

GARDEN **E-NOTES**

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Keep mint contained

Stephanie Batson, PA Mint is a great herb to have around. But give this hardy perennial an inch, and it will take a mile. Fortunately, Stephanie found a way to grow mint for her culinary endeavors and keep it from taking over her garden. First, she cut a 12-inch piece from a 12-inch-diameter PVC pipe. Then she dug a hole and placed the pipe in the ground. There's about 4 inches of the PVC above the soil in the photo above and that's enough to keep the mint in bounds. With the pipe in the ground she refilled the hole, planted the mint and watered it in. Now her mint stays put.

Boat planter

Maureen Williams, TX What do you do with an old boat that's not safe to put in the water anymore? Make it into a planter, of course! Maureen had a leaky old metal johnboat (the type with a flat bottom) sitting in the yard of her lakeside home. Once the boat was moved to its final resting spot, she put some edging and mulch around it to set the area apart from the rest of the yard. Then Maureen put soil between the bench seats and added plants. She set a few containers with mums on the bench seats to add a little height to her "container." A cascading plant, such as sweet potato vine or

Wave[™] petunias, spilling over the boat's edge helps it seem more a part of the landscape.

If you don't have a boat, you can still get creative with your planters. Anything will do — a purse, an old shoe, even a teakettle. Whatever you use, the most important thing is to be sure there are a few drainage holes. Use a drill, an awl or a screwdriver to drill or punch holes in the item you're using. Otherwise, your plants may sit in water and rot.

Easy-fill feeder Elizabeth Smith, MI

Hungry birds mean feeders need to be filled regularly. So you want to do all you can to make this chore easy. The best place for Elizabeth's feeder was hanging from a tree branch, which made it a challenge to reach and fill. Here's her solution: She looped an 18-inch bungee cord over the branch and attached both of its hooked ends to the top of the bird feeder. Now when the feeder needs a refill, she pulls it down with her left hand, removes the lid and fills

the feeder with her right. Then she replaces the lid and gently eases it back into position under the branch of the tree.

Pine basket

D.C. Harrison, OH

When it's time to fill those hanging baskets this year, don't bother buying a liner. Do what D.C. Harrison does and line your basket with pine needles! He just picks up a tangled mass of needles from under his trees and works them together in his wire frame baskets until they're about 2 inches thick. D.C. has found that Scotch pine needles (Pinus sylvestris) work best. The short, stiff needles hold together well. When he's tried white pine needles (Pinus strobus), the soil falls right through.

Keep track of plant tags

Those plastic plant tags that come with your plants are helpful when you want to know which tomato you grew last summer or when that new perennial blooms. But tags are no help at all if you can't find them. Here are two

QUICK TIP

Cork feet Pauline Crinnan, MA

Using pot feet to keep containers up off the deck prevents stains. But that can get pricey. Pauline found an inexpensive solution wine corks! Whether they're natural cork or

made of synthetic materials, the pot feet last a long time. Check out the illustration and you'll see how easy it is to assemble one: Just four corks that are held together with four wood screws.





Line the screw up with the hole made by the corkscrew.



great tips for keeping track of them: Mike Kilts, TN The tags for Mike's veggies kept getting lost in the mulch or soil of his raised beds. That meant he couldn't figure out which veggie variety was growing where. To solve this problem, he made special tag holders. Mike glued a wooden spring clothespin, business side up, to the front of a raised bed like the one in the photo below. He used a waterproof glue, such as Gorilla™ Glue, so it wouldn't be washed away by the rain. Now he clamps the tag into the pin and he doesn't lose tags anymore. For in-ground beds, Mike found a different solution: He glued the clothespin to a pointed cedar stake and pushed it into the soil near the

Cut tips off tags so

easily on the ring.

Susan Lananer, SD

Susan often referred back to the tags that

came with her plants.

But as her plant collec-

tion grew, so did the pile

of tags. What she needed

was a way to organize

them. So she came up

with the system in the

is a hole punch and a

opens in the middle —

you'll find them in the

school or office supply

in the tag and placed it

on the ring. Be sure to

check where the plant

information is to avoid punching a hole through

it. Susan likes to keep

order. That makes it

easier to flip right to

the plant she's looking

for. She hangs the ring from a hook in her shed,

so the information is

always at her fingertips.

her tags in alphabetical

name and growing

Then she punched a hole

section of the store.)

photo above. All it takes

metal ring (the kind that

they move more



plant it identifies.

Use waterproof Gorilla Glue, so the clothespin stays in place.

pestwatch

Cabbage looper Trichoplusia ni



IDENTIFICATION Be on the lookout for a small green caterpillar with white racing stripes and a voracious appetite each spring in North America. The cabbage looper can eat three times its body weight every day! And with two to seven generations each year, depending on the length of your growing season, that's a lot of plant damage.

a single silver spot in the center and most often lavs a single pale vellow to green egg on a leaf. But clusters of six or seven eggs aren't uncommon. Cabbage loopers' favorite egg hosts are cruciferous vegetables, such as cab-About three days after the egg is laid, a caterpillar emerges and starts eating.

DAMAGE Yes, a cabbage looper loves to eat cabbage, but it also munches on broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes, lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers. Ornamental plants, such as mums, carnations, snapdragons, geraniums and hollyhocks, are also on the menu. Avoiding the veins of the leaves, the cabbage looper eats irregular holes and can defoliate a plant in no time. This can stunt growth or even kill the plant. Be sure to check the centers of broccoli and other plants, as a cabbage looper will sometimes bore its way into the heads.

do you the favor of eating these hungry caterpilgrowth so much the insect dies.

The moth has mottled brown wings with bage, turnips, kale and others, but it's not picky.



CONTROL You can hand pick any caterpillars that you find. Or encourage predatory wasps and ground beetles to live in your garden by avoiding insecticides and leaving leaf debris or mulch around for hiding places. In turn, they'll lars. For serious problems, try a spray product containing neem. This organic pesticide stops the caterpillar from eating and disrupts its

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