

# "Lett-uce" Inform You



Extension

February 2010

## Come Learn with Us in 2010

**March 9, Tuesday, 7-9 p.m.** at the Elizabeth Middle School cafeteria. Dr. David Whiting presents his seminar on **Vegetables: A Hedge against Rising Food Cost**. Dr. Whiting will discuss the varieties of vegetables that do well at our altitude and with our short season. Get information about soil preparation, raised beds, protecting the garden from critters, and sustainable and perennial vegetables and herbs such as asparagus, rhubarb, thyme, oregano, and more. In addition there will be discussion about last summer's growing season--successes, failures, and what to do if we have another cool, rainy growing season. The fee is \$5.00

**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 28, Wednesday, 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.

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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.

### Valentine's Day

In ancient times, it was thought that birds chose their mates on this day. Position bird feeders so that small trees and shrubs are nearby.



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

By  
Audrey Steffan,  
Colorado Master Gardener

## Regal Torchlily

*Kniphofia caulescens*, Blue-leaf Red Hot Poker



A fabulous wildflower species, *K. caulescens*, is native to the high grassy slopes of South Africa's Drakensberg Mountains. There, in mid to late summer, you'll find huge fields of it ablaze with thousands upon thousands of large soft-orange and yellow flower spikes. Here at home, Blue-leaf Red Hot Poker adds color, texture and structure to

the garden with its robust rosettes of blue foliage. These uniquely colored thin long leaves stand out among their green leafed companions. This plant is widely adaptable across much of the country but does especially well in gardens at higher altitudes above 7,000 feet elevation.

*Kniphofia caulescens* thrives in compost-enriched soils that are well drained over the winter months (no low spots that collect rain water or snow). By late summer, the clump is crowned with glowing crimson, golden and ivory torches that create a focal point in a border or xeriscape. These plants and flower spikes attract hummingbirds and are deer and rabbit resistant. They will handle full sun and afternoon shade. This plant reproduces by sending off new shoots that can be transplanted in other areas of your garden or shared with friends.

## Redleaf Rose

*Rosa glauca*, *R. rubrifolia*



*Rose glauca* is a species of rose native to the mountains of central and southern Europe. This rose was not widely grown in gardens until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when its wildness and beauty were finally beginning to be appreciated.

The single rose blossoms range from pastel pink to white in color. The plant is also grown as much for the gorgeous red-purple hips that persist much of the year and its dark purple foliage color that provides wonderful contrast to the silvers and greens that dominate our xeriscapes. This plant is a deciduous arching shrub of sparsely bristled and thorny cinnamon-colored canes and covered with a waxy bloom that has 5 – 9 leaflets. The flower petals fall off easily in a spray of watering hoses as well as wind and rain.

This hardy blooming shrub thrives just about anywhere providing graceful presence with no effort, beautifying the dry garden all year around. Plant it in a location that gets full sun to maximize the color of the foliage. The plant has a hardiness of USDA zones 3 – 9, up to 9,000 feet in elevation and will grow in clay, sandy soil or loam.

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

by  
Laurie Wasmund,  
Colorado Master Gardener



Many herbs or plants have historical medicinal properties or uses. One of these is yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) which can be found in temperate zones throughout the world. Yarrow grows in sunny locales and is found in fields, along roadsides and in gardens.

Yarrow has been used for thousands of years to treat a variety of ailments. Legend has it that the Greek hero, Achilles, used yarrow leaves to stop the bleeding wounds of soldiers. A number of Native American tribes also used yarrow for joint or rheumatic pain, to treat eye infections and earaches, and as a remedy for colds.

Other traditional uses include topical applications to treat minor bleeding or wounds, internal dosages to reduce inflammation in the digestive tract, and as a sedative to alleviate anxiety or insomnia. Yarrow contains flavonoids that increase saliva and stomach acid for improved digestion and also relax muscles in the intestine. (Continued on page 3.)

## Medicinal Herbs in the Garden

(Continued from page 2.)

Yarrow is still used in herbal hair products to maintain the color of blond hair and is sometimes used to prevent baldness. It is closely related to chrysanthemums and chamomile.

Yarrow is not considered toxic to humans, but can cause fatalities in cattle. It can also increase hypersensitivity to sunlight in people who are allergic to plants in the aster family.

The flowers, leaves and stems of the yarrow plant are used for medicinal purposes. Plants are harvested when in bloom.

Today, yarrow is available in dried or fresh herbs for teas, capsules and tablets, tinctures and liquid extracts. Because it can react with both over-the-counter and prescription medications, always consult a medical professional before taking an herbal supplement.

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 Three Toxic Plants for Horses

by  
Aija Tobiss.  
Colorado Master Gardener

### Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)



Field bindweed was introduced from Europe and has become a noxious weed and a problem in Colorado. It is a perennial, very invasive and adapts to any type of soil and is very difficult to eradicate. Bindweed reproduces from seed and has a very extensive root system. The seeds are protected by a hard shell and can survive in the soil for twenty or more years.

Bindweed becomes toxic when the pasture has been overgrazed and bindweed has become the predominant plant. Hay contaminated with bindweed seed may cause colic in horses. A slow heart rate and dilated pupils may result if toxic levels of the bindweed are consumed.

### Russian Knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*)



Russian knapweed was introduced from Russia in alfalfa seeds. It can be found in fields, pastures and roadsides. It is a noxious weed and is highly invasive. It grows in all types of soil and spreads by an extensive root system. It also produces an inhibitory substance from its roots that

retards other plants that grow near it.

Russian knapweed is a creeping perennial with purple to white flowers bunched at the top of two to three foot stalks. The leaves and stems are silvery green.

Russian knapweed is toxic to horses. Prolonged eating of Russian Knapweed results in a disease called chewing disease. Chewing disease can result in frozen facial muscles, excess salivation, severe weight loss, the inability to chew or drink, and drooping lip or facial features.

There is no effective treatment and euthanasia is eventually necessary, "because of the debilitating and irreversible effects of the brain lesions and complicating inhalation pneumonia." (Continued on page 4.)

#### How well do you know your fruit and vegetables?

1. Name the only vegetable or fruit that is never sold frozen, canned, processed, cooked, or in any other form except fresh.
2. Of all vegetables, only two can live to produce on their own for several growing seasons. All other vegetables must be replanted every year. What are the only two perennial vegetables?
3. What fruit has its seeds on the outside?

(Answers on page 4.)

# Colorado's Three Toxic Plants for Horses

(Continued from page 3.)

## Yellow Starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*)



Yellow Starthistle, as well as Russian Knapweed, is very poisonous to horses and can be fatal. Yellow Starthistle was imported from the Mediterranean area with grain that was contaminated with its seeds. It is an invasive and noxious weed which

can grow to three feet high with yellow flowers at the end of the branches surrounded by one to two cm spines and blue green leaves. It grows in cultivated fields, roadsides and waste areas. It is an annual weed. The toxicity in horses does not appear until the animal has eaten large quantities over a period of 30 to 60 days. Prolonged eating of Yellow Starthistle also results in chewing disease, with the same symptoms as those caused by Russian Knapweed.

All of these weeds should be identified and removed from your pastures. For help identifying these weeds or other weeds, call the CSU Extension, Elbert County Master Gardener office at (303)621-3162. For additional information about these weeds ask for fact sheets [Controlling Bindweed Planttalk 2104](#), [Colorado Noxious Weeds Planttalk 2103](#), [Russian Knapweed Fact Sheet 3111](#), [Weed Management for Small Rural Acreage Fact Sheet 3106](#), or visit the web site at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>.

Ref: A guide to Plant Poisoning, by P. Knight and R. Walter.

## Natural vs. Supplements

by  
Steven Delgadillo,  
Colorado Master Gardener



Much has been made about the differences and benefits of using supplements in lieu of eating natural vegetables and fruits. I have a stake in this as I am a lung cancer survivor who had

his entire left lung removed. I haven't been as diligent as

I should be about either way of helping myself so maybe with this article I can help myself and you along the way.

First let's explore some of the facts:

- Healthy people can obtain all the vitamins and minerals they need from eating a variety of foods.
- Taking supplements does not guarantee protection against disease.
- Large doses of either single nutrient supplements or high potency vitamin-mineral combinations may be harmful.
- Vitamin deficiency is rare unless a person's diet is limited and lacks variety.
- Do not take self-prescribed single nutrient supplements without first consulting a physician or registered dietitian.
- About 68 percent of American adults take a multivitamin supplement each day because they think the food they eat lacks needed nutrients. With the quality and variety of food available in the United States, however, healthy people can get the vitamins and minerals they need from food.
- Our food supply provides a unique balance that cannot be duplicated by taking any combination of supplements. In addition, eating is one of life's pleasures. However, it is evident by supplement sales totaling over \$23.7 billion a year that much is invested in the hope that supplements will help.
- People think they can eat whatever they want as long as they take vitamin and mineral supplements.
- Supplements supply some vitamins and minerals, but they do not provide all of the components of food necessary for good health. We need 42 nutrients each day. Supplements supply only a fraction of these and are not a quick fix for poor food choices. Supplements are not needed if a variety of foods are eaten.
- Vitamins and minerals will prevent diseases associated with nutritional deficiencies such as scurvy, beriberi, pellagra and rickets. These diseases, however, are rare in the United States because the foods we eat are good sources of the needed nutrients. (Continued on page 5.)

### Answers:

1. Lettuce
2. Asparagus and Rhubarb
3. Strawberries

# Natural vs. Supplements

(Continued from Page 4.)

The diseases that plague today's Americans are chronic diseases not caused by specific nutrient deficiencies. Heart disease, cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure are affected by many factors, one of which is eating patterns. If people eat a variety of foods in adequate and moderate amounts, supplements will not give added protection.

Newer findings from clinical studies indicate that taking antioxidant pills does not offer protection against cancer, and may even do some harm. On the other hand, eating lots of food rich in antioxidants, such as green vegetables, citrus fruits, and deep-orange colored produce as well as other types of fruits and vegetables has been shown to be protective.

Several studies have looked at antioxidants, especially vitamin E, and have found no protective effect against heart disease (and may even increase the risk of heart failure). The results from clinical studies do not support antioxidant supplement use.

Large doses of either single-nutrient supplements or high potency vitamin-mineral combinations may be harmful. These megavitamins may contain 10 to over 100 times the Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) for a vitamin or mineral and can act like drugs with potentially serious results.

Taken in high amounts, some supplements may produce undesirable effects such as fatigue, diarrhea and hair loss.

Others may cause more severe side effects such as kidney stones, liver or nerve damage, birth defects, or even death. At high levels, single-nutrient supplements function as a drug in the body and not as a nutrient. Fat-soluble vitamins such as vitamins A and D are harmful in high doses. Water-soluble vitamins have commonly been thought to be harmless. Recent research, however, shows that vitamin B-6, a water-soluble vitamin, can cause nerve damage at the high doses prescribed for PMS. Large amounts of vitamin C can cause diarrhea and nausea.

Many factors influence toxicity. Supplement potency, dose (number and frequency), body size and how long the supplement is taken all influence whether a supplement can be toxic.

This certainly does not mean that supplements don't have their place in our health. Certain individuals have special needs and may benefit from taking a supplement. They include the following:

- People with limited food intake, such as chronic dieters and some elderly, have difficulty meeting their nutrient needs.

- Some vegetarians, especially strict vegans who eat no meat, dairy products or eggs, may not receive adequate amounts of iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B-12.
- Individuals with certain diseases or physiological conditions may require supplementation.
- Newborn infants are given vitamin K to help their blood clot.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women require higher levels of many nutrients, especially folacin, iron and calcium. Individual recommendations for supplementation should come from a physician or a registered dietitian.

Healthy people who take supplements should limit supplement potency to 100 percent or less of the Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) for their age and gender. Self-prescribed high dosages of supplements can be potentially dangerous and cannot guarantee good health.

The \$27.3 billion Americans spend on supplements is a lot of money. Because the body has limited storage for most of these nutrients, they are excreted and go down the drain. The most cost-effective way to promote good health is to exercise regularly and eat a wide selection of foods.

For more information call the CSU Extension, Elbert County Master Gardener office at (303) 621-3162 and ask for fact sheet [Food vs. Pills 9.338](#) or visit the Colorado State University web site at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>, click on Fact Sheets & Publications.

## Our Rabbits

by  
*Andrejs Tobiss,*  
*Colorado Master Gardener*



For the first ten years or so, living in Elbert County we hardly ever saw a cottontail rabbit. Then for a couple of years on our walks we would see an occasional rabbit. Interestingly, the

sightings were usually in the same areas. (Continued on page 6.)

## Our Rabbits

(Continued from page 5.)

A surprise came last summer. One day we noticed that we had a little baby rabbit living under a car that was not being used at that time. It was fascinating to watch that any time we got near; he would disappear under the car. As time went on, he got bigger and braver. He would wander farther away from the car. One day, while we were outside, we heard the characteristic rabbit distress screech. When we got there, there was one dead rabbit and two crows on top of it. The crows flew away and there was nothing that we could do. We left. Later, it appears, the crows had carried away the carcass.

The story did not end there. A month or so later we had two little rabbits living under the car. These two now have grown to full size and think that their home is around our yard. Our dog chases them away regularly, but each morning they are back and hiding again in some bush, under a car or some other secluded spot. On some occasions I have seen three or four rabbits in the yard.

Cottontail rabbits can cause heavy damage to flower and vegetable gardens in the spring and summer. Our experience so far is that we have not lost any plants to them. They will cut down a plant in a characteristic forty five degree angle cut as opposed to a deer which pulls on a plant. Rabbits seem to not like most smelly or fragrant plants. They also do not like corn, cucumbers, peppers, potatoes, squash, and tomatoes.

For population control the most effective methods seem to be habitat modification and exclusion techniques. This means elimination of their hiding places and erecting fences around the garden areas. Fences need to be only a couple of feet high with a mesh of one inch or smaller and the bottom needs to be secure to the ground or even dug in some.

Besides the human involvement there is the rule of nature. There is the natural balance between the hunters and the hunted. As the food supply increases so will the numbers of the predators that depend on the food supply. Hopefully man is not the disruptive element in this process.

For more information call the CSU Extension, Elbert County Master Gardener office at (303) 621-3162 and ask for [Ravishing Rabbit Revenge Planttalk 2305](#) or visit the Colorado State University web site at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>.

## It's Flicker Season Again!

by

Laurie Wasmund,  
Colorado Master Gardener



The northern flicker is responsible for most of the damage that woodpeckers inflict on Colorado homes. It can become a nuisance by either drumming or hammering on houses and other buildings and by leaving holes in wood siding and eaves. However, this annoyance can be controlled by exclusion, scare devices and preventative construction.

Flickers and other woodpeckers feed on wood-boring insects in trees and on the ground, vegetables, berries, and tree sap. The northern flicker can be identified in flight by the yellow or salmon color under its wings or tail feathers. Males have a black or red mustache that extends from the beak to the eyes.

Woodpeckers hammer to attract mates, establish or defend territory, build nests or roosting sites, or to search for insects. They prefer to drum on materials that produce loud noises, such as wooden shingles or siding, metal gutters or chimney pipes, and light posts. Drumming is most common in spring during the early morning and usually subsides by July 1st.

In order to prevent woodpecker damage on homes, immediate action is required. Once woodpeckers are established in territories or pecking sites, they are not easily driven away.

Promptly repair large holes to encourage the woodpecker to leave and to prevent other woodpeckers from taking over the territory. Cover the holes with aluminum flashing or metal siding and paint it to match the surrounding siding. Eliminate "toeholds" or perches on the sides of homes or buildings by tightly stretching fishing line or stainless steel wire over the landing sight.

While owl effigies are generally unsuccessful in frightening woodpeckers, moving silhouettes of hawks or "hawk mobiles" may discourage flickers and other nuisances. Black plastic strips, reflective pinwheels and aluminum pie tins may also frighten woodpeckers. Allow the wind to blow the strips, pinwheels and pie tins freely. Deadening the sound-producing material and siding by filling hollow spaces behind wood and metal may discourage some woodpeckers. (Continued on page 7.)

# It's Flicker Season Again!

(Continued from Page 6.)

Few chemicals have been proven to repel woodpeckers, and none are registered for that purpose. Sticky bird repellents may work, but may also stain or discolor siding. Providing cavity-type nesting boxes may encourage woodpeckers to stay away from homes and buildings.

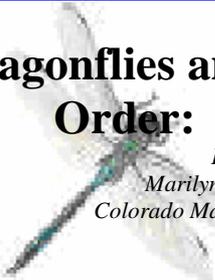
Woodpeckers are protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and cannot be eliminated by lethal methods without a permit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Division of Wildlife. Contact your local offices to apply for a permit.

For more information call the CSU Extension, Elbert County Master Gardener office at (303) 621-3162 and ask for [fact sheet 6.516 Preventing Woodpecker Damage](#) or visit the Colorado State University web site at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>.

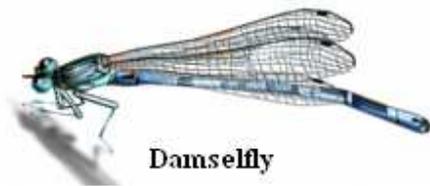
## Dragonflies and Damselflies

### Order: Odonata

By  
Marilyn Carroll,  
Colorado Master Gardener



Dragonfly



Damselfly

Dragonflies and damselflies are fairly large and easily recognized beneficial

insects. The wings of both dragonflies and damselflies are membranous and crossed with scores of small veins. The wings are often clear, but they may be lightly colored or patterned. Dragonflies hold their wings horizontally and outstretched when they are resting, while damselflies hold their wings together and above their bodies. Both have prominent eyes, and their antennae are very small. Dragonfly nymphs have stout, oval bodies. Damselfly nymphs are more elongate. Both dragonflies and damselflies live around water. Dragonflies are master fliers, capable of amazing maneuvers. These flights are often used to capture insect prey that they scoop up with basketlike front legs.

Dragonflies are the top insect predator of the air, capable of feeding on dozens of midges or mosquitoes in a short span of time. By contrast, the damselflies appear delicate, with slower and more deliberate flights, but they also are predators and capture flying insects. They both possess six legs like any other insect; however, they are not capable of walking. Instead they use their legs for perching, scooping up and handling prey. Both dragonflies and damselflies lay their eggs in water. Dragonflies drop their eggs by tapping their abdomens on the surface of the water. Damselflies usually lay their eggs just below the water's surface, where the eggs are inserted into a plant stem. The nymphs of both insects may cruise the bottoms of lakes, ponds and streams capturing other insects, and occasionally, a small tadpole or fish. They possess a unique, hinged "lower jaw" that can rapidly extend to capture prey. Dragonflies survive winters as immature nymphs in the water. Damselflies spend the winter in the egg stage, which has been inserted into the stems of plants along the water's edge.

Adult dragonflies are a very welcome addition to the garden as they eat many of the most annoying garden pests. The list of delicacies that they enjoy includes mosquitoes, flies, gnats, and aphids. Dragonflies are strong flyers, though most individuals stay around their own pond or stream. But some will wander, so if you build it, they will come. Many garden stores now sell stiff, pre-shaped plastic ponds, as well as flexible PVC or butyl rubber liners that will conform to the shape of a pond you design yourself. If you use a flexible liner, a layer of newspapers or old carpet under the plastic prevents punctures. What you plant around the pond is almost as important as what you plant in it. Wildflower grassland planted near the pond will attract small insects, the food of adult dragonflies and damselflies. Grasses, such as switch grass, produce seed for birds and provide cover for insects. Dragonflies and damselflies will bask on light colored flat rocks, placed at the edge of ponds.

**Reference: "Guide to Colorado Insects" by Whitney Cranshaw and Boris Kondratieff**

#### Some Gardening Tips:

- Feather herbs, such as dill, fennel and parsley, are favorite host foods for larvae of the black swallowtail butterfly. Be sure to include them when designing your herb garden.
- Sterilize flowerpots before reusing them. Wash them with detergent and water, rinse with water and a splash of bleach, and then let them dry in the sun.



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***February 2010***

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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).

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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

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### **Plant Select® Helps Elbert County Master Gardeners with New Demonstration Garden**

*By  
Debi Bredeson  
Colorado Master Gardener*

Each year a variety of questions are fielded at the Elbert County Master Gardener's Office. Many inquiries are about flower gardens, specifically, which varieties grow well with our hot sun, gusty winds, and altitude.

Thankfully, there is a group who has taken much of the guesswork out of flower gardening in Colorado. This organization is called Plant Select® and is a combined effort of Colorado State University, the Denver Botanic Gardens, and various green industries such as nurseries, greenhouses, and landscaping companies. They work throughout the year testing plants, and then release a list of their Plant Select® choices for that calendar year. Only the "best of the best" makes this list, and are chosen for their beauty, resilience, low maintenance, and suitability to the Rocky Mountain region.

Currently the Elbert County Extension Office in Kiowa has a small Demonstration Garden, but plans are in full swing to expand to a much larger plot this summer. Work will begin this spring to make the bed and ground ready. Then, in mid-June, flowers supplied by Plant Select® will arrive. This beautiful garden will not only be for your visual enjoyment, but will offer suggestions for your own personal beds. Information and brochures are always available at the Extension Office on all of the various Plant Select® choices.

We invite you to stop by our office this summer to see for yourself! The Master Gardeners are in the Extension Office at the Kiowa Fairgrounds on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. April through September. We'd be happy to answer any questions you might have, and also show off our new Plant Select® Demonstration Garden!