



## Master Gardener Update October 2017

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### Perspicacity

"October's the month  
When the smallest  
breeze  
Gives us a shower  
Of autumn leaves.  
Bonfires and pumpkins,  
Leaves sailing down -  
October is red  
And golden and brown."  
- *Can Teach Songs*

### Cucumber Bitterness Explained

Why are some cucumbers bitter, while others are not?

A natural organic compound called cucurbitacin is the culprit, according to Oregon State University vegetable breeder Jim Myers.

"Wild cucumbers contain relatively large concentrations of cucurbitacin and are highly bitter," he said, "while their domestic cousins we grow in the garden and buy in the store, tend to have less but varying amounts of the bitter compound."

Cucurbitacin is found mainly in the vegetative parts of the plant such as leaves, stems and roots. On occasion and to a lesser degree, it spreads to the fruit. It doesn't accumulate evenly within each cuke, however, and can vary in concentration from one fruit to another.

When harvesting slicing cucumbers, take note: The bitter compound is likely to be more concentrated in the stem end than in the blossom end of the cucumber. It is also more prevalent in the peel and in the light green area just beneath the peel - and less likely to be found in the deeper interior of the fruit.

Vegetable scientists have several explanations about why some cucumbers become more bitter than others. Cucumbers picked from vines growing under some type of stress, such as lack of water, are often somewhat bitter. Misshapen fruits are more likely to be bitter than are the well-shaped fruits. More complaints come about bitter cucumbers grown during cool periods than during warm times. Fertilizers, plant spacing and irrigation frequency may also affect bitterness.



James M. Stephens, vegetable crops professor at the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, came up with a method of peeling a cucumber to avoid serving bitter-tasting cukes.

Start peeling at the blossom end of the fruit. Slice away one strip of the green peel toward the stem end and stop about one inch from the stem. Then wash off the knife blade and repeat peeling from blossom to stem end until the fruit is peeled. Rinse the knife again and cut up the cucumber as needed.

Bitterness seems to vary with the type of cucumber grown. But you can expect some degree of bitterness from time to time in most any variety of cucumber commonly grown, Myers said.

Author: Judy Scott

Source: Jim Myers

Oregon State University Extension Service

## RPMGA October Event: Local Pollinator Gardens Brainstorming Tour

**Janesville WI**

**Saturday, October 14, 2017**

**Start of Tour: 10:00 a.m.**



As part of the ongoing Pollinator Project, The Rock Prairie Master Gardener Association (RPMGA) installed three pollinator gardens around Janesville this summer: one at the Rock County Community Garden, one at the Rock County Fairgrounds, and most recently, a garden at the Hedberg Public Library.

The idea was that RPMGA would offer and use them as demonstration gardens to help people learn about pollinators.

Each of the gardens is unique, but they currently have little more than just plants. Come see and learn about each of them, but bring your thinking cap as well.

- What would make these gardens better?
- Are there particular plants that should be added?
- Are there any features (such as particular types of bee or bird nesting sites, water features etc.) that would improve them?
- What kind of educational materials or signage would make each a better resource?
- How can RPMGA use, and promote other people's use of these gardens?

The tour will start at the library and end at the Community Garden.

Meet at Hedberg Public Library, downstairs entrance (near the coffee shop).

## Rotary Botanical Gardens 2017 Evening Garden Seminar Series: Unique Conifers Make a Garden Special

Janesville WI

Wednesday, October 17, 2017

6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Rich Eyre, owner of Rich's Foxwillow Pines Nursery in Woodstock, IL presents "Unique Conifers Make a Garden Special," focusing on how to site and select conifers for every garden location.



Conifers can improve your garden with form, texture, unusual shapes and seasonal color. Colorful coning attributes, buds and interesting bark characteristics add to their appeal. There is a conifer for every garden space. Images of gardens will inspire you to learn more about these unique trees.

\$5 for non-members, \$3 for RBG Friends members, no registration required.

### October Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <b>Rock County Master Gardener Volunteer hours due</b>	2	3	4	5	6 Chipotle fundraiser for RBG <a href="#">flyer</a>	7 RPMGA at Beloit Farmer's Market
8	9	10	11	12	13 <i>WIMGA Annual Conference</i>	14 <i>WIMGA Annual Conference</i> RPMGA Pollinator Garden Tour
15	16	17 RBG 2017 Evening Garden Seminar Series: Unique Conifers Make a Garden Special <a href="#">details</a>	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31 <b>Halloween</b> 				

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