to produce the beneficial oils. The flowers are harvested for use at the height of the blooming season.

The medicinal uses of the chamomile plant are wide-ranging. In the United States, it is popular as a remedy for stomach ailments. It also induces sleep or a generally relaxed feeling, and is widely used to relieve anxiety and insomnia. When used as a mouthwash, chamomile has been found to prevent mouth sores associated with radiation or chemotherapy. It can be used in creams or ointments to soothe irritated skin and has been found to be successful in treating eczema. German chamomile is also reported to have antiseptic, antibacterial and antifungal properties.

Although chamomile is generally considered safe, it may irritate those with asthma. Pregnant women should not use it, as it has been associated with miscarriage. It is also known to cause allergies in those sensitive to ragweed and other members of the Asteraceae-Sunflower family.

Certain species of chamomile appear on the Colorado Noxious Weed list and should not be planted or cultivated. These are Corn chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*), Mayweed chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*), and Scentless chamomile (*Matricaria perforata*).

Remember, all information about the medicinal properties of herbs in this and other such articles and websites is for educational purposes only. Many herbs historically used for medical purposes are considered too toxic to use today. Always consult a trained medical professional before ingesting any medicinal herbs.

## Colorado's Toxic Plants

by Aija Tobiss  
Colorado Master Gardener

### Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*)

Houndstongue is a biennial, introduced from Europe. The first year it produces rosettes and in the second year,



by midsummer, it grows a 1 to 4 foot long stem. Then it flowers and produces fruit. The lower leaves are broad and resemble a hounds tongue. The flowers are reddish purple and seed pods are covered with short prickles. It reproduces from seeds only.

Most seeds fall to the ground near the plant, but they can also be transported by animals, clothing and machinery. A mature plant can produce up to 2,000 seeds. Seeds are viable from one to three years.

Houndstongue is poisonous to animals. Toxic alkaloids stop the liver cells from reproducing. Livestock and wildlife may live up to six months after eating a lethal dose. It does have an odor that repels animals; it is more palatable when dried. Houndstongue's toxicity affects horses and cattle more severely than sheep.



Houndstongue is designated as a "List B" species in the Colorado Noxious Weed Act. It is required to be eradicated, contained, or suppressed depending on the local infestations. For more information visit [www.colorado.gov/ag/csd](http://www.colorado.gov/ag/csd) and click on Noxious Weed Management Program.

### Locoweeds



White locoweed (*Oxytropis sericea*), Woolly locoweed (*Astragalus mollissimus*), Purple locoweed (*Oxytropis lamertii*) are native wildflowers indigenous to the Rocky

Mountains. The word loco in Spanish means crazy. Woolly locoweed is a perennial with short stems and basal leaves with 21-31 leaflets. The flowers are rose colored; pods are 2-3 cm. in length with a sharp pointed tip. White and purple locoweeds are perennial plants very similar in habitat. Flowers are on leafless stalks and pea-like. (Continued on page 4.)

# Colorado's Toxic Plants

(Continued from page 3.)

Locoweed prefers open prairie, foothills, and well drained soils of decomposing granite. Leaves are the same in all three species. Seeds may remain viable for up to 50 years. Purple locoweed differs from the white only by the color of the flower. The purple locoweed blooms after the white one has finished blooming. In some areas these two plants have cross-pollinated and have formed plants with varying shades of colors. In drought seasons the plants remain dormant, but after rainfall they flourish.

Locoweed is poisonous at all times and has caused more economic loss to the livestock industry than any other groups of plants. Locoweed produces a toxic substance that affects the brain in horses and other animals causing neurologic abnormalities. Some horses become depressed or sleepy. Horses show more effects of locoweed poisoning than cattle or sheep. There is no effective treatment for locoweed poisoning.

**Reference:** [Guide to Poisonous Plants](#) by A. Knight

## Dwarf Mistletoe

by Andrejs Tobiss  
Colorado Master Gardener

This winter, during a walk in the garden we noticed a small, less than an inch long yellow greenish growth on one of our evergreen trees. After a closer examination of



the trunk area of the young, about 10 foot tall tree, it showed that it was dwarf mistletoe. Now we were surprised. We knew of no nearby infected trees and the nearest known

dwarf mistletoe infected areas were close to a mile away. After reading the appropriate literature we concluded that a bird must have brought the seed. This means that no tree is safe and we should be checking our trees periodically for any problems. We did remove the growth, but most likely the root is still there and new growth will appear. We will remove the growth whenever it comes back.

Dwarf mistletoe is a small leafless, parasitic flowering plant. The seeds, explosively discharged from the fruit at almost 60 mph, are sticky and adhere to any surface they

strike. Seeds adhere to young branches and germinate and the mistletoe rootlet penetrates the bark. Birds occasionally may spread the seeds. Seeds generally are dispersed in August and early September.

Dwarf mistletoe kills the trees slowly by robbing the tree of food and water. Diseased trees decline and die from top down as lower infected branches take more food and water. Death occurs slowly in most cases and depends on the severity of infection and on the vigor and size of the tree.

Dwarf mistletoe is not a quick killer; so long term management options are feasible. Pruning and removing trees is the best management measure available to reduce or eliminate dwarf mistletoe infestations in ornamental trees or urban forests. The parasite can be removed from lightly infected trees. Prune off all infected branches for healthier trees. Examine trees every two or three years and remove any newly infected branches. Remove severely infected trees or those with only a few live branches. Trunk infections are not as detrimental as branch infections, so their removal is not necessary. Mistletoe shoots die as soon as the tree branch is cut. Burning pruned off branches is not necessary.

Plant mistletoe resistant trees to replace the removed infected trees. For ponderosa pine areas some of the mistletoe resistant trees are: douglas-fir, white fir, blue spruce, pinon pine, limber pine, Rocky Mountain juniper, bristlecone pine, gambel oak and pea shrub.

More detailed information is available in Colorado State University Master Gardener Fact Sheet 2.925, [Dwarf Mistletoe Management](#) and also Planttalk 2106, [Dwarf Mistletoe](#). You can contact the CSU Elbert County Extension Office and request these publications or visit the Colorado State University web site at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>, click on Fact Sheets & Publications.

### Why don't deer and other animals like to eat daffodils?

Whether you call them daffodils, narcissus, or jonquils the good news is that generally the wildlife don't eat them. The reason is that the mucilaginous sap of daffodils contains sharp calcium oxalate crystals which are an irritant to the mucus membranes and the skin.

# Daddylonglegs or Harvestmen

Opiliones: Phalangids

*Leiobunum* and *Phalangium opilio*

by Marilyn Carroll

Colorado Master Gardener



**Truth or Myth:** Daddylonglegs are super-venomous spiders, but luckily their fangs are too small to bite people.

**Myth!** – Daddylonglegs are not true spiders, but are arachnids placed in another order (Opiliones). Unlike spiders, daddylonglegs do not possess poison glands. Daddylonglegs also do not produce silk.

Daddylonglegs are very well named, as no other animal comes close to having legs that are nearly as long and skinny. Daddylonglegs have four pairs of legs, although it is not uncommon for them to have lost one or more. Indeed, daddylonglegs can readily drop a leg if a predator such as an ant – or another daddy longlegs in a tussle over territory – tugs on it.

Daddylonglegs jaws are designed to tear apart food so that it can be mixed with digestive fluids. They may feed on small, soft-bodied insects, but many also feed on plant juices. They feed on these by sucking the fluids that are available after they crush plants with their weak jaws.

You commonly encounter them outdoors, particularly when adult daddylonglegs are present in late summer and early fall. Because they are active around harvest time, one of their common names is 'harvestmen'. Harvestmen are usually numerous and common in gardens. Little is known of how they may contribute to the suppression of plant eating insect activity in the garden if their populations were increased. A 2002 study done by Sarah Bradbury and Alan Cady show that brussel sprouts plants in the presence of harvestmen had greater growth and less damage from plant eating insects. These experiments were continued with cucumbers to test the effects of small lean-to shelters designed to provide harvestmen with a favorable habitat during the day to prevent their leaving to seek shelter from daytime heat. Harvestmen chose the shelters during the hotter, drier daytime, and were found out on vegetation at night. Thus, shelters may reduce harvestmen exiting gardens during the day, remaining in position to prey upon pests or their eggs at night. Plants in the presence of harvestmen showed trends for less damage and higher fruit yields, especially during mid-season.

For more information contact the CSU Extension, Elbert County Master Gardener office at (303) 621-3162 and ask for Fact Sheet 5.512 [Spiders in the Home](#) or visit the Colorado State University web site at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>, click on Fact Sheets & Publications.

The Master Gardeners are updating their contact database this year and trying to become “green” with the mail list. If you would like to continue to receive the “**Lett-uce Inform You**” newsletter, please provide the information below. If you would like to help us become “green” and only receive the newsletter by email, you can provide just your email address. If you do not have an email and still want to receive a hard copy, please provide your mailing address. If you want to receive email notifications, plus a hard copy, please provide both your mailing address and email address. You can send the information to the Master Gardeners by one of these methods: mail it to either the Kiowa or Simla office (addresses on the back page), email it to the Master Gardeners email [elbertmg@ext.colostate.edu](mailto:elbertmg@ext.colostate.edu), call or fax either the Kiowa or Simla office (numbers on the back page), or drop it off at either the Kiowa or Simla office.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Coyote Creek Concerts

Believe it or not, it's officially Spring and the 2010 Season of Coyote Creek Concerts has arrived. This year's offering will present a widely diverse collection of music and entertainment. Here is the lineup we have so far – mark your calendars now so you don't miss a single show:

### **Dakota Blonde – April 10th, 7:30PM**

This is a Benefit Concert with proceeds going to “The Relay for Life”  
– Wonderful music and good cause.

### **Chuck Pyle – May 1st, 7:30PM**

Colorado's own “Zen Cowboy” returns for great music and tall tales.

### **Finders & Youngberg – June 19th, 7:30PM**

The bluegrass group is so popular we brought them back to pump up the old turkey-coop full of energy.

### **17th Avenue Allstars – July 10th, 7:30PM**

A brilliant Colorado a cappella group that has sung for Presidents and Governors, and will get your toes a tappin'!

### **Buddy Mondlock – August 28th, 7:30PM**

A singer-songwriter who has written for singers from Garth Brooks to Joan Baez, now brings his acoustic guitar to our stage.

### **Mystery Guest – September 6th, 7:30PM**

Could be the Lone Ranger, or Zorro, it's a mystery so stay tuned.

The Coyote Creek website

<http://www.coyotecreekconcerts.com> has been updated for the new season. There you can hear samples of the performer's music and - NEW - see some videos of them.

Also, you are encouraged to go to the website to order your advance concert tickets (cheaper than at the door). Plus, a “Best of Coyote Creek Concerts” Volume 2 will soon be available through the website as well.

Don't forget the Master Gardeners will be selling refreshments again this year during the concerts. The money is used to help support the Master Gardener program. We are also available to discuss gardening questions at that time.

## Spring is finally here!

*By Jeannette Halseth,  
Former Colorado Master Gardener*

The Colorado State University Extension Master Gardeners in Elbert County are very happy that spring has arrived in Elbert County. This is the month that the birds return, the animal babies are born and we can start to garden.



First, we can do some real soil preparation to be ready for planting. We can still get a hard frost, but we can also start the garden. Work in about 2” – 3” of good compost into the garden beds as soon as the soil is workable. This will nourish and aerate the soil for planting.

Next, we can cut back the perennials we left over the winter. In case you didn't leave them over the winter, decide now that you'll do that this year. It adds interest to the winter garden and looks particularly wonderful in the snow. This also provides some nourishment and cover to birds that winter here.

We can start to plant hardy perennials. Be sure to check the hardiness zone to be sure the plant is appropriate for our area. Also, if the plant is bare root, soak the roots in water to rehydrate it for several hours before planting. Perennials and bulbs can be divided in late April.

Once your tulips and other spring bulbs have bloomed, they should be dead headed (spent blooms cut off). However, leave the foliage alone even if it looks awful. Do not remove the foliage until it turns yellow. This may take two months. The leaves will continue to perform photosynthesis and store food in the bulb for next spring's flowers.

Another big event is April 15<sup>th</sup>. Other than being tax day, this is the anecdotal or folksy date to hang up the hummingbird feeders. We better be ready for the arrival of these beautiful little jewels that will grace our yards and delight us.

Last, but by no means least, April is the first month the Master Gardeners are in the office to take your calls. We are in the CSU Extension office in Kiowa on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM and can be reached at (303) 621-3162.

## Winter Desiccation of Evergreen Trees

By Pat Meyers,  
Colorado Master Gardener

You have probably noticed brown needles on your evergreen trees. If the needles turn brown from the interior of the tree, but the outer needles stay green, there is no cause for alarm. This is just winter desiccation and is caused when the trees do not obtain enough water before the ground freezes. Desiccation is the drying out of plant tissues. This occurs in plants when the water lost through transpiration exceeds moisture absorption, which then results in wilting and damage to the plant tissues. Winter desiccation is very common on the evergreen trees in the higher altitudes.

Brown evergreen needles, needle tips and branch tips are a common sight during the winter and early spring months in Colorado. These are all examples of winter injury usually caused by the drying winds, lack of snow cover, fluctuating temperatures, and low soil moisture that are typical of Colorado's fall and winter seasons.



Evergreen needles transpire or lose moisture during the winter months. To keep functioning well, the plant must replace lost moisture through its roots.

But sometimes roots are unable to keep up with the moisture loss, especially in windy conditions when water rapidly evaporates from the needles. In some cases, there's plenty of soil moisture, but plants are unable to absorb it, because the ground is frozen. In other cases, there isn't enough soil moisture available to evergreens. As a result, the needle tissue dries out, turning brown or red.

To reduce or prevent winter injury, water the root area of evergreens during dry fall and winter months. When snowmelt and rainfall are inadequate, apply water monthly during warm periods when the soil can absorb it. Apply mulch over the root zone to help conserve soil moisture and reduce loss from desiccation.

Although it's unattractive, winter injury symptoms are eventually masked in the spring when new growth develops and old needles drop. Affected plant parts don't usually need to be removed.

## What to do with the Easter Lily?

By Audrey Steffan,  
Colorado Master Gardener



Now that the flowers of the Easter lily have withered, many people are wondering what to do with the remaining plant. The lily won't survive as a houseplant but can be planted outdoors where it should bloom again. Until the chance of frost has passed, keep the plant indoors in a sunny location and water thoroughly when slightly dry.

When selecting a space in your garden to plant your lily, make sure it is a sunny spot that gets 6 to 8 hours of sun a day. Remove the plant from the pot and loosen the root system. Plant the bulb a few inches deeper than it was in the container and cover with soil. Water thoroughly and fertilize with an all-purpose garden fertilizer. Soon after planting, the top will wither, die and need to be trimmed off. New shoots will soon emerge that may flower in July or August. If the plant doesn't flower later in the summer, it will flower the next summer in June.

Although they are not reliably hardy, some gardeners have good results when overwintering lilies in the garden. To improve your chances for overwintering, mulch the plants with at least 4" of straw or something similar in the fall. You can also dig the bulb and store it indoors the same as you would other tender bulbs.

*Lilium longiflorum* is the Latin name for the Easter lily. It is native to the Ryuku Islands of southern Japan. The Easter lily industry is an American success story. World War II eliminated the trade of the bulbs from Japan so now 95% of all bulbs grown in the US are produced by farms along the coastal region of California to Oregon. The Easter lily is generally described as a perennial forb or herb and is a monocot.

The Easter lily, the traditional time honored flower of Easter, is highly regarded as a joyful symbol of beauty, hope and life. The cultivar most widely grown today for greenhouse potted Easter lily production is called "Nellie White". The cultivar has large, white trumpet shaped flowers.

*Lilium longiflorum*, along with some other types of lilies, is extremely poisonous to cats. Make sure the plant is kept away from cats, especially ones that like to nibble on things. Dogs are not affected by Easter lilies or other lilies.



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***April 2010***

Master Gardener Office Hours are Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, April through September from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. Stop by the Extension Office at the Fairgrounds in Kiowa or give us a call at 303-621-3162 Kiowa or 719-541-2361 Simla. You may also email questions to [elbertmg@ext.colostate.edu](mailto:elbertmg@ext.colostate.edu).

Do you have a friend or neighbor who might wish to receive this newsletter? Please call or email the Extension Office with their name and address. Also let us know if you wish to receive this newsletter electronically. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Sheila Kelley  
Interim Elbert County Extension  
Director  
Colorado State University

### **To Our Clients: Please Help Us to Help You**

*By Raylene Owens  
Colorado Master Gardener*

When a client brings in a plant sample to the Master Gardener office there are steps that can be taken to ensure that the sample is in good condition for identification. Keeping samples moist and supple retains identification characteristics. The plant can be in a container with water and tented with a plastic bag. Or the stems can be wrapped in a wet paper towel and then placed in a plastic bag. If the weather is warm, care needs to be taken to prevent the plant from overheating. Master Gardeners can also work from dried and pressed samples if they are complete and not broken up. A picture of the plant where it is growing, in addition to a live sample, is always helpful.

The best samples are the most complete--two or three stems with several leaves, flowers and seedpods, if possible. Roots are sometimes helpful, but we don't want to encourage the destruction of native plants. If you are trying to show a disease process, bring in portions of the plant that are healthy, partly diseased, and fully diseased.

Master Gardeners also need specific information that will help in the identification and diagnosis of the sample and its possible problem.

- Name and variety of the plant, if known.
- Is the plant native or cultivated?
- How many months or years has this plant been established?
- What are the watering conditions?
- Describe the location of where the plant was growing, such as shade, sun, north or south facing slope, what side of a building, type of soil, other plants in the vicinity, etc.
- Was this plant found in hay and if so, where was the hay cut?
- Have any chemicals been used on the plant or in the area?

Thank you, from the Master Gardeners for helping us to help you with your gardening needs for 2010.