



## CROW WING COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

# Ask the Master Gardener

MAY 2016 COLUMN

**Dear Master Gardener:**

**I enjoy growing fruit native to Minnesota and so far have planted plums, raspberries and blueberries. I'd like to try Juneberries but don't know much about them. Would they grow on the west side of my house?**

Juneberries, members of the rose family technically known as *Amelanchier alnifolia*, are versatile shrubs with many names. In different parts of the country they are known as Saskatoon berries, service berries and shadblow. They are hardy in zones 2-7, grow in many kinds of soil, and thrive in both sun and part shade. Usually seen as bushes up to 8 feet tall and six feet wide, they can also be trained as small trees. They are often found along the edges of woods, growing under trees. In the spring they are covered with delicate white blossoms which in June—hence their name--turn into deep red-black berries that look and taste like blueberries. They are also like blueberries in size, color, shape and use. They are good fresh and in pies, jams, jellies, and syrups. They are nutritious, having more iron and vitamin C than blueberries. Though they are common in the woods, you may not notice them because their fruiting season is short and birds tend to get to them first. Juneberries have lovely orange-red fall color. Native Americans used them for food and medicine, drying them for off-season use. And yes, they should grow well on the west side of your house if they get plenty of afternoon sun.

**Dear Master Gardener:**

**I keep hearing that I'm in Zone 3, but I don't know what that means. What does Zone 3 mean?**

Cold hardiness zones were developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). They are based on the average annual extreme minimum temperature during a 30-year period in the past, not the lowest temperature that has ever occurred in the past or might occur in the future. The 2012 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location. Gardeners should keep that in mind when selecting plants, especially if they choose to "push" their hardiness zone by growing plants not rated for their zone. Minnesota has zones ranging from 3a near the Canadian border to 5a on the Iowa border. Most of Crow Wing County is in Zone 3b with average minimum temperatures in the -30°-35° F. range. Matching plants to their cold hardiness zones will increase your chance of gardening success.

**Dear Master Gardener:**

**I would love to have roses without going to so much trouble to protect them every winter. Can I grow roses up here without having to dig trenches and bury them each winter?**

Yes, you can! There are some roses that stand up to our wintry chills and drying winds without protection. There are three Polyantha roses that are rated for cold hardiness zone 3: 'Ole', 'Lena', and 'Sven'. The Canadian Explorer series are named after famous Canadian explorers and tend to be very cold hardy. Most of these roses are hardy to -30° to -40° F without winter protection. 'William Baffin' is hardy to zone 2 and an extremely vigorous climbing rose. The Canadian Artist roses have some that are reported to be crown hardy to zone 3. The Canadian Parkland or Morden roses are grown on their own roots, so even if they die back in the winter, they send up new shoots in the spring. Many make excellent bedding plants because they are low-growing. Rugosa hybrids are tough, vigorous plants. They have wrinkled leaves and the more wrinkled the leaf, the hardier the plant tends to be. The Pavement series hybrid rugosas are very hardy (most are zone 3). Suffulta hybrids are the parents to the Parkland roses and many are as hardy as -30° to -40° F. An excellent book to consider checking out at the library or purchasing is Growing Roses in Cold Climates by Richard Hass, Jerry Olson, and John Whitman from University of Minnesota Press. There are more than 875 varieties listed in the book and a five-star system has been used to rate each rose. Guidance on how to care for roses is also included.

**Dear Master Gardener:**

**I have had two Honeycrisp apple trees for years and do not get any apples. What could the problem be?**

Do your apple trees get enough sun? Apple trees need at least eight hours of sun daily during the growing season. You state that you have two of the same cultivar, but apple trees require cross-pollination of two different cultivars to reliably set fruit; therefore, you need to plant more than one kind of apple tree. Because crabapples and edible apples can successfully cross-pollinate, planting a disease resistant flowering crab apple would also be an option. Apples are insect pollinated by bees and flies transferring pollen from flowers of one tree to those of another. For best pollination, trees should be within 100 feet of each other, so if a neighbor had a crabapple or apple tree within 100 feet it could pollinate your tree, which doesn't sound like the case. Apple and Crabapple trees that are recommended for our fruit zone include: Mantet, Oriole, State Fair, Beacon, Chestnut Crab, Whitney Crab, Wealthy, Minjon, Red Baron, Lakeland and Sweet 16.

## **MAY GARDEN TIPS**

- Early this month work compost into flower and vegetable beds so that your soil is ready for end of the month planting.
- Install peony hoops.
- Save time and energy later by keeping up on weeding now.
- It is always a gamble to plant seedlings into the soil before Memorial Day.
- When late spring frost threatens, newspaper or cloth protects plants better than plastic.
- Plant cool-season vegetables this month: peas, spinach, onions, lettuce and radishes.

- Foliage on tulips and daffodils should remain on the plants until they are dry and brown.
- Pinching off the first flowers when planting cell pack annuals will result in sturdier plants.
- Remove tree wraps now. Replace them in the fall.
- Prune hedges so that the base is wider than the top. This allows sunlight to penetrate the base to keep it green.
- Consider Canadian varieties when choosing new rose bushes. They are usually the hardiest.
- Two different varieties of apples within bee-flight distance of one another are necessary for good fruit set. Flowering crabapples work.
- Clematis vines like cool, moist feet. Mulch over their root zones fills the bill.

University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners are trained and certified volunteers for the University of Minnesota Extension Service. All information given in this column is based on university research. To ask a question, call the Master Gardener Help Line at 218-454-GROW (4769) and leave a recorded message. A Master Gardener will return your call.

