Extension’s 2015 Master Gardener Trainings, Two Sites Available

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If you have a strong interest in gardening and enjoy helping others, you can become a Nebraska Extension Master Gardener volunteer. This program will increase your knowledge and understanding of horticultural topics such as best cultural practices for growing flowers, vegetables, turf, plant disease and insect pest identification, control and much more. Instructors are Extension specialists, educators, associates and horticulture professionals.

To become a Master Gardener volunteer, you must attend all training sessions, pass an examination and volunteer for Extension educational programming. Volunteering could include answering gardening questions from the public, teaching 4-H youth gardening, assisting at the county or state fair, or assisting community garden participants.

Training class size is limited. Those participating in the 2015 training class must pay a $190 materials fee. There are two options for Master Gardener Training in Lincoln, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County’s Master Gardener training sessions will begin in February. Trainings will be 6-9 p.m. at UNL East Campus. Application deadline is Jan. 23. For more information, call Terry James at 402-472-8973. Apply online at http://mastergardener.unl.edu/become-a-master-gardener.

Do not miss this opportunity to increase your gardening knowledge and skills and the chance to share them with others in the community.

Bed Bug Basics

Cold weather doesn’t deter bed bugs especially since they are living indoors with their human meals. We’re seeing plenty of bed bugs being brought into the office for identification. Here are some bed bug basics you should know.

Bed bug adults are about the size of an apple seed, flat, oval and reddish brown. Immature bed bugs are very tiny and can be hard to see. Some people aren’t bothered by bed bug bites, while other people find them very irritating.

Where Bed Bugs Hide

Bed bugs usually hide near where people rest or sleep like in beds, sofas and chairs. When you relax or sleep, bed bugs come out to feed. Bed bugs don’t live on our bodies but we can transport them in clothing, luggage, purses etc.

Most bed bugs are found within eight feet of where we rest. As an infestation grows, bed bugs can be found further away.

Where you might find bed bugs:
• Mattresses, box springs, bed frames, bedding
• Cracks and crevices of furniture
• Behind peeling wallpaper
• Behind pictures and clocks
• Between the pages and in the bindings of books
• Curtains
• Cracks in hardwood floors, baseboards, framing

Bed bug fecal spots and eggs under the fabric stapled to the framing of box springs.

Bed bugs are reddish brown and have flattened bodies (left — approximate size).

• Under carpet and rugs
• Behind electrical outlets, switch plates

If You Think You Have Bed Bugs

• First, make sure you really have bed bugs! We see plenty of insects brought into the office from people thinking they have bed bugs and to their relief, are not.
• Try not to panic! Bed bugs can be controlled using proper methods. Learn as much as you can. Contact your Extension office or visit http://lancaster.unl.edu/pests.
• Contact a pest management professional or your landlord to schedule an inspection and professional treatment for bed bugs.
• Over-the-counter pesticides labeled for bed bugs are not effective. Homemade or “custom-formulated” products can also be dangerous and may make your bed bug infestation worse, not better. Do not use garden or agricultural pesticides in the home. Never apply pesticides directly to your body. Do not use rubbing alcohol, kerosene or gasoline on your body, your pets or in your home to control pests. These products can make you sick and may cause fires.
• There’s no need to toss your furniture. Beds and furniture can be treated. You can (and should) invest in mattress encasements especially designed to keep bed bugs away from the mattress and box springs.
• Reduce or eliminate any clutter! Don’t store anything under the bed because this gives bed bugs more places to hide. The more hiding places you have for bed bugs, the harder it is for a treatment to work.
• Vacuum thoroughly and often. Be sure to empty the canister or bag immediately and take it to a dumpster or garbage can outdoors. Heat kills bed bugs. Remember this when doing your laundry.
• If you are having a treatment done for bed bugs, please follow the recommendations of the pest control professional both before and after a treatment. As a tenant or homeowner, you play an important role in helping make sure a treatment is successful.

Environmental Wellness Festival Needs Volunteers

Volunteers are needed for the 2015 Earth Wellness Festival on Wednesday, March 25 and Thursday, March 26 at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. For more information, contact Sara Winn at stwinn2@unl.edu or 402-472-0636 by Jan. 30. Visit http://lancaster.unl.edu/ewf to register online.

Earth Wellness Festival

Recycling Your Christmas Tree for the Birds

After the holidays, recycle your fresh-cut Christmas tree by moving it outdoors to help provide shelter for wildlife.

Place your tree in a bucket of wet sand and place it in the garden or in the landscape a few feet away from bird feeders. If you don’t want to stand your tree up in a bucket, prop it up against a secure fence and tie it into place. Your tree will provide wildlife months of protection from winter winds and predators like hawks and cats. Make sure your tree is trimmed up enough from the bottom so cats can’t hide in the tree. Trimmed boughs can be put over tender plants in your landscape until spring.

Decorate your tree with an edible garland made from orange slices, cranberries and popcorn. Pinecones stuffed with suet and rolled in birdseed can also be hung from the boughs of the tree for the birds.

—Soni Cochran, Extension Associate

For more information, contact your Nebraska Extension office or go to http://lancaster.unl.edu/pests.