

OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

Events

- March 25—Master Gardener monthly meeting—Season Extending Gardening

Lunch and Learn and Happy Hour series (weblink) <https://mastergardener.osu.edu/HHHLNL23-24>

fairly new leaves with erect fertile leaves in center



Christmas fern leaf with remains of fertile tip



fertile tip of Christmas fern leaf



stem, usually close to the parent plant. This means it doesn't spread and take over a garden area! (If that's what you

want, try the ostrich fern). It's sexual reproduction is by spores which appear and are shed in the early summer. Unlike so many ferns, the fertile area is restricted to just the end of the fertile leaf. See Joke's wonderful photographs below of the fern and it's fertile segments of the fern leaf.

Ferns

Lee Gregg and Joke Harnish

As spring is in the offing, one's thoughts turn to gardening and perhaps some new plantings. You might consider fern, they aren't bothered by deer, grow best in shade, and add foliage diversity. The easiest fern is the Christmas fern, which is green throughout the year and thus add color to your garden in the winter. The Christmas fern, *Polystichum acrostichoides*, grows in a variety of soil types and conditions, and only needs a moderately moist soil and a modicum of sun. It mainly makes new plants by its underground

underside of leaflets



fern leaflets showing mature spores



Spring Ephemerals – Don't Blink or You May Miss Them

Beck LaSor-Martin

Bloodroot



One of nature's most subtle gifts is that of the very early spring ephemerals. They start appearing as early as March- some even pushing their way through snow- offering the earliest foods to our pollinators. These tiny, gorgeous, vernal plants emerge early in woodlands- as the forest canopy hasn't blocked the sun's rays from touching and warming the forest soil- and don't last long (hence the 'ephemeral'). These are the very first signs of movement and life coming back into the woods. It turns out that a great deal of these spring beauties, and definitely those that bloom in early March, depend on ants for their pollination and soon after, seed dispersal.

This relationship is called myrmecochory (,mɜːmɪkəʊˈkɔːɪ) -the Greek word for ant is Myrmex. Ants tend to be the main pollinator and then seed dispersers of these myrmecochorous plants. Because the audience they desire is so close to the forest floor and very small these plants tend to be very small and delicate rather than big and bold. And what do the ants find so attractive? The perfect, fatty food after a long, cold winter. It turns out the

seeds of the ephemerals have a structure high in protein, rich in lipids attached to the surface of the seeds, called elaiosome, which the ants feed to their larva. Once the elaiosome is removed the ants throw the seed out with the rest of their garbage on their compost heap; the perfect growing place for the new seed to start its life. A couple absolutely gorgeous, early bloomers to be on the lookout for now are 1} bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), 2} Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), 3} Hepatica (*Hepatica americana*), 4} trout lillies (*Erythronium americanum*), and 5} wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*).

If you happen to miss this early window of March, look to April and May to bring more treasures you shouldn't miss. As the temperatures rise and the insects begin to stir, the flowers become bigger and showier looking to attract our flying pollinators. Toad shade (*Trillium sessile*) is one not to be missed and is also ant dependent. And if you have a shady spot in your yard consider planting dwarf crested iris, wood poppy, blue phlox, Virginia bluebells, violets, pink lady' slippers, wild geranium. The early pollinators will be grateful and you will be blessed with early blooms.



Trout Lily



Dutchman's breeches



Hepatica





Gardening

After March 15

- Asparagus
- Collards
- Onion (sets)
- Peas
- Radish
- Spinach
- Turnips

After March 25

- Leeks
- Mustard
- Potatoes

March



CFAES

Solar Eclipse



April 8,

Have you made plans to view the partial eclipse? In Athens, Ohio it will last 2.5 hours, beginning at 1:58 PM, reaching its maximum at 3:15 PM and ending at 4:29 PM. In the past, this day was cloudy 64% of the time, but hopefully 2024 will bring a clear day.

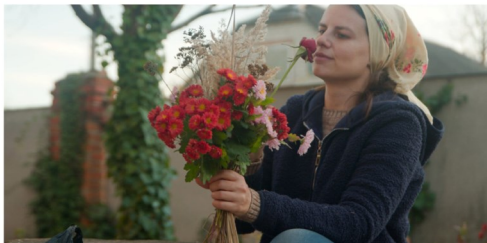
Gardening in a War Zone: A Documentary



Alla Olkhovska lives and gardens in Kharkiv, Ukraine, a few kilometers from the Russian border. Her hobby as a rare seed grower became her family's main income after the Russian invasion more than 2 years ago. For those of us living our safe, secure lives, it is difficult to imagine life within a war zone. For Alla, everyday life now includes air alerts, sirens, explosions, lack of heat and electricity, and a constant 'threat of war and that anytime my dearest persons can be killed'. This 33 minute docu-

mentary, produced by Floret Flower Farm and available on YouTube, shows beautiful images of Alla's garden and her beloved family along with the nearby destruction wrought by the bombing. Narrated by Alla, she simply and eloquently describes her daily existence and her belief that 'while you are alive and have an opportunity to make something productive, beautiful and good, there is always a hope.' Gardening brings her moments of escape and hope. This film will bring you moments of connection as a gardener and compassion as a world citizen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jn6sMZCkAHY>



Digging Deeper – Ceil Weldon

We met for our first regular monthly meeting of 2024 at the Extension Office. Our presenter was our own Ed Brown and the presentation covered the mandatory training for Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS). GAPS is the food safety considerations necessary for handling produce and vegetables in the garden in order to prevent disease outbreaks caused by pathogens. Ed covered all those common garden practices that can cause such a spread: land history, soil amendments, fertilization and compost, cleaning and sanitizing tools, and cleaning your hands. The impacts of overhead watering vs soaking, where the water comes from used for irrigation, and whether it is open to animals – domestic or wild. If you weren't able to attend the training please contact Ed at the Extension Office.

