Master Gardener Series –
Gardening with the Holidays

April

"Keep America Beautiful Month"

- 1 April Fool's Day
- 4 National Walk to Work Day 1st Friday
- 15 Income taxes due

The Number One April Fool's Day Hoax in History: The Swiss Spaghetti Harvest

In 1957, the respected BBC news show *Panorama* announced that thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. It accompanied this announcement with footage of Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees. Huge numbers of viewers were taken in. Many called the BBC wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti tree. To this the BBC diplomatically replied that they should "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best."

This hoax was rated #1 by www.museumofhoaxes.com. Visit this website to see the list of 100 best April Fool's Day Hoaxes.

APRIL FOOL'S DAY MENU

Meatloaf Cupcakes
French Fried Cookies (sugar cookies sliced to resemble French fries)
Apple Cole Slaw
Green Jello Drink – Jello served in a glass with a straw

Meatloaf cupcakes: prepare meat loaf in muffin tins as usual, top with mashed potatoes for the frosting and top with a cherry tomato

FEEDING BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS

If you want butterflies to live in your yard, you must create habitat for the adult butterflies and the larval stage – caterpillars. In most species, caterpillars feed on completely different vegetation than the adults. Black Swallowtail caterpillars

http://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide/cimg266.html

are green, black and yellow. The first time I saw them on my parsley I thought I was under attack. It is not that difficult to plant a little extra in the garden for the bugs**. In Indiana, foods like cabbage, dill, parsley, and milkweed will sustain the caterpillars**. Help them over-winter by leaving some vegetation in the garden for them to hide in. Experts agree that the butterfly boxes on the market do not work. See the Purdue Department of Forestry Handout for additional information and cautions regarding attracting butterflies to your yard and garden. http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-248-W.pdf

You must limit use of pesticides if you want to have butterflies in the garden. Use floating row cover on the cabbages and broccolis you plan to harvest. Put out a little extra parsley – the caterpillars love it and it grows easily from seed. You can save parsley and dill seed for replanting each year.

Since now is the time for planning the garden, be sure to plant a little extra for the butterflies and other pollinators.

Spicebush Swallowtail Caterpillar

Black Swallowtail Butterfly

Pollinators

US Postage Stamp Series

Article courtesy of www.USPS.com

Depicted on the *Pollination* stamps are four wildflowers and four pollinators. The common and scientific names of the featured flowers are: purple nightshade, also known as chaparral nightshade (*Solanum xanti*); hummingbird trumpet (*Epilobium canum*); saguaro (*Carnegiea gigantea*) and prairie ironweed, also known as common ironweed (*Vernonia fasciculata*). The common and scientific names of the featured animal pollinators are: Morrison's bumble bee (*Bombus morrisoni*); calliope hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*); lesser long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris yerbabuenae*) and Southern dogface butterfly (*Colias cesonia*).

Bumble bees with relatively short mouthparts visit flowers that hold nectar in open cups, while those with longer tongues probe for nectar in tubular flowers with hidden nectaries (the plant glands that secrete nectar). The flowers of some plants, such as tomatoes and other nightshades, contain no nectar but produce an abundance of pollen in tubular anthers. To obtain pollen from these flowers, bumble bees employ a technique known as buzz pollination. By grasping the anthers and rapidly vibrating their flight muscles, they dislodge the pollen.

Butterflies use their long, narrow proboscises like straws to suck up nectar from flowers with long, narrow nectaries. Hummingbirds have long narrow bills and tongues that, along with their ability to hover in mid-air, enable them to obtain nectar from flowers with very deep nectaries. Lesser long-nosed bats feed on the fruit and nectar of night-blooming cacti, such as saguaro, as well as many species of agave.

Pollination, the transfer of pollen within flowers, or from one flower to another of the same species, is the basis for fruit and seed production. Insects and other animals, such as birds and bats, provide pollination services for the majority of the world's food crops and flowering plants. In turn, the plants provide their pollinators with food and other nutrients in the form of energy-producing nectar and protein-rich pollen. Many plants also serve as hosts for the larvae of insect pollinators.

In economic terms, insect-pollinated plants provide us with about one-third of the foods we eat and the beverages we drink. In fact, some plant species — including red clover and other important farm crops — are pollinated only by bumble bees. Many fibers, condiments, spices, oils and medicines also come from animal-pollinated plants. And on a purely aesthetic level, we enjoy the beautiful profusion of colors and lovely fragrances that many flowers use to attract pollinators.

Populations of some animal pollinators appear to be declining. Over the past few decades, scientists and growers (farmers and orchardists, as well as backyard gardeners) have all noted this downward trend. As a result, many concerned organizations and individuals, along with some government agencies, are working to encourage pollinator research, education and awareness. They are also developing conservation and restoration projects aimed at ensuring measurable and documented increases in the numbers and health of both resident and migratory pollinating animals.

Many things can be done to help promote the health and vitality of pollinator populations. Among them are: planting flower gardens that provide a continuous succession of blooms throughout the season, utilizing native plants, and using nontoxic methods to control pests and weeds. We can also protect nontarget organisms such as pollinators from inadvertent exposure to pesticides, insecticides, herbicides and other chemicals, and set aside and protect habitats suitable for wild pollinators. To learn more about the importance of *Pollinators*, visit: *www.pollinator.org*.