

Healthy Acres

A RESOURCE TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LANDS AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Does ‘No Mow May’ really help pollinators?

Have you heard of No Mow May? Articles about it fill gardening magazines and online forums this time of year. I even heard an NPR radio segment about it last spring.

If you're not already aware, No Mow May is an initiative that began in Great Britain that encourages people to stop mowing their lawns for the month of May. The goal is to provide flowers for early spring pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and moths, when other pollen and nectar resources may be limited. And the concept is spreading even here in the US – over 25 US municipalities have adopted No Mow May programs, including at least one in Montana (Livingston).

Pollinators are vital for natural ecosystems and agriculture, but pollinator populations are declining worldwide due to stressors like habitat loss, pesticide use, introduced pests and diseases, and climate change. And since urban environments are the fastest growing ecosystems on the planet, it makes sense to practice small conservation measures at home, even in your own

backyard. Many people already understand that traditional lawns provide little to no pollinator habitat and require a lot of resources, especially water, a real concern in the West. No Mow May seems like an easy way to help.

But is No Mow May appropriate here in western Montana? Our climate is a far cry from that of the British Isles, and simply not mowing your lawn here in western Montana will not result in the beautiful, flower-filled meadow that it might in England. Not only are our common turfgrass species, like Kentucky bluegrass, not native to North America, but neither are the flowers often present in lawns, such as dandelion and clover. However, in urban and suburban landscapes that offer little for native pollinators, even weedy lawn flowers can provide some food for these important insects.

No Mow May continued



No Mow May can be a great starting point for pollinator conservation. While a single month of not mowing doesn't do much to help pollinators, one benefit we may get from this movement is the opportunity to rethink our relationship with traditional lawns: Can you mow less often? Can your lawn be more diverse? Do you really need to apply pesticides? Can you reduce your lawn and incorporate native plantings somewhere? With a little creativity, your own yard can become vibrant pollinator habitat year-round, not just the month of May.

Instead of simply not mowing, try these other meaningful ways to support our local pollinators:

- Reduce your lawn: Traditional lawns offer little habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. They are also resource-intensive and require water, fertilizer, and mowing to stay healthy. Additionally, you could plant a [Flowering Pollinator Lawn](#) in which you purposefully cultivate low-growing, flowering plants that provide pollinator food into your existing turfgrass.
- Plant native wildflowers: Choose species that are native to our local area – native pollinators depend on native plants to meet their nutritional needs and can't survive without them! Focus on early spring native flowers to support mason bees and newly-emerged bumblebee queens.
- Create a diverse landscape: Plant a variety of native grasses, flowering plants, shrubs, and trees. This will provide a range of food resources and habitat for pollinators throughout the year.
- Reduce pesticide use: many pesticides, even those not specifically used to kill insects, can sicken or kill native pollinators, so minimize their use as much as possible.
- Support habitat conservation efforts (including in your own backyard!): Habitat conservation and restoration efforts - even at the scale of your own yard - help protect and restore natural areas and green spaces that provide important food and nesting resources for pollinators and other wildlife.

Soup's On!

Kelly Moore, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent



Soup's On..... is an iconic call to come eat what's been prepared. I am fascinated with food history! I quickly learned from a Goggle search, that the phrase comes from a German word, "sup, or suppa", meaning some kind of hot broth meant for soaking bread. The phrase "soup's on or soup's up" no longer refers exclusively to soup, however. Soup is no longer described simply, as a broth. Now there are countless varieties from which to choose: hot, cold, commercially canned, homemade, spicy, sweet, savory, with pasta, rice, beans, vegetables, etc. It is estimated that soup has been a thing since 6000 B.C. The oldest soup vessels were found in China. The Campbell's Soup Company has been making soup for more than 126 years and it is estimated that 1 billion cans were consumed during the recent pandemic. Soup, not surprisingly, has the title, January is "National Soup Month" dedicated to its popularity and longevity.

For those of us who have cautiously and courageously side-stepped the commercially prepared soup aisle, soup nirvana awaits! With a little knowledge, practice, and creativity, you can create your own signature soup with just a few ingredients.

There are nine steps to creating a simple soup, according to New Hampshire University Extension.

<https://extension.unh.edu/recipe-tags/simple-recipes> Keyword- Create a Soup

Step 1-Choose 2T. of preferred cooking oil/ part butter, if desired

Step 2-Cook chopped medium onion.

Step 3-Choose 3 c. chopped veg. and add to pan.

Step 4-Choose 1 lb. protein of choice

Step 5-Choose one starch item to add to pan (potatoes 3-4, pasta 4 oz., ½ c. uncooked rice)

Step 6-Choose broth, tomatoes/juice, milk, or combination -total of 4 cups

Step 7-Add 1 or more dried seasonings if applicable.

Step 8-Partially cover pot and simmer until protein is cooked and vegetables are tender.

Step 9-Add fresh herbs (if using) and simmer additional 5 min. Salt/pepper to taste.

(4 servings)

Every culture has a collection of prized soup recipes containing secret ingredients that often require specific preparation techniques. A recently discovered old family cookbook recipe required the "boiling of a hog" to produce a savory ham and bean soup for a crowd. That would have been quite the crowd!

There is nothing like savoring a delicious and nutritious garden- fresh soup any day of the year!

"Soups' On" everyone! Enjoy!

Slow and Steady: Give farm machinery the space and patience it needs when sharing the roads.

Patrick Mangan, MSU Extension

Montana's summer season ushers in a flurry of activities on our farms and ranches. Livestock are transported to summer pastures, irrigation systems are brought back to life, and farmers, ranchers and land managers are in and out of fields all through the spring and summer to harrow, fertilize, cultivate, and harvest crops. Agriculturalists squeeze a lot of activity and effort into Montana's short growing season in order to put up the harvests and make the revenues that will sustain the farm for the next years.



Spring and summer are also times when we see an abundance of farm equipment and machinery out on roads as the farmers move pieces of equipment from the machine shop to a field, or from one field to another. This can be especially true in western Montana with its network of small farms and properties, where farmers may lease or own separate plots of land interspersed with subdivisions, houses, and other land uses

or structures. It takes time to move tractors and equipment from one field to another, and it can be an especially risky time for a farmer when they must share the road with cars and motorists.

Tractors and farm machinery were never designed to travel on our rural and suburban 2-lane roads; they were meant to operate in a field. Tractors aren't designed to travel 55 miles an hour, 15 MPH tops is usually best. And tractors and machinery can be oversized, wider than the traffic lane they are trying to occupy, as well as being taller, with a high center of gravity, making them unstable on a slope. Tractors and farm machinery are also notorious for having blind spots and limits to visibility around the whole machine, especially when towing an implement behind a tractor. Few tractors have turn signals or other signaling devices to communicate intent to other motorists, having only the orange "slow moving vehicle" triangle to communicate speed and caution.

There are several things we as motorists in cars and trucks, travelling at full speed, can do as we see farm machinery moving in front of us in either lane of the road up ahead.

- Slow down! If your car is traveling at the posted speed of travel for the road you're on, be aware that the farm machinery is moving at a much slower pace than you are. Pull your foot off the gas and match their speed.
- Tractors and implements can be wider than the lane of travel and might cross over the center lines at any time. This can be especially true when mailboxes, road signs, guard rails, or bridge abutments crowd close to the outer edge of the road. Give a tractor plenty

Slow and Steady

continued

of room to move out into the center of the road when needed and pass only when you can clearly see that it is safe to do so on a good, straight and open stretch of road.

You should also slow down as you see equipment moving toward you in the other lane. All the same reasons apply; equipment might be hanging a bit over the center lines, or have to avoid a road sign.

Be patient. You may have to travel at the speed of the tractor for a minute or two. Farmers will pull over to the side of the road and let traffic pass if it is safe for them to do so. Don't crowd them, and don't pass when it's risky, or cut them off while speeding on by. Slow down, enjoy the countryside views, and embrace Montana's farming heritage.

Tractors and equipment may have to make a swing out into the center of road in order to make a wide turn into a field or gate when they reach their destination and will most likely slow way down in order to do it. Pay attention

to a change in speed or direction and give them the space they need to safely get off the road and into a field.

It may seem like these rules are only something that we as drivers would need to follow when out in the wide-open parts of rural Montana buzzing down a two-lane road surrounded by farms. However farming in western Montana is a very different place; we have farms in the Target Range area of Missoula, out along Blue Mountain and Kona Ranch roads, and along South Avenue, with its mix of city and rural living, as well as in Frenchtown, Condon, and Lolo. It's important to realize we can come across farm equipment on our roadsides at any time, just as we can experience the diversity of farms in western Montana at almost any time.

When you come across tractors and farm equipment on the roads, slow down, move over, and give them a brake (the left pedal kind). Let's keep all users on the roads safe and secure during the summer growing season.

Tractor Photo by: Erin Turner

Missoula 4-H Volunteer recognized by State 4-H Office as Outstanding Lifetime Volunteer

During the Montana 4-H Volunteer Institute in Billings last month, Missoula volunteer Joey Hennes was recognized as the 2023 Outstanding Lifetime Volunteer. Joey has been a volunteer for over 40 years, serving as a club leader for

many of those years. Through decades as the 4-H Leaders Council Treasurer, Joey worked to streamline the budget and improve the financial process for everyone involved. Joey is an outspoken supporter of the Missoula County 4-H Program. In 2006 Joey led the efforts to resist encroachment on the 4-H/FFA exhibit area at the Fair, helping create what was known for many years as the Country Fair. Joey has always been a trusted advisor and supporter of the 4-H mission. Congratulations, Joey!

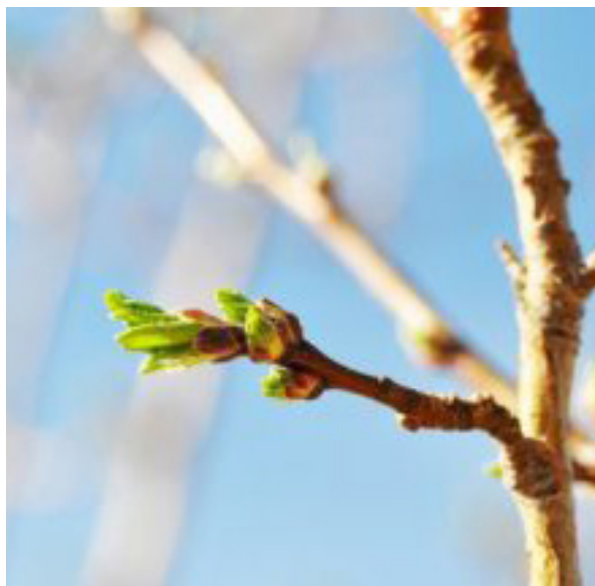
Photo credit: Christine Hodges



Photo outline: Missoula 4-H Volunteer Joey Hennes (center), with State 4-H Volunteer Specialist Kelton Jensen (left) and Montana 4-H Director Todd Kesner (right)

What's a dormant spray good for?

Longer days and warming temperatures are sending “wake-up” messages to our plants. It's time to think of new blooms, first leaves, and plant pests. As plants come out of their rest, or dormant period, so also do insects and disease-causing organisms that spent the winter on trees and shrubs.



If you had problems with mites, aphids, scale, or leaf rollers last year, you might want to consider applying an insect-preventative horticultural oil spray when tree and shrub buds begin to swell and show the first green color.

Research indicates that oils are most effective (especially on scale and leaf-curling aphids) if you wait until the very first tips of green leaves begin to emerge before you apply oil. Oils smother newly hatching insects and insect eggs that are just about to hatch. Oils are less effective on insect eggs that are not yet ready to hatch; these eggs are thicker and tougher (in order to get through our cold winters). As days lengthen and temperatures warm, insect eggs become less

thick and more susceptible to the smothering effect of horticultural oils.

Most spray oils are mineral or petroleum-based, but vegetable, fish, neem, and citrus oils are also available. Petroleum oils stand up to weathering best and thus last the longest. Oils can burn tender new leaf tissue, so apply them carefully. Lighter, lower-concentration oil sprays are less likely to burn leaves. Use oils when temperatures are above 40 F, but below 80 F. Oils should dry completely before they are exposed to freezing temperatures. Apply oils several hours before night temperatures drop.

The advantage of oil sprays is that they have a relatively low hazard to humans and non-target organisms, such as beneficial, biological control insects. There are limitations, however. Oils must contact the insect (or insect egg) to kill it. So, dormant oil sprays are completely ineffective unless the pest for which you are aiming has spent the winter, and is still present, on the tree or shrub you are spraying. Another limitation is that oil sprays generally kill only smaller, soft-bodied insects.

If you had disease problems last year, you could also apply disease-preventative sprays to trees and shrubs. If fungal or bacterial diseases, such as Fire blight, were a problem last year, the least-toxic disease-preventative spray is copper.

Do not forget to clean up the dead leaves, fallen fruit, and dead branches around your plant and trim before spraying. Cleaning and trimming your plants encourage better airflow, and prevents disease, and insect infestation.



Interested in learning more about the Department of Ecology and Extension?

Sign-up to receive our quarterly newsletter on our website.

<http://www.missoulaeduplace.org/newsletter>

Nighttime Biocontrol Collection

The Montana Biocontrol Project led a nighttime collection of spotted knapweed agents this summer that proved to be one of our most memorable summertime adventures!

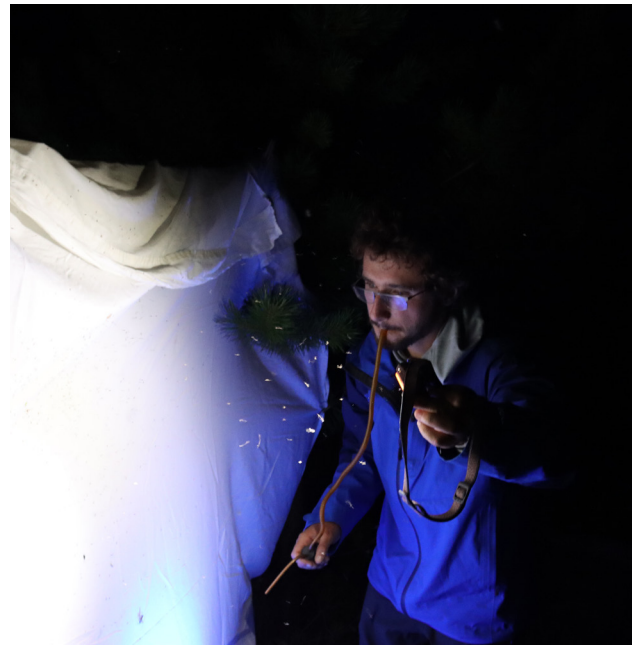


Unlike our routine collections, it was suggested that *Agapeta zoegana*, was easier to collect around midnight due to their reproductive activity. After finding an infestation with evidence of *Agapeta* (root observations, daytime spotting), we set up camp and planned for an evening of collections. Upon arriving to the site, we pulled out our supplies and set up a “curtain” using a white sheet draped across two trees with a blacklight projected onto its surface.

This immediately attracted a lot of flying critters. Within minutes we found *Agapeta* adults resting on the sheet, as well as surrounding brush, and on branches nearby. They proved to be quite difficult to catch due to their speed. We utilized a particular technique called respirating. This allowed us to collect moths in clear, small containers that restricted movement and could easily be detached and placed in our cooler for use in resins. This took about 2 hours to learn and put to practice that night. We worked from 11pm to 1am and managed to retrieve about 50 moths. Overall, the experience was a blast! We felt a bit ridiculous in the middle of the woods with a blacklight, but truly enjoyed such a rare opportunity to take part in, despite being a little scared after seeing two wolves near the site. Though we reared low adult numbers, we achieved our goal of learning a new collection method and observing a familiar agent in an unfamiliar environment. We are excited to collect more agents this August, 2023.

Why do all this at all?

Currently, the Montana Biocontrol Coordination Project is in the process of creating nearly 800 resin molds for education and awareness of biocontrol across the state. The creation and distribution of these molds is part of a larger effort to encourage diversifying control methods for noxious weeds in the state of Montana. These resins highlight the eight most common and effective biocontrol agents for the state, and their



corresponding host plant. We hope that the samples made with our collected *Agapeta* (and other species) will inspire others to ask questions, reach out, and continue being environmental stewards to our beautiful state.

Is the Youth in Restoration program a fit for someone you know?

Each summer the Missoula County Department of Ecology & Extension provides 4 high school students a unique employment opportunity to participate in and learn about local conservation organizations within Western Montana and the important work they perform.



Youth in Restoration is a cooperative program that builds collaborative partnerships between diverse land management organizations while providing youth crew members with career mentoring and on-the-ground training in natural resource conservation work.

The youth crew works on a variety of hands-on activities over their 8 weeks of service. This program is a great way to enter the workforce, establish a resume, practice time management, and gain valuable skills in working with a team.

A typical day may include the removal of noxious weeds on public and/or private land, monitoring, and mapping vegetation such as newly discovered invasive grass species, collecting and releasing thousands of biological control insects, removal of fencing that inhibits wildlife movement, removing browse cages as part of an ongoing stream restoration effort to enhance native trout populations, thinning for fire suppression in an old-growth ponderosa pine forest, backpacking into the Bob Marshall Wilderness to remove noxious weeds, or floating the local rivers and lakes to monitor for aquatic invasive species.

Is the Youth in Restoration Program perfect for someone you know?

- High school students aged 14-18 years old.
- Has transportation to and from the Missoula Fairgrounds Monday - Friday by 8:00 a.m.
- Will miss no more than 4 workdays throughout the 8-9-week employment period.
- Enjoy hands-on tasks, outdoors in all kinds of weather and locations.
- Have fun working to improve or restore public lands.

If you know someone who might be interested, contact Steffany at 258-4211 or email her at srogge@missoulacounty.us

Find out more about the program and a link to the application on our website.

<https://www.missoulaeduplace.org/youth-in-restoration>

<https://missoulaeduplace.org/documents/6r-jTYr2UU6eIVq3uiDOyY4I5V2Lv33xsGW->

Flowering Pollinator Lawns



Pollinators are vital to the maintenance of a healthy plant community. Unfortunately, changing landscapes have altered our native pollinator community. As Missoula County grows, habitat for pollinators shrinks. One way the Department of Ecology and Extension is looking to address this is with a recent program. The Flowering Lawn Pollinator Habitat Improvement Program is an exciting initiative just getting underway!

Started in 2022, this program invites landowners to transform their yard into a diverse landscape perfect for pollinators. By adding a mix of grasses and low-growing perennial flowers, your yard

can become a haven for bees and other beneficial pollinators. This mix requires fewer lawn inputs, resulting in a lower ecological footprint. In addition to added habitat, it also provides the pollinators with food resources that otherwise may be tricky to find.

You don't need a large plot of land to join. Even smaller yards can participate in this program and do their part for our pollinator friends. If you have an interest and think your lawn could take on this program, consider applying! You can find more information on our page at: <https://missoulaeduplace.org/flowering-lawns-project>

Climate Resiliency Education

The new climate resiliency education program celebrated its 1-year anniversary in March. We have created and enhanced partnerships within the county to create education opportunities for the public around resilient communities. Watch for some upcoming programs on soil health, heat, wildfires, and sustainability coming this spring. April is fast approaching and with it comes earth day! Missoulians have long been passionate about the local flora and fauna and environmental issues. I encourage you to engage with the community during April and join one of the many fun and educational climate opportunities being offered around town. Here are just a few events happening, you can check out even more here: <https://meic.org/conservation-calendar/#apr>.

April 14-15 Youth Climate Leadership Workshop
10am-3pm @ Home Resources - [information](#)
April 18 UM Earth Day Fair on the Oval 12-2pm
April 18-21 National Wilderness Workshop & Summit @ UM - [More Info](#)
April 21 Clark Fork River Cleanup - 9-3pm
[Information](#)
April 22 Earth Day Clark Fork River Cleanup
[Info & Registration](#)
Run for the Trees - Register by March 30
Don't Toss It - Fix It! - Home Resource 11am-3pm