

# Horticulture Hints

We might think that we are nurturing our gardens, but of course, it's our gardens that are nurturing us—  
Jenny Uglow

September/October 2022

As far as I can tell, everyone around our part of the state fared pretty well through this last storm. Our hearts go out to all those who lost everything. We'll support them the best we know how. Probably the best thing for most of us will be to give money to the charity of our choice, and let them to the work that they know how to do. But now that the weather has moderated a bit, and it's pleasant to be outside, there are plenty of jobs that can be done in October. Now is the time to start your cool season flowers and garden plants. All of the lettuces, along with spinach, are good for these transition months. They grow to edible size very quickly, and can take fairly cool temperatures. Also in the 'fastest-to-table' category is the radish. All varieties are pretty much ready to consume in 35 days or less. Just about any root crop would be appropriate to plant at this time. Some root crops have the extra advantage of having top parts that are edible, delicious, and nutritious as well. In addition, there are the cabbages, broccolis, kales and peas and beans. All of these do better when the weather cools down. As far as ornamentals go, calendula, pansies and petunias are basics for cooler weather. In addition, here are a few more you can plant now: alyssum, baby's breath, dianthus, dusty miller, foxglove, geranium, hollyhock, kalanchoe, lavender, ornamental cabbage/kale, verbena, strawflower, and snapdragon. As far as your lawn goes, the first of October is the last time you should fertilize for the year. Any later, the new growth encouraged by the fertilization could encounter damage from the cold weather that is sure to follow in November and December. And for both your garden and ornamentals, don't forget to mulch! It not only saves from excess water loss, it can also help protect in cooler weather.

I just couldn't stand the loquat tree (*Eriobotrya japonica*) anymore - when it got fruit (which wasn't very often), it was way too high to pick, and it just looked...well, pitiful. Too bad I don't have a before picture. Not sure it looks a lot better now. It's somewhat of a multi-tailed lion look. I wasn't sure it would really grow back, but I've seen many videos on YouTube of loquats that had been

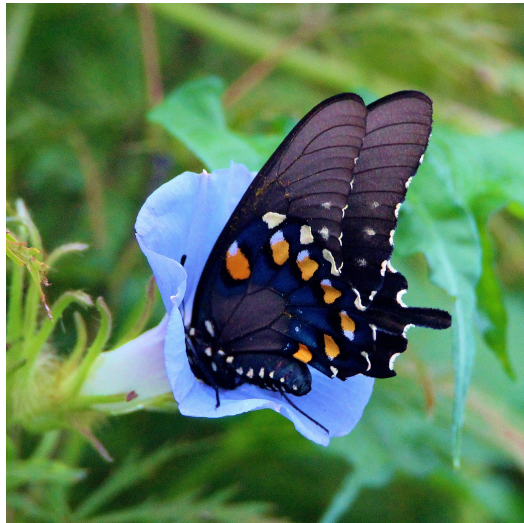


A Trendy Loquat Under Construction

scalped, and lived to tell the tale in full green beauty. Apparently, loquat trees are a bit trendy in sub-tropical regions as a landscape focal point. And they certainly are proving to be tough. So, I thought, why not. I cut back several of the branches, and waited to see if they were going to come back. Within two weeks, new leaves were appearing. So I cut the rest of the branches off. And a month

later, here you go. Yeah, they're tough. And eager to grow. I'm hoping that by next spring, it will actually look like a tree, and just maybe the fruit will be a pickable height. By the way, loquat trees are native to the hill regions of south central China, and they're grown there commercially, not only for their fruits, but also for their leaves, which are used for teas. And they are members of the Rosaceae family.

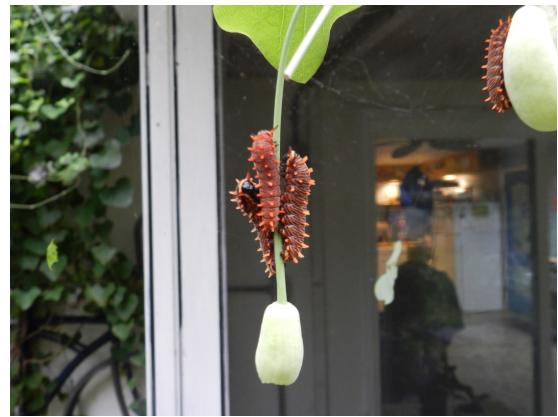
Pipevine swallowtail butterflies (*Battus philenor*) will only lay eggs on plants of the *Aristolochia* genus. Around here, the



Pipevine swallowtail (*Battus philenor*)

native *Aristolochia* include Virginia snakeroot (*A. serpentaria*), Woolly Dutchman's pipe (*A. tomentosa*) and Marsh's Dutchman's pipe (*A. pentandra*). Not sure which I have in my backyard, but at least

four (and possibly five) batches of caterpillars have, once again decimated my pipevine. I fertilized it once in the spring, and rerouted the gray water from our outdoor shower to its base, and it was beautiful! Lush, green and lots of flowers. Not anymore. I know it will come back, and I do love to see these beautiful caterpillars munching away on the leaves, but it surely looks pitiful right now. I'm not at all sure why, but this group of caterpillars felt it necessary to bunch up at the very end of a bare branch right at eye level on the way out to the shower. We dodged them for several days before they decided to go back up to where there was more food. The leaf supply finally



Pipevine swallowtail caterpillars (note the one on the flower upper left)

gave out, they all went out to pupate, and my pipevine tries to recover. Life goes on.

Get out and enjoy the best time of the year - happy gardening!