

# OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

April 2023

## Events

- April 24—Master Gardener monthly meeting
- Spring—Lunch & Learn Series  
<https://mastergardener.osu.edu/HHHLNL22-23> All programs and links are on our County Calendar

## Chinese Praying Mantis



The **Chinese mantis** (*Tenodera sinensis*) is a species of mantis native to Asia and the nearby islands. In 1896, this species was accidentally introduced by a nursery tender at Mt. Airy near Philadelphia, United States.

It is typically longer than other praying mantis species, reaching just over 11 cm (4.3 in), and is the largest mantis species in North America (spread throughout the Northeast United States). Like with most invasive species, their aggressive nature poses a threat to our native mantis, the Carolina mantis (*Stagmomantis carolina*). The invasive species outcompete the Carolina mantis for food sources and even enjoy the Carolina mantis as a meal.



*Dear Flora,*



**Dear Flora,**

Canada Thistle! Help! I don't want to use herbicides. Is there another way to rid my yard of this noxious and obnoxious weed?

*Herbie Fields*



**Dear Herbie,**

For obvious reasons, the Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is also known as “cursed thistle” and several other names, many of which we cannot print here. It has been considered problematic in the U.S. since the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and an ordinance requiring landowners to mow infested fields was passed in Ohio in 1844. It belongs to the sunflower family and originated in southeastern Eurasia. Canada Thistle is widespread in at least 58 of the 88 counties in Ohio. It is allelopathic (toxic to other plants) and has a torturous ability to reproduce. One plant produces up to 1,200 seeds per year, which, according to one source, can remain viable in the soil for up to 20 years. The cursed plant also has a deep root system that can spread horizontally up to ten feet per year. The Canada Thistle is indeed a formidable foe.

I applaud your decision to use non-toxic methods of dealing with undesirables in your yard and garden. Even those who use herbicides cannot be assured of eradication. With organic methods, you will need to focus more on control than on ridding your yard completely of this unwelcome invasive. While some sources recommend frequent tilling, they are typically aimed at large-scale agricultural operations with adequate mechanical equipment. Among the disadvantages of tilling to control the Canada Thistle is the superpower of the species to clone itself when the rhizomes are disturbed. Even small bits of the weed can produce new plants, rivaling the most contemporary of 3-D printers.

Organic methods for managing Canada Thistle involve keeping the plants closely trimmed, to prevent them from going to seed. If you are dealing with a small area, use a hoe to cut off the tops of the young plants. For a dense stand, allow the plants to grow taller and then cut them with a mower or scythe before they flower. Repeat this process several times throughout the growing season. You can cover the site with a mulch membrane, if that is practical, or you can also try sowing a green manure, such as hairy vetch or crimson clover, to give the thistle competition. Just be sure your cover crop is not another invasive. Patience and persistence should pay off over time, and you will have the benefit of knowing you resisted using toxins.

**Do you have a question for Flora? Please write to Char Rae, [charrae51128@gmail.com](mailto:charrae51128@gmail.com).**



## DISCOVERY KITCHEN

## GARLIC MUSTARD PESTO



## INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups garlic mustard leaves\*
- 1/4 cup walnuts or almonds
- 1-2 cloves garlic
- 1-2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated (optional)\*\*
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, more or less to taste
- black pepper, and crushed red pepper, to taste

\* Or try a mix of various greens, for example 1 cup garlic mustard leaves and 1 cup other spring greens such as sorrel, spinach, and/or arugula.

\*\* Try substituting 1-2 tablespoons nutritional yeast for cheese

Note: This recipe is very freezer-friendly! Make a couple double batches while garlic mustard is in season and freeze in smaller portions; an ice cube tray works well.

## DIRECTIONS

1. In a food processor, combine garlic mustard leaves, walnuts, garlic, and lemon juice and pulse until chopped to the desired consistency.
2. Slowly pour in the olive oil, pulsing to incorporate fully.
3. Add the cheese (if using), salt, black pepper, and crushed red pepper and pulse to combine thoroughly.
4. Taste and adjust seasoning.
5. Transfer to a jar and store refrigerated for up to a week. Great with pasta, potatoes, bread, crackers ... just about anything!

FOR MORE RECIPES, VISIT  
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YOU'RE INVITED!  
COMMUNITY POTLUCK  
&  
ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY APRIL 15  
12:30PM-2:30PM  
ATHENS COMMUNITY CENTER

**12:30pm:** Welcome & charcuterie workshop with Chef Becky Clark

**1:00pm:** Potluck lunch

**1:15pm:** Member meeting & volunteer recognition

**1:45pm:** Seed swap & garden chats

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Membership  
NOT required to  
attend!

COMMUNITY FOOD INITIATIVES  
ANNUAL SEED GIVEAWAY

AVAILABLE AT ALL LIBRARY LOCATIONS BEGINNING  
**APRIL 10TH**

Stop by your local library branch to choose from a selection of vegetable, herb, and flower seeds.

Seeds available at all library branches while supplies last.  
Selection may vary by location.



ATHENS COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARIES





## Soft Landings—Marcia Burchby

As you plan, expand and work in your garden this spring, consider the advice of Heather Holm, a biologist, pollinator conservationist and author of numerous books, including *Pollinators of Native Plants 2014*. Her web-site, <https://www.pollinatorsnativeplants.com/softlandings.html> is packed with information about native plants, pollinators and data for citizen scientists.

Holm explains the need for **keystone plants** and **soft landings**. *Keystone plants*, such as oak, willow, cherry, pine and poplar, are native plants that support caterpillars and are part of the ecosystem that provides food for other organisms. They are essential to support caterpillar diversity, sensitive species and food web stability. But keystone plants are not enough! *Soft landings* is the term Holm uses to describe the diverse native plantings, leaf litter, duff and plant debris under keystone trees. Beneficial insects need this critical shelter and habitat to continue their life cycle.



Funded by a grant from Wild Ones Minnesota. © 2021 Heather Holm and Neighborhood Greening.  
Developed in consultation with Desiree Narango, Ph.D.; artwork by Elsa Cousins.  
More information: [www.PollinatorsNativePlants.com/softlandings.html](http://www.PollinatorsNativePlants.com/softlandings.html)

## Digging Deeper – Ceil Weldon

Badger Johnson of Rural Action offered a presentation on Regenerative Agriculture and how to help mitigate the effects of Climate Change. He began his presentation by describing how climate change will impact Ohio – heavier spring rains, longer and hotter summer droughts, and by the end of this century temperatures running between 8 to 16 degrees higher than the present day. The flooding that comes with heavy rains is already damaging some crops like corn. Badger then described the different methods involved in regenerative agriculture such as no-till farming, using goats to clean up invasives, and using more native plants and eliminating crop monoculture. Agri-forestry is used in a method of creating a multifunctional riparian buffer to adapt for increased flooding. Alley cropping is a method of farming between rows of trees such as the Chinese Chestnut – the advantages of this include holding the soil in place, having profitable crops in a flood plain, soaking up the ag chemicals that run off such a fertilizer, and improves the habitat for trout, shellfish and the hellbenders. Rural Action is trying to encourage small farms to change their methods of farming to include no-till farming and agri-forestry to better address climate change. It was a very informative and fact filled session.

