

# From the Ground Up

A Gardening and Native Plants Quarterly

Colorado State University Extension-Pueblo County

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## Deadheading Your Perennials-Drudgery or Pleasant Moments?

By Maureen Van Ness, Colorado Master Gardener, 2015

The task of deadheading, or removing faded, spent blossoms, is a matter of personal preference. To some gardeners, it is a dreaded task of monotonous drudgery. To others, the moments spent among the plants, clippers in hand is a pleasant, rewarding pastime. "Your garden wants your shadow," a gardener said to me recently. If you choose to allow the blooms to come and go at their own pace, that is a valid choice, too.

For annuals, deadheading is an important function to keep them blooming into fall. The plants work to generate seeds in their short life cycle, and if you keep the gone-by flowers trimmed, the plant continues to work to produce more seed, which means more showy flowers. Annuals such as pelargoniums, marigolds, snapdragons, zinnias, alyssum, cosmos and annual salvia all respond well to deadheading and reward with repeat blooms. Especially if you want to limit invasive self-seeding, continued deadheading of annuals until late summer is smart.



Deadheading



Snow on seed heads

For perennials, deadheading is also a choice. As you remove the faded blooms, you help the plant maintain its health and store energy for coming seasonal changes. The appearance of the plant is improved, and unwanted seeds are prevented. By clipping spent flowers, a garden keeps a crisp and clean appearance. Roses, perennial salvias, butterfly bush, yarrow, blanket flower and lavender all reward the effort of deadheading with continued blossoms.

However, many gardeners prefer a loose, flowing, more native appearance, as plants in the wild would look. There is not a rule about deadheading. The Pruning Police will not show up at your door if you leave faded blossoms on your plants. The pollinators will still hum around the blossoms, finding scraps of pollen and food. Birds will still settle on the branches to sing their songs and ride branches waving in the breeze.

Come early fall there is a strong case for leaving spent blossoms on a plant into winter.

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Rather than cutting all the plants to the ground as part of fall clean-up, leave as many faded blooms and stems at various heights until an early spring (late February or March) clean-up to provide winter habitat for pollinating insects and birds. The beauty of fall seed heads is of a different sort than colorful flowers but has a beauty of its own.

There is something satisfying about seeing a pile of snow on dried out yarrow or echinacea, or watching small birds roller coaster on grass fronds, or seeing rabbits shelter under the branches of a shrub during a snowfall. We probably won't see the beneficial insects wintering over in our dried-out landscape, but they are there, and we'll be grateful for their presence come spring and summer.

Deadheading is a garden task that enhances the small, slow details that create beauty in the garden and the soul. But so is the choice to leave our plants to flourish without our intervention. Whether we choose to deadhead or not, we can celebrate the beauty of our plants and the abundance in our gardens. 🍂



### WICKED WEEDS

#### Russian Thistle, *Salsola* spp.

By Marge Vorndam, Colorado Master Gardener 1997, Native Plant Master, 2007

Did you know that tumbleweeds have been part of our Western landscape only since 1873? Tumbleweeds are also referred to as Russian Thistle. The genus *Salsola* that make up this group of noxious weeds originated from Russia in 1873 as a contaminant of flax seed shipment to South Dakota. It quickly grew in waste places, disturbed areas and cultivated fields, preferring our dry Western habitat. Today, *Salsola* is found across Pueblo County and other landscapes, spreading via the brittle plants which break off in the fall and roll across the prairie with the wind, spreading thousands of small seeds in its wake. *Salsola* is found on Noxious Weed Lists in 46 states and on the interstate when high winds are present in the fall.

Synonyms for the specie identified as *S. kali* are *S. iberica* and *S. pestifer*. Other species of the plant have made it to the U.S. from its native lands in Eurasia (*S. collina*) and Australia (*S. australis*) since the first shipment; thus, there are other species and hybrids that have readily risen from these groups. This genus is found in the Chenopodiaceae (aka Goosefoot or Beet) Family which also includes spinach. The term *Salsola* derives from the Latin verb, *Salire* "to salt".

The annual plant seeds sprout in the spring aided by small amounts of moisture. Young plants can be gathered for table fare like spinach and used as animal fodder, but a concern is the high oxalic acid in seedlings that can reach 5%. High nitrogen levels can be a problem for young animals. Identifying characteristics vary somewhat. Mature *Salsola* is notably xeric, has a brittle stem and alternate branches with alternate succulent leaves that end in a thorn. Stems and branches may have red to purple longitudinal striations. Flower forms found in plants can vary widely. Bernau and Eldredge indicate that, in general, "Inflorescence is an open or somewhat condensed spike of a solitary flower or cluster of 2-3 flowers; clusters normally producing only a single developed fruit. Flowers are small, bisexual, with 3-5 stamens, 0.04-0.05 in (1.1-1.3 mm) long anthers, and a short style with 2 stigma branches.



Russian thistle, *Salsola* spp.

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Flowers are subtended by a single 0.15-0.24 in (4-6 mm) long bract and two 0.09-0.20 in (2.5-5 mm) long slightly recurved bracteoles; all three rigid and sharply tipped. The undifferentiated perianth is five lobed, about 0.09-0.12 in (2.5-3 mm) long, and winged at midlength; typically with three well developed colorless translucent broad wings and two narrow wings.” The plants mature to a rounded 3 to 4 feet tall and 4 to 6 feet wide. Growth habit, including stickers, can make it unpalatable as mature forage.

Despite its noxious weed designation, *Salsola* fruiting bodies provide nectar and pollen to many butterflies, moths and bees. Its colonial habit provides cover for small mammals and reptiles. It also was used for glassmaking and has health medicine properties for several human ailments. As a revegetation aid, it holds otherwise barren soils in place.

Due to its prolific nature, but also, its annual growth habits from seed, the pre-emergent herbicide Preen may be a chemical control agent as labeled to prevent seeds from sprouting. Seeds are also cold-weather intolerant which can prevent germination. Seeds have a short viability of two to three years but that is counterbalanced by the prolific habit of this plant. In the early 2000s, work was done using a fungus, *Uromyces salsolae*, that showed promise in the laboratory to control *Salsola*. This fungus is still in experimental stages but may be a way to check this noxious weed as research progresses. 🌱






*S. tragus*

Citation:

Bernau, C.R. and E.P. Eldredge. 2018. Plant Guide for Prickly Russian Thistle (*Salsola tragus* L.). USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, Great Basin Plant Materials Center. Fallon, Nevada 89406. [https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/doc/pg\\_satr12.docx](https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/doc/pg_satr12.docx)

# All Pueblo GROWS Seed Lending Library

Join us the last Saturday of every month for a free educational seminar and to help prepare seed for the library. The fun starts at 9:30 a.m. in the Thurston room on the first floor of the Rawlings Library. All seed donations welcome!



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## Master Gardeners Branching Out in 2020

By Sherie Caffey, Horticulture Agent, CSU Extension-Pueblo County

Do you love to garden, and are eager to learn more about gardening in Colorado? Do you love to share your knowledge with others? If so, you should consider joining the Colorado Master Gardener program in Pueblo County!

Colorado Master Gardeners are trained in research-based horticulture by CSU Extension staff. Trainees, referred to as Master Gardener Apprentices, receive ten weeks of online and in person education that will prepare them to educate the public on all things gardening. Once training is over, Apprentice Master Gardeners are out in the public volunteering at events that allow them to spread their newfound knowledge. These volunteers will do 50 hours of volunteering before late October, which means a lot of people will become educated by the Master Gardeners!

No time to volunteer? You can also take the class with a non-volunteer option for a higher fee. This option is called the Colorado Gardener Certificate option. CGC students take the same training as Master Gardener Apprentices but once the ten weeks is over, they have no commitment to spread their knowledge to the public.

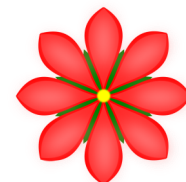
We are now accepting applications for the 2020 training class. Training will begin on January 23 and be held weekly on Thursdays until April 9. Applications for Master Gardener Apprentices are due November 22, 2019, and Colorado Gardener Certificate applications are due January 9, 2020. More information and the link to apply can be found on our website at <https://pueblo.extension.colostate.edu/programs/gardening-horticulture/master-gardener/>. 



**MASTER GARDENER**  
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### ***Garden Tip:*** Edible Flowers

Edible flowers are experiencing a renewed interest. In the past, edible flowers were a frequent culinary companion to meals. They are especially high in vitamins C & A and provide a colorful addition to salads and other dishes.



If you are interested in using edible flowers, there are a few safety rules to follow:

- Make sure no pesticides have been used on flowers used for culinary use
- Don't use flowers purchased at a nursery as there is no way to know if pesticides were used or what growing matter was used
- Accurately identify the flower to make sure it is edible in nature or if only certain parts are edible as some parts can be toxic

Pick flowers when they are at their peak early in the day. After picking flowers, rinse them very gently then place between damp paper towels. They can be used fresh in salads or refrigerated until ready for use. Flowers can also be preserved in oils or vinegars.

Some familiar flowers to sample are: marigolds, English daisy, hibiscus and geranium.

Penelope Hyland, Colorado Master Gardener, 2018





## INTERESTING INSECTS

### INTERESTING POLLINATORS


By Penelope Hyland, Colorado Master Gardener, 2018

While bees and butterflies are probably the most well-known pollinators and hummingbirds might be the favorite to watch, there are many lesser-known pollinators. Pollinators are critical to the eco system as they are responsible for pollinating 1/3 of the human diet and over ¾ of major food crops as they move pollen from plant to plant for fertilization.

Probably the earliest prehistoric pollinator was the beetle. They are referred to as the mess and soil pollinator as they chew (instead of drinking nectar like other pollinators) and then leave droppings behind. The midge, which is a species of the fly, pollinates the cocoa tree while moths pollinate white, fragrant flowers like jasmine at night.

Eighty-seven percent of flowering plants are pollinated by animals such as the cape grey mongoose and the large spotted genet. The world's largest pollinator is the black and white ruffed lemur who pollinates the traveler's tree with pollen that sticks to their fur. The honey possum from Australia gets a nose dusted with pollen when they drink nectar and the blue-tailed day gecko pollinates by spreading seeds.

With so many of the planet's flowering plants requiring pollination, wasps and flies can assist with the job. Moths are joined by bats in nighttime pollinating. Bats pollinate over 300 different types of fruits in tropical and desert places.

While we continue to encourage bees and butterflies to our pollinator gardens, let us not forget all their friends! 



Bat pollinating



### Check out all of the CSU Extension-Pueblo County Facebook pages!

CSU Extension Pueblo County  
CSU Extension Pueblo County Ag and Range  
CSU Extension Pueblo County Horticulture Program  
Pueblo County Extension-FCS  
Pueblo County 4-H

## Canning 101

By Laura Krause, Family and Consumer Science Agent, CSU Extension-Pueblo County

When done properly, home food preservation can be a fun and rewarding project. Here are a few basic tips to get started:

Why can foods?

Canning is a safe and economical way to preserve food at home. It gives you complete control of what goes into your food, creating an often times more nutritious product than store bought versions. There are recipes for low/no sodium, low/no sugar, as well as other dietary options. The preservatives are also all natural, rather than some chemical compound you can't even pronounce! Canning is also a good option if you have an overflowing garden, and want to preserve those fresh fruits and veggies for the entire year.

What are the different canning methods?

There are 2 basic canning methods: water-bath canning and pressure canning. The method that should be used is dependent upon the acidity in the food you are processing. Water-bath canning is acceptable for acidic foods, such as fruits, pickles and jams and jellies. The acidity naturally present or added to the recipe creates an environment where bacteria, specifically botulinum, cannot grow. Low acid foods, such as vegetables and meats, must be pressure canned to ensure they will be safe.

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Where can you find reliable recipes?

It is always recommended that you use a tested recipe, meaning that they have been through extensive testing at the university or corporate level to ensure that they will produce safe and shelf stable food. Be cautious of recipes found online. They are likely not properly tested and adjusted for altitude, which is a particularly important factor in Colorado. Tested recipes can be found from the following sources:

- Any university Extension program
- The National Center for Home Food Preservation
- The Ball Blue Book
- The Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving
- Any website ending in “.edu” or “.org”

What now?




Pressure canner



Water bath canner

Now that you have the proper canning device and a tested recipe, it's time to hit the kitchen! Make sure you follow the recipe precisely. Do not double batch sizes, or add or substitute ingredients. It is okay to add a little extra spice if you have a favorite, but don't change the fruit or vegetable or create a mixture if the recipe doesn't call for it. This will change the volume and consistency, and the processing time may no longer be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact your local Extension office for more information. 

## Food Preservation Classes



### Pickling

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

1:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

Making and canning your own pickles is one of the easiest things you can do with produce! This class will cover: Pickling fruits; Pickling vegetables; Pickled relishes. Register by 10/2. To register online, for day class, go to: <https://pickling2019day.eventbrite.com> or for evening class, go to: <https://pickling2019evening.eventbrite.com>

### Fermenting

Wednesday, October 30, 2019

1:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

Learn how to make and preserve sauerkraut, kim chee, and other products. This class will cover equipment needed, acceptable processing methods, and how to preserve fermented foods.

Register by 10/23. To register online, for day class, go to: <https://fermenting2019day.eventbrite.com> or for evening class, go to: <https://fermenting2019evening.eventbrite.com>

### Freezing and Dehydrating

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

Learn how to freeze fruits and vegetables quickly and safely for high quality product. Learn how to dry fruits, vegetables, herbs and meat.

Register by 11/6. To register online, for day class, go to: <https://freezedry2019day.eventbrite.com> or for evening class, go to: <https://freezedry2019evening.eventbrite.com>

