

# Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 2

Summer Edition

June 2007

## A Flutter of Color



## Brainy Butterflies



When butterflies in search of nectar encounter a new flower, it may take them a few tries to learn how to sip from it. A study conducted by Georgetown University scientists found that after some fumbling about, butterflies learn how to stand in just the right place and operate their proboscis (their sipping tongue) in just the right way to get at the nectar. Groping time on a new flower varies from 10 to 20 seconds, once the butterflies have figured out the right moves, they become more efficient feeders.

Butterflies also learn the colors of flowers, and are apt to revisit blossoms of the colors that had provided nectar on a previous visit. They are generally attracted to vibrant colors like hot pink, bright red or screaming yellow. Their learning process is interesting to watch especially with flowers that change color as they age, such as a multicolored lantana. For example, if you have a lantana that that opens yellow and then ripens to red, native butterflies will quickly learn to concentrate on the fresher

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yellow flowers.



But despite evidence that butterflies can make these kinds of learned decisions, they are still not as smart as bees. After bumblebees find new flowers and learn how to access the nectar chamber, their visiting time skyrockets from three flowers per minute to more than 10. This ability to learn through trial and error explains why gardeners often see very concentrated bee and butterfly activity on certain flowers. Like more sophisticated animals, bees and butterflies tend to stick with what they know.

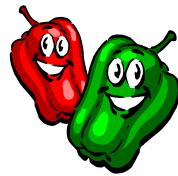
*Wise Watering* =  
*Better Flavor*

For peak harvest-time flavor from melons, tomatoes, and peppers, keep these tips in mind:



Melons need 1 inch of water per week in the early stages of growth. Too much water, however, late in the fruiting cycle can cause cracking of fruits and weaker flavor. A rule of thumb is to cut back on watering the plants once fruits reach tennis-ball size.

Tomatoes like 1 to 2 inches of water per week until late in the fruiting cycle. To avoid cracking, water regularly and evenly so the plant doesn't absorb too much at one time. Drip systems and mulch help in this regard tremendously.



Peppers like 1 inch of water a week, but if you like the hot varieties either withhold water or over-water your peppers a bit. This (and other forms of stress, such as high temperatures) makes hot varieties put out more capsaicins, (the pungent element that makes peppers hot).

## Formerly *Forbidden*

*(a history of the Black Currant)*

Black Currants were once popular in the United States, but became a “forbidden fruit” after Currant farming was banned in the early 1900s. Due to its unavailability (for the past 100 years), they’ve fallen out of favor in our diets. What a shame! Once you understand the many healthful benefits you’ll want to know where you can get some! Let’s go back to where all the controversy began.

Allow me to sum it up for you in a simple word.....**DISEASE!** The cycle started like this. In 1705, White Pine seedlings were shipped to England. As the tree spread across Europe, **Blister Rust** (*Cronartium ribicola*), a disease affecting White Pines, appeared on the trees in Germany. For a more in depth look at the disease go to:

[www.plantmanagementnetwork.org/pub/php/management/whitepine/](http://www.plantmanagementnetwork.org/pub/php/management/whitepine/)

Meanwhile, in the U.S., forests were being depleted by the booming lumber industry. Unaware of the disease, the U.S. began **RE-importing** White Pine seedlings from Europe. Unfortunately, the White Pine **Blister Rust** came with them. So just where does the Black Currant fit in the



mix you're wondering? Here's how...plant pathologists demonstrated that the tree disease, which threatened the U.S. timber industry, **DID NOT** jump from White Pine to White Pine, but from White Pine to **Black Currant** bush to White Pine. By 1911, regulations were passed which led to the farming ban. The ban still exists today in Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. It was however lifted in New York State in 2003, as result of efforts made by The Currant Company. They introduced the first nationally available Black Currant beverage in the U.S. since the ban was lifted. This powerful health-



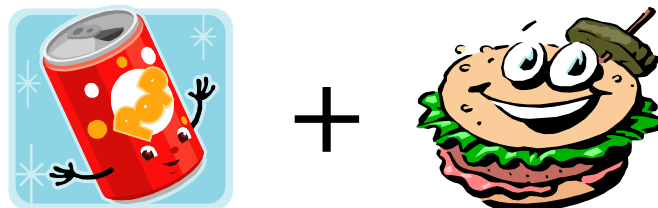
food nectar goes by the brand name **CurrantC**. Black Currants are a strong source of powerful antioxidants and vitamins much like the pomegranate juice **POM that's** been available for a few years. I've tried this one & have to admit that I actually like the

**CurrantC** better because it's a bit sweeter and **BETTER** for you.

## Black Currant Sorbet

1 qt fresh, frozen or canned black currants  
 Juice of 3 lemons  
 1 cup + 2 Tbsp. sugar (or alternative)  
 3/4 cup water  
 Puree black currants and combine with lemon juice, sugar, and water. Freeze until smooth, firm, and frozen.

## COLA BURGERS

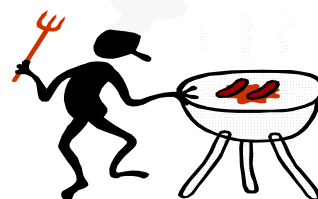


An unusual combination for sure! This isn't your typical burger, but it has fabulous flavor.

1 egg  
 1/2 cup cola, divided  
 (Diet cola is **NOT** recommended)  
 1/2 cup crushed saltines (about 15)  
 6 tablespoons French salad dressing, divided  
 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 1-1/2 pounds ground beef  
 6 hamburger buns, split

In a bowl, combine the egg, 1/4 cup cola, cracker crumbs, 2 tablespoons salad dressing, Parmesan cheese and salt. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into six patties, 3/4" thick (mixture will be moist). In a bowl, combine the remaining cola and salad dressing; set aside.

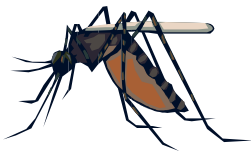
Grill patties, uncovered, over medium heat for 3 minutes on each side. Brush with reserved cola mixture. Grill another 8-10 minutes or until no longer pink, basting and turning occasionally. Serve on buns with your favorite condiments. Serves 6.





# There Ain't No Bugs on Me!

**THIS STUFF WORKS!!** I started using this product last season. I got it at Whole Foods Market and I'm sure that it's also available at Better Health stores. It's not cheap, about \$8.00 + per bottle, but it's worth it!

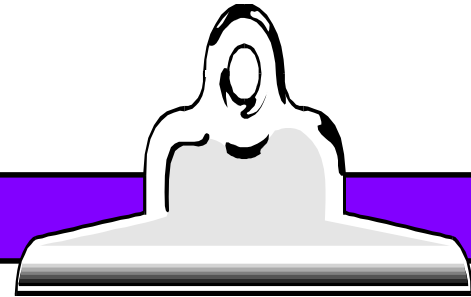


Herbal Armor is all natural and DEET **FREE**. DEET is a toxic chemical that can cause neurological damage once absorbed by the skin. Children are especially susceptible to the toxic effects of DEET, and yes, there is an Herbal Armor just for kids. The product is a protective blend of five essential oils, and has a nice scent. Herbal Armor repels mosquitoes, ticks, gnats, flies, ants, and black flies (unfortunately, for me it **DON'T** work on BEES, guess I'll be trying the Bounce sheets for that this year)! This product also offers protection from West Nile Virus, Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (should you take it with you when you travel). **YES, YOU DO HAVE TO RE-APPLY IT FOR GUARANTEED PROTECTION!** Independent clinical research demonstrated that Herbal Armor is 95 to 100% effective up to **3 hours per application**.

Give it a try and keep you and your family bug free this summer!



## Gardener Gatherings Places To Go Things To Learn



### What & Where

Ann Arbor Garden Club  
Annual Garden Walk

**June 9th (10 A.M. to 4 P.M.)**

call Anna Ornelas at **734-449-4237**  
for ticket information

Canton Garden Club  
Annual Garden Walk

**June 25th (10 AM to 4 P.M.)**

call **734-416-0589** for ticket information

Trailwood Garden Club  
Annual Garden Walk

**June 27th (Noon to 4 P.M.)**

call **734-459-7146** for ticket information

Gardens of Northville  
Annual Garden Walk

**July 11th (10 A.M. to 4 P.M.)**

call Kate Daniel at **734-591-0360**  
for ticket information

MSU Tollgate Gardens  
Summer Open House

**July 14th (10 A.M. to 3 P.M.)**

call **248-347-3860** for location & details

Belleville Garden Walk

**July 22nd (11 A.M. to 4 P.M.)**

call Faye **734-697-4628** for more details

Contact us at 734-416-0866 or earthen-