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The Green Thumb
By GEORGE ABRAHAM

PROTECT FRUITS FROM BIRDS Write the best way to keep birds out of your cherry tree, strawberry patch and away from the blueberries? Readers have sent me many suggestions such as scarecrows, pieces of garden hose hung in trees, bells, cheese cloth draped over the bushes, jugs of water placed in trees or on the ground (exploding water chasers birds, they say).
Actually, the best method for the home gardener consists of using one of the various netting materials made of plastic or polyethylene. These are draped over the tree or bushes and keep birds OUT, so they cannot reach the fruit. Most of these nets are durable and can be used year after year.
Nearly all garden stores handle the anti-bird mesh and if you really want to thwart the birds, I'd try these materials.

EAT YOUR NETTLES! Nettles are a pesky weed, defying the hoe and the spray gun. A reader says she eats her nettles and they "make her beautiful."
Try her recipe for nettle soup: Wash nettles, remove and discard roots. Pour boiling water over tops to remove the sting. Drain and chop fine. Heat two tablespoons of butter in a saucepan and mix with two tablespoons of flour, stirring until smooth. Add two cups of milk and stir until thick. Season with salt, pepper and a dash of nutmeg. All greens can be cooked in this way. Nettle soup is made with a beef base. After pouring boiling water over the nettles, put through a blender and add to broth. Nettles can also be cooked with salt pork.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: A reader writes: "Is it OK to add sawdust to the base of our clump birch and evergreens?"
Answer: Yes, sawdust, wood chips, compost, etc. are all fine for around the trees or shrubs.
FREE: Send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope for my bulletin, don't be afraid of

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Study May End Lawn Burning
Michigan State University scientists have refuted some earlier theories on the cause of lawn damage during hot weather and, in the process, may have found some clues which will help them put more heat tolerance into new lawn varieties.
Dr. James Beard, MSU turfgrass researcher, explained that high temperatures can reduce or stop leaf growth during midsummer. This results in a brown, weak turf incapable of resisting injury from insects, drought and disease.
Many scientists had believed that growth stoppage of northern cool season turfgrasses was caused by exhaustion of carbohydrate reserves. But Beard's research suggests the actual cause involves heat breakdown of one or more enzymes involved in protein synthesis.

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