

# The Garden Gate

## July 2006



### 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade

Tons of fun was had by the following parade participants: (left to right) Pat Moss, Debbie Crain, Ann Warwick, Sue Lopez, Rae Charlton, Gail Swan, Janae Dale, and Penny Barton (taking the photo was Jennifer Costich-Thompson and Jan Rumore missed the photo opp.)

### Biological Control of Knapweed Workshop

**Thursday July 27 9:00am-3:00 pm at the Extension Office**

Mark Schwarzlaender, a biological control of weeds specialist from UI, is planning another workshop in Sandpoint. He would like to talk about knapweed and Dalmatian toadflax. He will also discuss Eurasian milfoil, since that is such a hot topic here. Class will take place from 9-12 and lunch is included. In the afternoon, the class will travel to a nearby field site to release some knapweed insects. Participants will be able to take home some of these insects to release on their own property. There is no charge for the class but you must pre-register at 263-8511. This workshop will count for the continuing education requirement for Master Gardener recertification.

### Plant a Row

Good news from the Plant a Row project! To date, sixty-five pounds of produce have been donated to the Bonner Community Food Bank. The goal is to have 750 pounds of fruit and vegetables from local gardens donated this year to help feed the hungry. Please keep this worthwhile project in mind as you tend your garden. When you harvest, please take all extras to the food bank and be sure to mention that it is for "Plant a Row".

## **Bonner County Fair**

August 23-26.....Come help at the Summer Safari! Needed items include: pith helmets, jungle plants, netting, jungle décor, plastic bananas. We especially need an artist to help put the brilliant ideas for safari animals on paper. Please contact Sue Lopez to sign up or donate items! 263-1949 or [soozmlopez@yahoo.com](mailto:soozmlopez@yahoo.com).

## **Yard Sale**

Saturday August 26, **NOT** at the Extension Office! A new location is being sought and will be announced next newsletter. Please be saving "good" stuff to be sold. Janae Dale is our mighty leader on this project and will be needing lots of help, so save the date! Janae: 265-2205 or [jjdale@coldreams.com](mailto:jjdale@coldreams.com)

## **The Teaching Garden**

Progress is being made! Many thanks to Gail Swan and Linda Kirchmann for taking the helm of the project while Ann Keiser is recuperating from knee surgery (Get well soon, Ann!) Come and see what is taking shape on the east side of the extension office. Better yet, come and help on one of the work days: Thursday July 27 or Tuesday August 8

## **Recertification Requirements**

Don't forget that returning Master Gardeners need nine hours in the plant clinic and nine hours of community service with three of those hours in continuing education. Don't get caught short! Suggested community service hours include: landscaping the Teaching Garden, weeding the MicKinnick Trail, working the Fair Booth or Yard Sale. Some education opportunities include the Home Horticulture workshops this fall and an excellent opportunity is the workshop Tuesday July 25 for the Biological Control of Knapweed.

## **Plant Clinic at the Farmer's Market**

In order to give Master Gardeners more options for Plant Clinic hours, we have scheduled a MG booth at the Farmer's Market (FM) about once/month. After the first session in June (thanks Kate and Joyce), the FM asked if we could come every week!!! I don't believe that we have enough people to staff it every week, but if anyone is interested in doing this on any Saturday, please call Bob or Patti to schedule a day. This works best with at least two people.

We did have some coordination problems with one of our scheduled sessions, so if you are signed up for one of the Saturday FM's, please read through the following guidelines.

1. Anyone working the Farmer's Market on a Saturday needs to contact the other people working that day to divide up responsibilities. This should start about a week ahead of time. The following responsibilities need to be assigned:
  - a. Contact Farmer's Market
  - b. Pick up plant clinic materials on Friday (list will be posted in the Plant Clinic). This includes the Plant Clinic sign and MG tablecloth.
  - c. Bring a table & chairs to the market

- d. Decide what hours you will work (usually 9-noon or 1)
  - e. Bring everything back to the extension office on Monday
2. The FM needs to be contacted no later than Tues. of the week scheduled to reserve table space at the market. Call Raeann (market manager) at 290-3088.

**Plant Clinic Schedule** Call Patti 263-8511 to schedule your hours!

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|---|---|--|---|
| <u>Tuesday July 18</u><br>Deanna<br>Kate<br>Jennifer C-T<br>Chris | <u>Thursday July 20</u><br>Jan G<br>Shirley<br>Blaine/Gina (am)         | <u>Tuesday July 25</u><br>Deanna<br>Julie C.<br>Barb (am)      | <u>Thursday July 27</u><br>Bonnie<br>Chris<br>Bill L (am)             |
| <u>Tuesday August 1</u><br>Shirley<br>Chris<br><b>OPEN</b>        | <u>Thursday August 3</u><br>Sue L.<br>Linda K.<br>Bonnie C.             | <u>Tuesday August 8</u><br>Deanna<br>Ann Wimberly<br>Barb (am) | <u>Thursday August 10</u><br>Jan G<br>Blaine/Gina (am)<br><b>OPEN</b> |
| <u>Tuesday August 15</u><br>Kate<br>Julie C<br>Rae                | <u>Thursday August 17</u><br>Ann W<br>Bonnie (am)<br>Chris              | <u>Tuesday August 22</u><br>Blaine & Gina (am)<br><b>OPEN</b>  | <u>Thursday August 24</u><br><b>FAIR</b>                              |
| <u>Tuesday August 29</u><br>Julie C<br>Jane R.<br><b>OPEN</b>     | <u>Thursday August 31</u><br>Jane R.<br>Blaine/Gina (am)<br><b>OPEN</b> |  |   |

**Northwest Lavender Growers Festival**

July 22 & 23 South of Athol at Mountain View Ranch

Pick your own lavender, horticulture demonstrations, live music, local artisans, food and a children's fish pond.

Directions: take Hwy 95 south to Bunco Rd (the road just south of Silverwood) turn left (east). Bunco Rd will veer left, but continue straight on Nunn Road and follow the signs.

## Biological Control of Weeds – Is it safe?

Bob Wilson

Recently I received an email asking about the risks of releasing plant-feeding insects for biological control of weeds and what the danger is of these insects creating other problems. It seems like this question comes up often enough that it is worth some discussion. Here is the original letter:

*I would like information about controlling knapweed by introducing knapweed root weevils to the area infested. Is it safe to do this? Has it been proven that the weevils will not eat other plants when they are short of knapweed? Are there any areas in Idaho that have been used as test sites? Any information would be appreciated.*

Biological control (BC) has been practiced in the US for over 50 years to control both insect pests and weeds. Although biological control of insects proceeds on a "the more the merrier" approach, BC of weeds carries with it the risk of introducing either an agricultural pest or environmental risk since these are plant feeders.

The agency responsible for overseeing the safety of introduced organisms is USDA-APHIS. Within that operates the Biological Control of Weeds Unit. They coordinate overseas searches for biological control agents to bring into the US. They take great care to test the host range of these insects to find species that only feed on the target plant or plants. Initial testing is done overseas, then they are brought into the US into a biosecure facility for further testing. Once cleared, they can be released into the wild within the US.

In the early days of BC of weeds, testing was not as meticulous. The cinnabar moth was released for control of tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) which later was found also to eat the ornamental dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*). This was unanticipated, but generally considered worth the price since it provided a significant reduction of a serious weed. There also was a weevil, *Rhinocyllus conicus*, released to feed on musk thistle in California which later was discovered feeding on endangered native thistles. This was considered unacceptable and forced a reassessment of the screening procedures. Since then the testing has been broadened and the track record is much improved. All knapweeds are in the genus *Centaurea* which is not native here. No major crops are in this genus, but there are some ornamentals such as bachelor's buttons and mountain bluet included which are grown as ornamentals.

The root feeding weevil you mention is probably *Cyphocleonus*, which certainly has cleared USDA testing. It is not possible to prove with 100% certainty that it will not feed on any another plant, but the risk is very low. Insects with a very narrow host range will seek at most only very closely related plants.

Thus far, there have been at least 2 flies, a moth and 3 or 4 weevils introduced into northern Idaho to feed on knapweed. Some are well established and others are recently introduced. At present, they appear to have made little impact on spotted knapweed, however I do not believe that this is a reason not to continue the program. Knapweed causes millions of dollars in cost of control and crop losses every year. Biological control offers the ONLY long-term solution.

The other side of BC of weeds is that it never eliminates the weed from an area, but merely reduces its abundance. We have little idea how effective a new BC agent is going to be until it is released. Under the best of circumstances it can turn a serious weed into an occasional weed.