

# Home Horticulture Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks *Fall 2019 Issue*

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**Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture** is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to [kemeryr7@frontier.com](mailto:kemeryr7@frontier.com)

## Facebook and Garden Questions ..Sigh..

I have to be honest and say that Facebook is like many things technological .. a blessing and a curse. It is nice to have a support system of a virtual community to rely on for advice or even education on many subjects; Including gardening issues. What I don't particularly like are political opinions and rants, judgment on a variety of issues from people who really have no reason to be judgy judgy, pictures of wonderful vacations or better yet, pictures of wonderful plates of favorite meals, and self-promotion on a grand and continuous scale. I prefer cat boxing videos or dancing cows.



I see many folks asking for gardening advice on many topics, including identification of weird plants in the yard or landscape, plant disease or insect problems, and general gardening topics.

Here is one example: A person had organic kale that was being eaten alive by "something". What should be done? Answers varied from the correct cabbage looper damage to "an insect". Treatments included several "just pull the plant and start over" to a discussion on amending the soil, attracting beneficials to the garden to eat the pesky worm or applying Diatomaceous Earth. The most appropriate answer was to apply an organic product called Bt (short for bacillus thuringiensis) containing a beneficial bacterium that only affects caterpillar larvae to the kale to kill the worms. The commenter even gave a Planet Natural website where one could get a liquid form of Bt to apply to the Kale.

The issue here is that all the answers were correct to some extent, but none totally correct. The simple response is that Bt (often sold as Dipel Dust) to control cabbage loopers is available locally in dust form at many garden centers. It is easy to apply as the product usually comes in shaker cans, and no special sprayers are needed. Instead of removing the heavily damaged kale one could simply cut it back, apply the BT and in a short time harvest the recovered Kale. Kale actually grows pretty fast when the weather is cool. I would do both; cut back and replant.



When I posted this on the Facebook page, a few posted afterwards stating the BT was indeed the correct answer, not realizing that the Dipel I recommended actually contained Bt. One person said that Bt was toxic to butterflies (actually the larvae), which is indeed true, but the chances of a Monarch or Swallowtail butterfly visiting a Kale plant are remote, and especially remote would be a butterfly laying eggs on a Kale, instead of the milkweed or parsley plant used for the caterpillars to feed on.

Finally, when folks post answers on Facebook, which answer does the original questioner use? If everyone agrees, then it is easy. But Facebook commenters rarely agree, on anything, even whether boxing cat videos are actually funny. I do believe it is nice when folks try to help others out – even in a virtual form- on Facebook.

- And many times, someone does have a correct answer. I still might ask a Master gardener volunteer or the owner of a local greenhouse or garden center (such as Young's Greenhouse or the Allen County Co-Op in New Haven) for their opinion on what to do. Many extension sites such as Ohioline are good resources, but many have issues keeping their info and publications up to date. Many do not include organic options. Ohio State does have a publication about organic gardening and controls.

During my 23-year stint as Horticulture Extension Educator in Allen County, I adopted a more organic and sustainable approach to pest control and recommendations. Master Gardener volunteers were allowed during my tenure to use recommendations from the Rodale Institute, for example, because I knew their recommendations were based on actual research, and Master Gardeners are supposed to use research-based information to answer disease and insect problems.

I of course remember when “experts” at Purdue scoffed at my organic gardening training for Master Gardener volunteers because they thought organic gardeners were “kooky”. Unfortunately, the Allen County Extension office now only allows Master Gardeners to use Purdue University pest control recommendations - unfortunate because many Purdue publications are still out-of date-and have always leaned towards more conventional control options.

**I was extremely disappointed** when I went to look for gardening publications at the Allen County Extension office web site recently and found all the links to gardening publications – categorized by garden topic – previously on their web page - had been removed. Even more disappointing was that the special publications that my predecessor Allen Boger and I wrote – called ACH publications – had all been removed and I presume deleted. Allen and I wrote those publications specifically because in some instances information on those topics was unavailable. I condensed many Extension publications to save paper, as some state Extension publications are very long – and in some cases to provide more up-to date information

because the information was outdated. I also added organic options when applicable. Anyway, I worked hard to write those publications – and I know Allen did also - and they are gone. On the Allen County web site, a small and barely discernable search window is in the upper right-hand corner. If you happen to actually find the small search square, and actually know what you are looking for, then your key word search will be taken to a Purdue University publication (and no others). In my mind, better just to Google search, ask a Master Gardener you know, text me at 260-431-6893, or ask friends on Facebook. It all comes full circle.

## Transplanting Shrubs

Many folks will ask whether they can transplant shrubs in the fall. The answer is you can, but the chance of survival goes down as the season progresses.

My method involves preparing the shrub in the fall for very early spring transplanting. Very large shrubs should probably be transplanted by a landscape professional with the proper equipment (a tree spade). The larger the shrub is the more soil around the plant is needed to be

successful. For instance, to transplant even a three foot in height shrub, one would need to begin digging about 2 foot away from the plant and at least 2-3 feet in depth to even have a decent chance at being successful. That is a surprising lot of soil.

Root prune the shrub in late fall - late September or up to mid-October. First prune back the shrub by at least a third, this will make it easier to root prune and transplant later. To root prune, take a sharp spade (one that doesn't have curved edges) and drive it straight down in the soil about 2 feet away from the base of the shrub-farther away if the shrub is larger. Skip a shovel width and then rinse and repeat until you make it all the way around the shrub.

Even later in the fall, but before the ground freezes, dig the hole where you want to move the shrub. Remember to slope the sides of the hole and try and make the hole no deeper than the shrub is currently planted. Place dry leaves in the hole and then cover the hole with a thick piece of plywood. If you are lawsuit fearful, then place a sawhorse over the plywood with a warning to stay away from the spot.

In very early spring, just after the ground thaws, dig the shrub, and move the shrub and the soil on a tarp or heavy plastic, and plant the shrub in the new location. You can mix the leaves into the hole soil or take them out.



You might have to watch and water the shrub later on during summer drought periods, but the early planting usually works well for the root system to develop before summer. Here is a good link from Penn State on root pruning for transplanting. <https://extension.psu.edu/transplanting-or-moving-trees-and-shrubs-in-the-landscape>

## Clean Water and Riverfront Development

(Ricky's Prequel) *Let me begin by saying I am all for riverfront development and the development of areas near our rivers for all sorts of activities.*

I recently had a good conversation with Abigail King, the director of Abigail Save Maumee – a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the water quality of the Maumee River. Abigail began her quest to save the Maumee when she moved near the river in the late 1990's/early 2000, and neighbors told her not to go near the river because the water was toxic.

“It took seven phone calls to city officials just to finally talk with someone about water quality in the Maumee River” she said. Abigail found out over the years that her neighbors were right about the river. “Even today no one should be coming in contact with the water in the Maumee”, Abigail said.

The reasons why the water is unsafe are complex and not easily solvable and go back to the turn of the century.

Around 1919, a combined sewer overflow system was constructed for Fort Wayne and 6 other communities in the Maumee River basin. No one knew at the time that by combining (or connecting) the sewer and drainage systems for runoff would become such an issue in the future.

Combined Sewers are sewer systems that collect stormwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe and bring it to the wastewater treatment facility

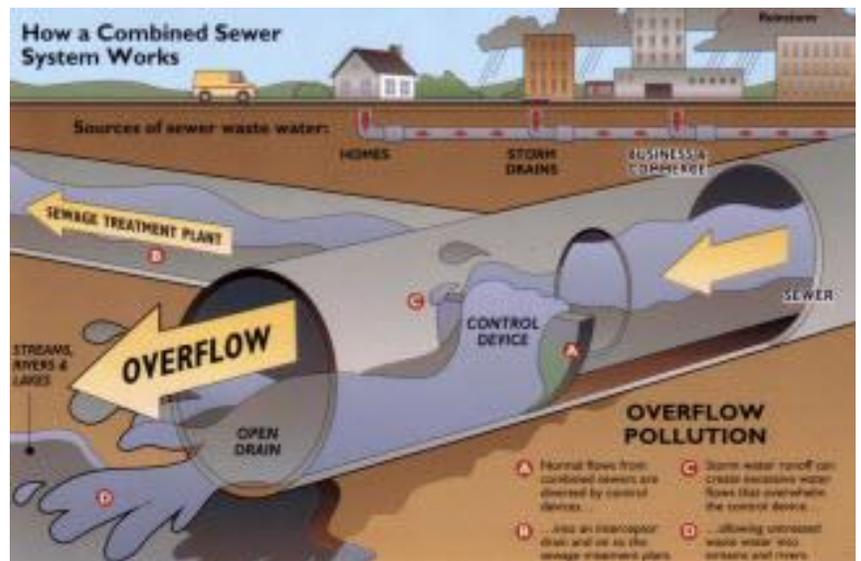
In these combined systems everything works fine when rainfall is light or non-existent. However, nowadays the runoff and sewage input are much more extensive because there are more people feeding into the system, there is much less native vegetation along rivers and drainage ditches to slow and clean runoff, and more paved areas where runoff is a real issue.



Abigail stated that even rainfall events of 1/10 of an inch nowadays can overload the system. In any event, many times the rainfall we receive in our area often exceeds the capacity of the system to handle both runoff and sewage needs, and so the combined runoff and sewage are released directly into the Maumee River when these events occur. So, think about this: many times, raw sewage from our toilets' – along with highly polluted runoff containing gasoline, oil, antifreeze, and other toxic materials – is released directly into the Maumee. I do know about you, but the thought of coming into contact with that mix of sewage and polluted runoff is not appealing – and not good for anyone's health.

This antiquated combined sewer overflow system is the main reason why the Maumee river can be loaded with e-coli, which is not safe to be ingested, swallowed, or even to come in contact with.

I served on the St. Joseph River Watershed Group for many years, and I knew from their testing that e coli often was detected in the river after periods of heavier rainfall. There are other toxic materials (not a complete list) present in the water and mud of the river bottom, including atrazine, a farm herbicide that has many negative effects for people and fish, nitrates, hexavalent chromium (remember the movie Erin Brockovich?) and PCB's (remember the Love Canal?)



Riverfront development perplexes Abigail and other concerned citizens because in her opinion, the water currently is unsafe for human contact many times during the year, and to promote activities where citizens come in direct contact with the river water is both unsafe and irresponsible. Is the water of the Maumee truly unsafe? According to some, the answer is yes. Here is a report from the Maumee river basin describing the extensive pollution of the river and tributaries in Ohio and describing combined sewers as a major reason why many times the water of the Maumee is unsafe to swim and fish in. <http://www.partnersforcleanstreams.org/mau-rec.pdf>

Even Dan Wire, Director of the Tri-State Watershed Alliance and a huge proponent of Riverfront development, stated in a 2016 Journal Gazette article, "And yes, the rivers are safe to fish, canoe, kayak and sometimes swim, allowing "full body contact" – barring occasional downpours that can render the rivers temporarily polluted." In 2015, in an article by Nick James, using data from the EPA, Fort Wayne was ranked the 6<sup>th</sup> dirtiest city in Indiana. Its water quality score: F. <https://www.roadsnacks.net/these-are-the-10-dirtiest-cities-in-indiana/>

In 1972, the Clean Water Act was passed. As a result of that act, Fort Wayne and many other cities with combined systems, were ultimately mandated to do something about their antiquated systems.

City officials did not want to raise taxes to pay for a new system, so nothing was done for many years.

Over time the federal government ultimately mandated that the city of Fort Wayne fix the system or face huge monetary penalties such as the loss of federal funding for various projects and programs. This is when City Utilities began to discuss rain gardens and other ways for citizens to control run-off. It is unfortunate that ultimately it was huge fiscal penalties – not an underlying desire to clean the river – that forced the city into action.

Now the city has implemented a plan (which taxpayers are footing the huge bill for) to build a huge tunnel under the downtown to the Foster park area to manage the combined sewer runoff outflow during precipitation events. Essentially the overflow water will be diverted to the tunnel (instead of the river) - stored - and then released to the water treatment facility where the water will be cleaned and then reenter the system. This tunnel (dug by a huge drilling device called Mama Joe) is based on a similar tunnel in Indianapolis that was used to deal with their antiquated system.



According to Abigail, the tunnel should help improve water quality in the Maumee. However, improving water quality in the Maumee involves more than just a tunnel. Planting riverbanks and ditches with native plants and removing invasive plants will also help clean the runoff (often filled with pollutants) and reduce erosion. Save Maumee volunteers under Abigail’s direction have been removing invasive plants and replanting the riverbanks with trees and native vegetation for many years now. It is very hard work, and I am so impressed by her efforts to make the water cleaner for all. Not only is cleaning the water here important, but cleaning the Maumee is also important for the future of Lake Erie, the end point of the Maumee. Lake Erie is dying more each year as a result of pollutants (particularly phosphorus runoff) from the Maumee.

Former Allen County Agriculture Extension Educator Gonzalee Martin worked with Amish farmers to reduce runoff of fresh manure (containing e-coli) by educating them about the timing of manure applications and managing manure stockpiles so that runoff was reduced or eliminated. Many farmers over the years have installed filter strips of prairie grasses near waterways to reduce erosion and remove any fertilizer or pesticide residues before they enter waterways.

Homeowners also need to do their part by applying slow-release fertilizers to lawns in the spring, install buffer strips around retention ponds, plant grasses such as fescue around ponds to reduce Canada geese activity and feeding. These were issues I presented often to neighborhood associations, wrote publications and articles about, and discussed on the many radio and TV shows I participated in, when I was Extension Educator in Allen County. Nowadays, I see little targeted efforts by local Extension “Urban Agriculture” Educators to promote clean water initiatives with homeowners and farmers.

It appears as if Fort Wayne is on the right track to over time clean the Maumee River. All these efforts can help make the Maumee River cleaner, and efforts in other cities have shown that ultimately having a clean healthy river is the best way to promote economic development. This message is what I told city officials since the very beginnings of riverfront development. To help Abigail clean the Maumee, visit her website. <https://savemaumee.org/>

# Fall Tasks

- August and early to mid-September are appropriate times to plant most woody trees and shrubs and perennials. It is important to make sure the plants roots are teased apart as the plants certainly will be root bound. Planting a bit earlier gives the plants time to establish some roots before the winter.
- I would wait to cut back perennials until October or even November this year. Cutting back too early can stimulate growth that might be zapped by cold temperatures later on. Some folks wait until very early spring to cut back, to provide shelter and some food for critters during the winter months. This is fine as you don't wait too long and you don't mind cutting back in the freezing cold.
- In early September, give your amaryllis bulbs a 10-15-week rest period by placing the plant on its side- either outdoors until the first frost or inside in a cool basement. Do not water at all. Trim back the foliage a bit. Once the plant has received its rest period; place the plant in a sunny window and begin to water again. If you time things right the plant can once again bloom at Christmas.
- Late-August to Mid-September is the optimal time to renovate and re-seed the lawn. Rent a slit seeder and use a premium bluegrass blend to re-seed an existing lawn. Fall is also a good time to core aerate the lawn. Fertilizer applications in late August / early September and once again in late October/ early November are the best “bang for your buck” applications for a healthy lawn next year.
- Be on the lookout for potential grub damage to lawns where the adult Japanese beetle populations were high. Sections of the lawn could turn brown and lift up like a carpet; revealing the grubs.



## Ecovillages

A growing number of people (especially Millennials and Gen X) are looking for ways to live more sustainably. An **ecovillage** is a community created with the goal of becoming more socially, culturally, economically, and ecologically sustainable. Most range from a population of 50 to 2,000 individuals. Ecovillagers seek alternatives to ecologically destructive electrical, water, transportation, and waste-treatment systems, as well as the larger social systems that mirror and support them. Many inhabitants of ecovillages see the breakdown of traditional forms of community, wasteful material-based

lifestyles, the destruction of natural habitat, urban sprawl, factory farming, and over-reliance on fossil fuels as trends that must be changed to avert ecological disaster and create richer and more fulfilling ways of life.

Over 500 Ecovillages are now found worldwide, and often offer increasingly isolated people a sense of community – sharing resources and celebrating the difference that occurs between individuals. While ecovillages won't replace traditional lifestyles, the ideas behind ecovillages and living more sustainably will resonate and change the way people live in the future. An ever-increasing number of ecovillages are being planned and constructed in the United States.

## **The idea of an Ecovillage is not new.**

Village Homes is a seventy-acre ecovillage located in the west part of Davis, California that was created in 1975. It was designed for the development of a sense of community and the conservation of energy and

natural resources. The completed development includes 225 homes and 20

A number of design features help Village Homes residents live in an energy-pleasing manner.

Many of the pioneering features of Village homes have been used to create other ecovillages and businesses.

**Orientation** — All streets trend east-west and all lots are oriented north-south.

This orientation (which has become standard practice in Davis and elsewhere) helps the houses with passive solar designs make full use of the sun's energy.

**Street Width** — Our roads are all narrow, curving cul-de-sacs; they are less than twenty-five feet wide and generally aren't bordered by sidewalks. Their narrow widths minimize the amount of pavement exposed to sun in the long, hot summers. The curving lines of the roads give them the look of village lanes, and the few cars that venture into the cul-de-sacs usually travel slowly.

**Pedestrian/Bike Paths and Common Areas** — Alternating with the streets is an extensive system of pedestrian/bike paths,



running through common areas that exhibit a variety of landscaping, garden areas, play structures, statuary, and so on.

Most houses face these common areas rather than the streets, so that emphasis in the village is on pedestrian and bike travel rather than cars.

**Natural Drainage** — The common areas also contain Village Homes' innovative natural drainage system, a network of creek beds, swales, and pond areas that allow rainwater to be absorbed into the ground rather than carried away through storm drains. Besides helping to store moisture in the soil, this system provides a visually interesting backdrop for landscape design.

**Edible Landscaping** — Fruit and nut trees and vineyards form a large element of the landscaping in Village Homes and contribute significantly to the provender of residents. More than thirty varieties of fruit trees were originally planted, and as a result some fruit is ripe and ready to eat nearly every month of the year.

**Open Land** — In addition to the common areas between homes, Village Homes also includes two big parks, extensive greenbelts with pedestrian/bike paths, two vineyards, several orchards, and two large common gardening areas. The commonly owned open land comes to 40 percent of the total acreage (25 percent in greenbelts and 15 percent in common areas), a much greater proportion than in most suburban developments.

Thirteen percent of the developed land area is devoted to streets and parking bays, and the remaining 47 percent to private lots, which generally include an enclosed private yard or courtyard on the street side of the house.

It must be mentioned that there was tremendous resistance from citizens and business leaders when Village Homes was created. Real estate values would drop, the community would be an eyesore, and no one would want to live there. All horse hockey. Real estate values increased, there are long waiting lists of people who want to live there, and the community has served as a model for sustainable living – even almost 45 years later. <https://www.ic.org/directory/ecovillages/>

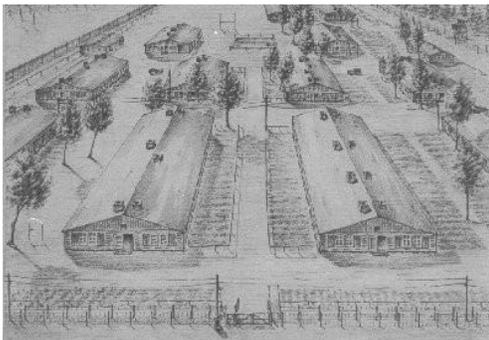
## Camp Scott – Dealing with Run-off

The constructed wetlands at Camp Scott is located in the S/E quadrant of Fort Wayne; near McMillen Park. The wetlands are fed by a massive, 1.7-million-gallon underground storage tank and pump station located under McMillen Park, 6 blocks west of the wetlands. The underground tank collects stormwater from surrounding neighborhoods during rains. Pumps then send the water through a 4-foot diameter pipe to the wetlands storage area. Water bubbles up through a stone structure designed to resemble a natural waterfall. The water then moves through a series of wetlands areas before it enters a two-and-a-half-acre storage pond. Stormwater is held in the pond until the discharge line is empty, then the cleaned water can be released slowly to the Maumee River by opening the 36” storm sewer outlet located under the pier.



Around 2015, Congressman Mark Souder and Senators Evan Bayh and Richard Lugar helped the City receive \$2 million in federal grants for Camp Scott.

This is the model for cleaning runoff that actually works. Homeowners and the city need to use this model more extensively to handle runoff. (The big tunnel is based on this general idea). Rain Gardens help, but many drains leading into retention ponds and even the rivers do not have native vegetation planted to slow and clean water as it exits the drains. Many retention ponds and ditches are devoid of any native vegetation that will clean the water and help prevent erosion. Abigail’s efforts have helped but everyone needs to be more responsible to help clean the rivers in our area.



## History of Camp Scott

Long before a wetland was developed to store and clean runoff, Camp Thomas A. Scott was originally a training center for the Army's Railroad Operating Battalions.

The training facility closed in mid-1944, when the last battalion was shipped overseas. By September, ominous machine-gun towers and barbed-wire fencing appeared along Moeller Road and Wayne Trace. Soon after, more than 600 prisoners taken from the North Africa campaign arrived to live in the camp's frame and tar paper houses. These veterans of Rommel's corps performed a variety of tasks around town, but never were they abused or degraded. They worked in fields harvesting crops and in local industries. One Fort Wayne resident remembers POWs being used to set pins in the Lions Club Bowling alley on Calhoun Street, and they were a frequent sight shoveling snow on Fort Wayne streets.

The camp had its own library and game room. The prisoners could listen to WOWO at night on their private radios. The Ping-Pong tables left behind by the Railroad Battalions were a hit, but the pool tables mystified the Germans. Not everyone in Fort Wayne was pleased with these comfortable arrangements. This was the time of the Battle of the Bulge,

and the war continued in the air and at sea at a deadly pace. In newspapers, letters to the editor complained bitterly of the good treatment given to the German prisoners. Especially irksome was the daily allotment of two packs of cigarettes to prisoners, while rationing prevented locals from buying more than one pack.

Six months after the surrender of Germany, Camp Scott was closed, on Nov. 16, 1945. The prisoners were returned to Germany, and the camp was considered as a prospective site for postwar housing for returning GIs, at a time when housing was scarce." Excerpts from: "World War II camp had impact on city" By MICHAEL HAWFIELD from the archives of The News-Sentinel (Fort Wayne), 1990

## Ricky's Management Plan for Large Mowed Properties

If you own more than 2 acres of property, and you are mowing it all every week or so, then you are spending way more time and money that is necessary to manage the property. Many folks spend 2 hours or more (even with a faster wider mower) every week just to keep things manicured. We do this because many of us have this idea that we want our landscapes to look like a manicured English countryside. This problem with this strategy is that as we age, spending 2 hours to mow a lawn becomes more tedious. We are also wasting resources since lawn mowers are the biggest polluters of the air in summertime. We also do not live in Great Britain where there are copious sheep with nothing to do but eat grass. My strategy is to just quit mowing outlying areas so often. No one knows if the lawn is 10- 12 inches in height or 3 inches in height when you look at turf 100 yards away. Just mow less often and enjoy your extra time. One can also establish areas of hard or sheep's fescue that only grow a foot tall in outlying areas or around ponds. Many golf courses use fescues in areas off the manicured fairways to save on mowing costs and time. Planted fescue areas around retention ponds reduce Canada Geese pressure because the geese don't like to eat fescue compared to the delicious bluegrass that is normally planted around ponds. I worked with County Parks and neighborhood associations to quit mowing so much in outlying areas, and this saved money-lots of money and time-that could be spent elsewhere.



**Fall Color:** Often folks ask me when the optimal date to experience fall color in this area will be. After I consult with my spiritual advisors, my Tarot cards, and crystal ball, I tell them the optimal fall color display usually is anywhere from the 10<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> of October. This is in preparation of my career with the national weather service. I have noticed that some trees are coloring early this year. If you have a tree that is coloring earlier than normal, this could be a sign that something is amuck. Check the root flare of the tree to make sure it is not buried under soil or mulch. Check for physical damage or insect damage (usually small holes in the bark). Were any herbicides such as glyphosate (Round-Up) or lawn weed killer used near the base of the tree? There are some common factors that can result in early fall color.

# Late Season Pests

I am noticing spider mite damage on oaks, Dwarf Alberta Spruce, and burning bush in landscapes this fall. Usually mite damage shows up earlier, but mites don't like a lot of



rainfall. It washes them off the foliage of the plants they want to feed upon. It's too late to treat larger trees and shrubs, but for the Alberta Spruce, smaller burning bush, and even green beans that show the classic bronzing and browning, use Diatomaceous earth to repel the mites. Use a high-pressure water spray on the foliage before you dust.



Keep an eye out for late season bagworms on spruce and arbor vitae. I am seeing some suspicious browning on these evergreens, and bagworms are late

this year because of our generally lower temps overall this summer. Use scissors to remove the bags and destroy them by any diabolical means you can think of.

# Hoggles

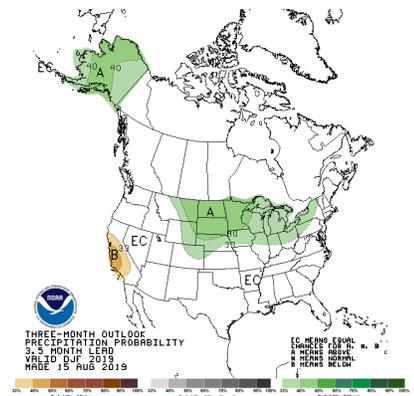
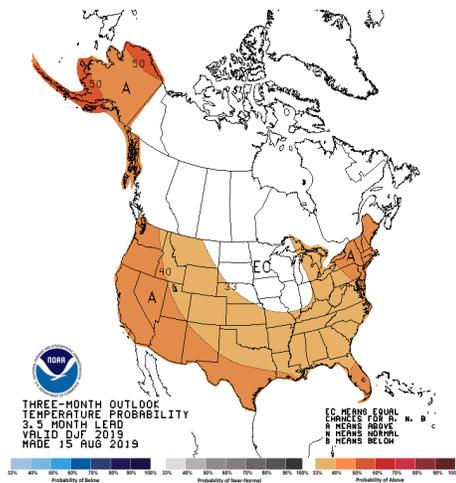
*To my caregiver: As a feline concerned with sustainability and my personal well-being, I must demand that my water for my drinking pleasure be pure filtered water from the caverns of Sweden. I am much too refined to be given the swill of Fort Wayne tap water treated with bleach and other materials.*

*I must be in optimal shape because I am planning the first ever cat ecovillage, named "Paradise Hoggles" in honor of ....me.....of course.*



# Winter Climate Predictions

The National Weather service predicts an equal chance of above, normal, or below normal temperatures for the upcoming winter months in our area. That is like saying a cloud or two might show up in the sky sometime between December and February of next year. They do predict a greater than average chance of



precipitation during the winter months.

This coming winter will be a wild weather ride according to the experts at the Farmer's Almanac. In fact, those experts are giving the winter of 2019 and 2020 its own nickname: **"Polar Coaster"**. The worst of the bitterly cold winter conditions

will affect areas east of the Rockies all the way to the Appalachians. The biggest drop in temperatures is forecasted for the northern Plains and into the Great Lakes. This area will also see more precipitation and snow than usual. Oh boy.... As for the biggest drop in temperatures, the Almanac said you can expect those to arrive during the “final week of January and last through the beginning of February.” It added, snow and wintry conditions could last well into April for much of the nation.

**Purdue Extension Woes:** Over 23 Extension Educators with “years of experience” took advantage of an early retirement package offered by Purdue University recently. The retirement package was offered in part because Purdue Extension has not received any budget increases for the past two years from the state of Indiana. Its complicated but Purdue University and their budget is separate from Purdue Cooperative Extension at the state level. Additional funds are provided by counties and the feds. Allen County will be hit hard as both CED Vickie Hadley and 4-H Educator Barb Thuma will be gone by Sept 30<sup>th</sup>. In addition, East District Director Paul Marciano will also leave.

In my opinion Purdue Extension is trying to cut costs because without an increase at the state level, it cannot support the salaries of the approximately 350 Educators in the state. The true cost of this initiative is that in the last 5 years, Purdue Extension - through early and forced early retirement - has lost almost all of its senior Educators. When you lose that experience, programs will suffer because it takes time for Educators to gain the necessary experience and wisdom to establish trust within the community and develop meaningful programs based on true needs. In the past, Educators were given more independence to develop their own programs and work more in regional teams to do exceptional work. Now micromanagement by many supervisors at the local, district, and state level is a big issue, and mediocrity is the norm. Many Educators do nothing but protect their own program areas - or silos – as they are called – and are deathly afraid that they will be next to lose their jobs. It is bad when in **good** economic times, Purdue Extension cannot receive support at the state level. In my opinion, Purdue Extension needs to re-evaluate its existing staff and lack of meaningful programming. The top dogs at the state level of Purdue Extension have lost touch with the central mission of Extension by micromanaging and insisting that many educators remain in the office instead of outreaching to citizens, and by concentrating on restrictive practices that inhibit creative programming. Even volunteers such as Master Gardeners are now treated with restrictive policies that inhibit their desire and ability to “Make Others Grow” which used to be the motto of the program. Honestly, Purdue Extension’s strategy before this opportunity to take early retirement has been to target, harass, and eliminate Educators with “years of experience” to save money and replace the “Old Guard” with younger, cheaper, and more malleable individuals. Based on the behavior of the current Extension administration, I would expect the same strategy as these young employees become older. Even though this behavior by many companies and institutions seems to be “the norm” nowadays, it is so very disappointing to see Cooperative Extension, with such a gloried past of service and dedication to communities by Extension Educators, dismantled in such a fashion.

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