In the News Giant Hogweed

In the news recently are stories on Giant Hogweed (GH). A Plant which according to the report could cause burn and blindness. First, according the USDA Plant Database the plant is not in Tennessee (see map), but is found in neighboring states. The plant is listed in the UT Extension publication, Invasive Weeds of the Appalachian Region (PB1785), and by the Tennessee Invasive Plant Council due to its proximity in neighboring states. The US Forest Service states “In the United States, giant hogweed is a noxious weed. Contact with plant sap can burn, blister, and scar exposed skin.” Large plants can negatively impact soil dynamics, fisheries, and other species in its nonnative habitats.” More photos on page 2.
In the News Giant Hogweed Continued


According to this article “Within the class of toxic chemicals that make the plant so dangerous is an approved drug called psoralen.”

Dates for 2018

- **Sequatchie County Fair** August 6-11, 2018. Entries taken August 6, Flower Show August 7
- **Steak and Potatoes Field Day** – August 7, 2018, 8:00AM Crossville
- **SVMG Quarterly Meeting and Tomato Tasting** August 11, 2018, 9:00 AM – meeting 10:00 AM, Tasting Pikeville (moved to avoid Yard Sale)
- **10th Annual Fall Gardeners' Festival** August 28th, 2018 UT Gardens Crossville, Plateau Research & Education Center
- **SVMG Quarterly Meeting** November 3, 2018, 9:00 AM Dunlap

2018 All Bugs Good and Bad Webinar Series

- **August 3, 2018** Title **Bees, Wasps, and Hornets, Oh My!**
  Presented by TBA
- **September 7, 2018** Title **Winterizing Your Home to Keep Out Pests**
  Presented by Janet Hurley, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- **October 5, 2018** Title **Structural Misidentified Pests**
  Presented by Molly Keck, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- **November 2, 2018** Title **Lice, Scabies, and Mites**
  Presented by Dr. Nancy Hinkle, University of Georgia
- **December 1, 2018** Title **Pantry Pests**
  Presented by Dr. Dan Suiter, Extension Entomologist, UGA Extension
Rain Gardens: Hot Topic in Landscape Design

Utilize Runoff to Create a Plant Oasis

Warm temperatures mean different things to different people, but to University of Tennessee Extension specialist Andrea Ludwig, they mean the perfect time to build a rain garden. One of the top ten hot topics in landscape design for 2018, rain gardens are simply gardens designed to catch runoff water from rooftops, driveways, and parking areas.

According to Ludwig, a typical house roof will shed nearly 500 gallons of rainwater during a half-inch rain. Since most of Tennessee receives over 50 inches of annual rainfall, this means nearly 50,000 gallons of rainwater becomes rooftop runoff each year. “This is water that can be nourishing healthy soils and lush landscaping around homes,” says Ludwig.

For homeowners who are considering a rain garden, Ludwig says the best first step is to go outside when it rains and observe how water moves across the property. “Look for opportunities where the water slows down, in areas that catch runoff and aren’t being used otherwise.”

Rain gardens can come in all shapes, different sizes, and many colors. All of them bring countless benefits to the landscape that improve overall function, reduce mowing, attract beneficial wildlife, and protect community water resources. A rain garden can be as simple as planting water-loving, native Tennessee plants in a low lying area that already catches runoff to help soak it into the ground. A new depression can also be dug to create a rain garden at the end of a diverted downspout or set away from a driveway.

If a new depression is the best choice, Ludwig cautions that a few considerations must be made in the process. First, make sure the sited location for the rain garden is in between the source of the runoff (e.g. impervious surfaces like rooftops or pavement) and where overflow will need to leave the property. The rain garden will be able to soak in runoff from most storms, but for anything over about an inch, the garden will likely be full and need to overflow the excess water safely to the storm drain system. Also, make sure there are no underground utilities, septic tanks or fields, or large tree roots. Place a Tennessee One Call at 8-1-1 before digging at all times.

Rain gardens should be located in the flattest area of the yard, at least ten feet away from structures, and absolutely must be built in soils that will infiltrate water within a couple days after a rain. Size is also important when building a rain garden, but will be partially determined by the soil type in the area. Soil samples can be sent to a soil testing center for analysis, and then homeowners can make the best decisions about the size and type of rain garden.

Once a rain garden is in place, wise plant selection, like native plants adapted to Tennessee soils and climate, will keep the soil healthy and able to absorb water. Choosing native plants found in wetlands or along stream banks will also supplement your rain garden. For more help in plant selection, consult the Tennessee Smart Yard native plant database at tynativeplants.wordpress.com.

For additional help or resources about rain gardening, contact your local county Extension office. For more information about creating a Tennessee Smart Yard, visit tnyards.utk.edu.
August Garden Tips

Here is your “to do” list for the garden for July. These tasks were submitted by Jason Reeves, horticulturist and curator at the University of Tennessee Gardens in Jackson.

- Many plants are easily propagated by layering. Hydrangeas, viburnums, weigela, trumpet honeysuckle, Carolina jessamine, and climbing roses are a few that will root if the stems are fastened down and covered with soil.
- Start planning your fall vegetable garden. Late July is the time to start seeding your winter broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and brussels sprouts to be transplanted into the garden in mid-August.
- You should be receiving fall nursery catalogues in the mail soon. Now would be the time to begin planning a new garden.
- Raise the height of your mower to reduce stress on your lawn and to conserve moisture in the ground. For best results, mow 2 inches for Bermuda grass, 1 to 2 inches for Zoysia and 2.5 to 3 inches for fescue.
- July is a good month to prune “bleeder” trees like maples, dogwood, elm and birch and other trees that “bleed” when pruned in winter.
- Give your chrysanthemums and aster a last pinching no later mid-July.
- Keep your perennials deadheaded so they will continue to flower. Be sure to remove the fading flower down to a leaf node or new bud.
- Cut back early planted annuals that are getting leggy or out of control by one-third to keep them looking good into the fall. Give them a shot of a water-soluble fertilizer. Good candidates include impatiens, salvia, sweet potato vine, trailing or ground-cover-type petunias and herbs, like basil.
- Avoid pruning spring-flowering shrubs from now until next spring. Anything you remove now will also be removing next year’s flowers. Spring-flowering shrubs include azaleas, camellias, witch hazels and rhododendrons among others.
- Now is the time to prune overgrown oakleaf and mop-head hydrangeas.
- Cut flowers for a bouquet early in the morning. Immediately place them in water. Good cut flowers include purple or white Echinacea (coneflower), Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan), zinnias, salvia, dahlias, sunflowers, Mexican sunflower, celosia, jewels of opar, cosmos, dill, fennel, Gomphrena (globe amaranth), Gaillardia, Monarda (bee balm), phlox, yarrow, ornamental grasses and Artemisia.
- Cut old flower heads off Hydrangea arborescens such as ‘Annabelle’ to get a second, but smaller, flush of flowers.
- July is a good time to buy crapemyrtles. They are in flower now so you can be certain to get the flower colored desired. Crape myrtles should not be fertilized after mid-July to allow them time to properly harden off by fall.
July 2018 Plant of the Month - The Castor Bean

A Star for the Summer Garden

Amy Dismukes, UT-TSU Extension, Williamson County

The castor bean, *Ricinus communis*, a member of the spurge (*Euphorbiaeae*) family, grown both for its flowers and dramatic foliage, is indigenous to the southeastern Mediterranean, Eastern Africa and India, but the plant can be grown throughout the United States as an ornamental annual.

The name *Ricinus* is Latin for tick, for which the seed is so named, due to its markings and shape. The common name castor oil is thought to come from its use as an alternative to castoreum, a perfume base derived from the dried glands of the beaver (castor in Latin). Another common name is palm of Christ, or *Palma Christi*, which speaks to the plant's castor oil derivative and its reputed ability to heal wounds and cure ailments. Other common names include mole killer plant and castor oil plant.

It is said that the plants were grown in English gardens, beginning around the 16th century, as well as in Egypt, where the oils were utilized as an alternative to lamp oil. In the United States, castor bean plants were grown to produce castor oil, which was used in making soaps, linoleum, nylon, paints and electrical insulations. It was also used to make a military grade aircraft lubricant and was a popular medicine in the first half of the 20th century.

Because the oil itself does not contain ricin, the poison naturally found in castor beans, it has also found its way into the cosmetic world as a benefit for both skin and hair.

Today, when we think of castor bean, most of us think of moles, those annoying little guys responsible for tunneling around your back yard in search of food ... probably because castor oil is the main component in many mole deterrent sprays. The effectiveness of these sprays is still up in the air.

Castor bean can vary greatly in both its appearance and growth habits. Over time, breeders have increased this variability by selecting specific cultivars for leaf and flower color, as well as oil production, leading to its new found popularity with gardeners. With its rapid growth rate, some cultivars can reach the size of a small tree in a very short period of time. The giant castors, of course, can surpass those shorter varieties in both height and width.

Dependent on the type of castor you choose to grow, its enormous, glossy palmate leaves can range between anywhere from 6 to 30 inches across, resembling a star, with anywhere from five to 12 deep, coarsely serrated lobes. Each leaf is attached by a slender, long petiole, arranged alternately up the main stalk.

In some varieties the leaves start off a dark, reddish purple, bronze or green, gradually changing to a darker tone as they mature, whereas other varieties offer green leaves from the start.

The stems and alien-like, spiny seed pods also vary in color and are often prettier than the actual blooms. The male flowers are yellowish-green with creamy white stamens, where the female flowers hide within the spiny seed pods, have red stigmas and are produced in lower numbers than the male.

Each fruit is a spiny capsule containing large, bean-like seeds, decorated with a brownish motting pattern. The seed has a small wart-like appendage called a caruncle, which promotes myrmecochory — the dispersal of seed by ants.

If you’d like to incorporate castor bean plants into your landscape, sow the seeds in a site with direct sun and deep, rich soil. Alternatively, you may start them early, inside, to get a jump on the growing season, transplanting...
young plants to a sunny location when the weather is adequate and the possibility of freeze has passed. Make sure to protect the plants from winds that could harm the large, glossy leaves. Castor bean plants love water, so make sure they receive an adequate amount of irrigation should drought be a concern at any time.

The biggest drawback of castor bean is its lack of cold hardiness. As the year goes by and the temperatures begin to drop, you’ll notice your castor bean seems to disappear along with the long daylight hours. You can bring your baby back to life by saving its seeds. Its seed is the castor bean, which, despite its name, is not a true bean.

Using rubber gloves, carefully cut the seed stalk (previous bloom) out, allow the seed pods to dry in a cool, dark and dry room, and crack and remove the seeds carefully. You may store the seeds in a paper envelope, labeled, inside your refrigerator or wherever you store “saved seeds.”

If you want to take a peek before you jump all in, *R. communis* var. New Zealand Black and *R. communis* var. Carmencita Red are both grown at the UT Gardens, Knoxville. *R. communis* var. gibsonii — my favorite — makes an annual debut in UT Gardens, Jackson.

All in all, castor bean is a star — literally! Don’t let the “poisonous” label scare you, as it would take a deliberate act to utilize it as a poison. Unintentional exposure is highly unlikely, except through the ingestion of the beans. So, don’t eat the beans!

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**Short Rows**

The Tennessee state fruit is the tomato.

**Scientific classification**

- Kingdom: Plantae
- (unranked): Angiosperms
- (unranked): Eudicots
- (unranked): Asterids
- Order: Solanales
- Family: Solanaceae
- Genus: *Solanum*

As late as the early 1800’s the tomato was grown mainly as an ornamental. By the mid-1800s with the appearance of recipes in several periodicals the fruit became more popular thus more widely grown and eaten.

The plant belongs to the nightshade family, *Solanaceae*. The species originated in western South America. The name derives from the Spanish word "tomate", the Spanish came from the Nahuatl (Aztec language) *tomatl*.

Botanically, a tomato is a fruit, the seed bearing part that develops from the ovary after flowering. The fruit is classified as a berry — a fleshy fruit with multiple seeds.

According to Wikipedia is was a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1893 which classified the tomato as a vegetable. This was based on the popular definition that classifies vegetables by use— generally served with main mean and not dessert. This was a ruling to define the legal status of the tomato due to the Tariff of 1883 which placed tariffs on vegetables but not fruits.

Smith, K. Annabelle. “Why the Tomato Was Feared in Europe for More Than 200 Years: How the fruit got a bad rap from the beginning” smithsonian.com June 18, 2013 accessed Tuesday June 26, 2018 [https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/why-the-tomato-was-feared-in-europe-for-more-than-200-years-863735/](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/why-the-tomato-was-feared-in-europe-for-more-than-200-years-863735/)