

OUTDOORS

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: I hear a lot about invasive insects like emerald ash borer and gypsy moths, but what are some of the good bugs that help keep our forests healthy?

A: There are many more beneficial insects than insect pests; we just don't hear about them as often. One beneficial insect, the friendly fly, is named for its habit of repeatedly landing on people without biting. The larvae of this fly feed on forest tent caterpillars inside their cocoons. During the third or fourth year of a caterpillar outbreak in Minnesota, the friendly fly can kill nearly 90 percent of the cocoons.

Parasitic wasps also keep insect populations in check. Most parasitic wasps are extremely small, which is why we don't usually see them at work. There are thousands of different species, none of which sting people, but nearly every insect species is attacked by parasitic wasps during at least one life stage. Beneficial wasps feed on pests such as spruce budworm, gypsy moth, fall webworm and emerald ash borer.

Many types of beetles, the largest and most diverse group of insects, are predaceous and feed on aphids, scale insects, caterpillars, other beetles and more. The larvae of one beetle family called checkered beetles feed on harmful wood-boring insects such as bark beetles, potentially preventing an outbreak.

Val Cervenka, DNR forest health program coordinator

FEEDING TIME



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Robert Johnson captured bonding time between a doe and her fawn near his home in Ray earlier this month. Johnson reports there have been several deer — many with fawns — hanging around his property this summer.

Kouba moose on new critical habitat license plate

DNR STAFF REPORT

Minnesota motorists can support conservation with a new critical habitat license plate featuring moose art by renowned wildlife artist Les Kouba.

"Moose are synonymous with Minnesota's north woods and its outdoor heritage," said Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Tom Landwehr. "Nothing captures the essence of being up north better than a bull moose feeding in the shallows of a boreal lake,

and that's exactly what this new license plate depicts."

The new moose plate, which displays a never-before-published painting by Kouba, is the eighth critical habitat plate offered. Other plates display the loon, pheasant, chickadee, showy lady's slipper, a fishing scene and white-tailed deer.

New moose critical habitat plate

The Minnesota Legislature created the critical habitat license plate program in 1995 to provide additional opportunity for Minnesotans to contribute toward conservation. Motorists who purchase a critical habitat plate make a minimum annual contribution of \$30 to the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program. Every dollar generated through the sale of the license plate is matched with private donations of cash or land.

Critical habitat license plate revenue has generated more than \$25 million toward the purchase of 7,700 acres of critical habitat and helped fund nongame wildlife research and surveys, habitat enhancement and educational programs. Information about the program is available on the DNR website at www.mndnr.gov/plates.

Horticulture Day offers tours, information

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Horticulture experts from around the state will gather at the University of Minnesota North Central Research and Outreach Center in Grand Rapids for the annual Horticulture Day Open House Aug. 27.

NCROC is the only agricultural research station in the continental United States with a horticulture program located in the cold climate of USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 3. In addition, the research and outreach center is an All-America Selections Display Garden with the best new varieties of flowers on display.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This year's flower tours will include new and interesting selections, as well as some returning favorites.

Attendees should visit the registration tent to sign in before joining in the open house activities, which will include walking and wagon tours. During the open house guests can take part in featured activities, wagon and bus tours, walk through the plots and high tunnels, or visit various displays. University of Minnesota specialists and Extension educators will be on site to explain research activities and answer questions.

- The open house begins at 2 p.m. with tours continuing until 6 p.m. and will feature the following activities:
- Apple orchard tour.
 - Grape high tunnel tour.
 - Blueberry and strawberry informational talks.
 - Asparagus and brussels sprouts.
 - Visits to research plots

of annual flowers — both sun and shade adapted — including nearly 300 varieties in the field and many baskets and containers.

■ Discussions of chrysanthemum development, hydrangea trials, cherry and honeyberry varieties.

■ "Ask a Master Gardener" table and "Plant Disease Diagnostic" area staffed by University of Minnesota Master Gardeners and plant pathologists — bring your samples and questions.

■ Wagon ride tours of the grounds.

■ Presentation by NCROC's Entomologist Christopher Philips.

This year's flower tours will include new and interesting selections, as well as some returning favorites. One new selection this year is a petunia called "Espresso Frappe Ruby." This new line of dwarf petunias displays rich colors and frilly flowers. Another new entrant is Hibiscus "Honeymoon Deep Red." The Honeymoon series of hibiscus produce huge flowers on compact plants. Striking multi-colored foliage is a feature of "Artful Fire and Ice" Caladium. These vigorous plants, grown from tubers, love the heat and humidity of summer, and perform well both in beds and in containers.


Active gardeners, commercial producers, and all those interested in gardening are invited to attend. Horticulture Day is free and open to everyone. The University of Minnesota North Central Research & Outreach Center is located on the east edge of Grand Rapids at 1861 East US Highway 169. For more information, contact Leanne Stanley at the North Central Research & Outreach Center at 218-327-4490 ext. 2001, or email lstanley@umn.edu.



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