

## Culver's Root, a Must-Have Perennial Plant

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Culver's root, *Veronicastrum virginicum*, is an impressive plant and quite stunning in full bloom. The flowers are white and resemble an elegant candelabra. It blooms from late June into August. It can reach heights of 3–6 feet tall and adds an amazing vertical element to the landscape.

Culver's root is native to Nebraska and prefers a moist site. It grows well in full sun to part shade. It is an herbaceous perennial that grows in a clump with a rhizome root system, but is not aggressive. Culver's root has lance-shaped, dark green, whorled leaves and are attractive through the season.

Culver's root is important to many native pollinators. This plant is visited by leafcutter bees, bumblebees, red admiral butterflies and soldier beetles.

There are no serious insect or disease problems with Culver's root. Long flower spikes provide a noticeable accent and impressive vertical height for landscape borders, rain gardens or pollinator habitats.



Mary Jane Frogge, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County

## Selecting a Babysitter

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Babysitting is a job many youth participate in during their teenage years. As a parent, you hope to find a safe and responsible teen to care for your child while you are away. Whether you are a seasoned parent or a new parent, you might be curious as to "What makes a good babysitter?"

If you are looking to find a great teenage babysitter in your neighborhood, here are a few things to consider:

- Age and abilities of the teen.
- Has the teen babysat before.
- Availability for babysitting: days, evenings, weekends.
- Are they comfortable watching an infant? Toddler? Preschool-age child? School-age child?
- Are they comfortable watching multiple children at once?
- How will the teen get to and from your home?
- Does your child require any extra care such as needing to take medicine or be taken to sport practice on time?
- Do you know the teen's family?
- Have they taken a babysitting class?

I am an instructor for the American Red Cross Babysitting Training. This training is designed for new and developing babysitters, typically in 5th–7th Grade. I have taught youth as young as 10 years and as old as 16. Youth who take this training will learn skills in:

- Basic child development and

complete an activity to do with children.

- Identifying safety hazards in the home.
- Become trained in CPR and First Aid.
- Learn about the business of babysitting.
- Practice feeding, diapering and good handwashing.
- Identify and grow leadership skills.
- Increase their decision-making skills.
- How to prepare and serve a healthy snack.

Babysitters who take this training get a babysitters handbook, CD and babysitter emergency-ready reference guide — a pocket guide to caring for anything from a simple scratch, bee sting, asthma attack, choking and more. This program typically is offered at the Extension office in June each year.

Leaving your child in the care of someone else is a big decision. As a parent, you should take time to sit with the teen and talk about your child. Discuss your expectations of them as a babysitter and ask what they feel comfortable doing. Do they feel like they can make lunch for your child? Would they be willing to help your child take a bath?

You will also want to ensure the babysitter knows your address, phone number and another emergency contact in case they cannot reach you. If possible, make sure to have a first-aid kit available at your home and let the sitter know where you keep it.

I am lucky enough to have found some great babysitters over the years to care for my two daughters. Where did I find them? Early childhood programs in the city I lived in employed many of my children's sitters. Using a babysitter who also works for a licensed childcare can be a great benefit to the parent. These employees must have had criminal background checks and annual continuing education in child development.

If you are looking for some resources you can provide your babysitter with, about children the same age as your child, Nebraska Extension has developed NebGuides "Ages and Stages," which are broken up into ages: 0–12 months, 12–24 months, 2 and 3 year olds and 3, 4 and 5 year olds (at <http://extensionpubs.unl.edu>).

4-H has "I have What It Takes To Be Your Teenage Babysitter." This curriculum helps adults facilitate a program to train teens in babysitting skills similar to those mentioned above.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension NebGuides available online at <http://extensionpubs.unl.edu> include:

- "Helping Children Resolve Conflict: Conflict Mediation Model" (G2014)
- "Consequences Teach Responsibility" (G1818)
- "Parenting Your Child Effectively: Help Children Feel Lovable and Capable" (G1732)

## GARDEN GUIDE

### THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate

Every weed that produces seed means more weeds next year. Control weeds before they go to seed.

Remove old vegetable plants which have stopped producing to eliminate a shelter for insects and disease organisms.

Water the garden early in the day so plants can absorb the moisture before the hot sun dries the soil. Early watering insures the foliage dries before night. Wet foliage at night increases susceptibility to fungus diseases.

Many herbs self-sow if the flowers are not removed. Dill produce seeds that fall around the parent plant and come up as volunteers the following spring.

Check deciduous trees for fall webworm. Use a broom or rake to get them out of small trees.

Check on water needs of hanging baskets daily in the summer. Wind and sun dry them more quickly than other containers.

Clean up fallen rose and peony leaves. They can harbor disease and insect pests over the winter, if allowed to remain on the ground.

Mound soil over the lateral or brace roots of corn stalks for extra support against strong winds.

Pick summer squash and zucchini every day or two to keep the plants producing.

To reduce the number of pests on your fruit tree for the coming year, pick up and destroy all fallen fruit.

*Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) is used by many gardeners to protect cole crops from chewing caterpillars.

White flies are attracted to yellow, so use yellow sticky boards to reduce their populations.

Do not add weeds with mature seed heads to the compost pile. Many weed seeds can remain viable and germinate next year when the compost is used.

### Back-to-School Nutrition

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Studies suggest children and teens who eat with their families are less likely to be overweight, eat more fruits and vegetables, have higher self-esteem, improved grades and a lower incidence of

depression. Make family mealtime a priority and take advantage of the time with your children. Ask children to share how their day was, what they are learning in school and share events from your day. Mealtime is a wonderful opportunity to connect with your children and bring your family closer together.



### TROPICAL FRUIT DIP

(8 servings)

- 1 cup non-fat yogurt, vanilla
- 1 package (3.9 oz.) instant coconut pudding mix
- 1 cup non-fat sour cream
- 1 cup non-fat milk
- 1 cup crushed pineapple, drained

In a medium bowl, stir together all ingredients until well blended. Cover and chill at least two hours. Serve with fresh fruit or graham crackers.

*Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories 117, Total Fat 0 g (0% DV), Saturated Fat 0 g (0% DV), Cholesterol 4 mg (1% DV), Sodium 248 mg (11% DV), Total Carbohydrate 26 g (20% DV), Dietary Fiber 0 g (0% DV), Sugars 21 g, Protein 3 g, Vitamin A 6% DV, Vitamin C 3% DV, Calcium 13% DV, Iron 0% DV.*

Source: Nebraska Nutrition Education Program's 2017 Calendar