Issue #39

Amador/El Dorado County Master Gardener E-News

October 2013

The Ravenous Redhumped Caterpillar

Kathy Pearson, El Dorado County Master Gardener

Beware of a yellow caterpillar with black and white stripes, black spots and a red head. Its fourth body segment will be red and enlarged to form a hump with two prominent black spines. It's the larva of the Notodontid moth (Schizura concinna), a ravenous pest of many deciduous trees in California. Master Gardener Cindy Young recently sent me pictures of caterpillars she found skeletonizing four Liquidambar branches.

The culprits were these redhumped caterpillars, the insect version of Pac-Man! Feeding in groups, they can devour almond, apple, apricot, birch, cherry, cottonwood, pear, plum, prune, redbud, walnut, willow, and other trees. If trees have been sprayed with insecticides to control other pests, the process may have destroyed the caterpillars' natural enemies thereby setting up a banquet for them.

They have four stages of development: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (silken cocoon in the soil or in the layer of organic debris covering the soil) and adult (moth). Adult moths lay spherical pearly whitish cream

eggs in groups of 25-100 on the underside of tender young leaves.

Caterpillars hatch and go through 4-5 instars (development stages), then drop to the ground to pupate. They winter over in their cocoons. In April and May grayish brown moths appear. You may experience 4-5 generations in a year.

Two parasitic wasps, Cotesia (*Apanteles*) species and *Hyposoter fugitvus*, provide an effective control using the redhump as a host. Other general predators are bigeyed bugs, damsel bugs, lacewings, and spiders, all which feed on both the eggs and larvae. The most effective control method is removing foliage that is infested with larvae and destroying it by burning. If there are small numbers of insects you can crush them, then remove and burn the foliage. The least toxic insecticide is *Bacillus thuringiensis*, sold as Safer Brand Caterpillar Killer, or Greenlight BT Worm Killer. But by the time you see the caterpillars, it's usually too late to spray.

Take comfort knowing that even if redhumped caterpillars completely defoliate a tree, if the tree is otherwise healthy, it usually recovers.



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Contact Your Local Master Gardener

Amador County 209-223-6838 Office hours: 10 am—Noon Tuesday—Thursday mgamador@ucdavis.edu

El Dorado County 530-621-5512 Office hours: 9 am—Noon Tuesday—Friday mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu



It's That Time of the Year!

Each season brings specific chores for the garden and as we transition into fall and our vegetable garden produce begins to wain and our glorious summer flowers start to head to seed, there are still things to do!

October

- Plant cool season annuals. If it continues to be warm be sure to provide some shade for them.
- Deadhead or clean out your summer flowers and consider replanting with some fall color.
- Depending on your elevation the following winter garden vegetables can be planted now from seed: fava beans, beets, carrots, Swiss chard, leaf lettuce, parsnips, peas, radishes, shallots, spinach and turnips. If you want a little head start consider these plants: beets, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Swiss chard, collards, kale, leaf lettuce and onions.
- Now is the time to plant those wonderful spring bulbs which will bring that much needed shot of color in the spring.
- If your irises are getting crowded now is the time to dig them up, divide them, and share them with all your gardening friends.

Enjoy these last few weeks of warm weather that fall often brings and enjoy your garden.



El Dorado County Demonstration Garden Wishlist

If you've been to one of the recent Master Gardener classes in Placerville you've seen the slide show of the demonstration garden's progress. (It's so exciting!) We have funded the development costs entirely through our plant sales and generous donations.

There are a few things on our wishlist you might have available as a donation or temporary loan.

- We are ready to mix the mounds of compost into the soil and could use rear-tine rototillers with some power that can be used in most gardens.
- We're spreading the decomposed granite in the walkways and need a **roll- er or power compactor**.
- We need a **trencher** for the electrical line from the solar system to the future information kiosk.
- We need large boulders to place throughout the gardens.
- We are looking for information on either discounts or a donation of **electrical wire** to connect our solar system to the electrical panel.
- We always need things like **extra PVC pipe**, **anti-siphon valves**, and **sprinkler wire**.

If you can help with any of these items, please contact the Master Gardener office at 530-621-5512. Thank you!



El Dorado County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden takes shape.

Rainscape Gardening

Sharlet Elms, El Dorado County Master Gardener

Do you know what rainscape gardening is? A rainscape is "a landscape that absorbs storm-water runoff instead of directing it into streets and sewers." They are landscapes that once established, rely entirely on rainwater or grey water, if it is available. This type of gardening has become very popular particularly on the east coast and also in the southwest. These areas have rebate programs offered to gardeners who take advantage of the storm runoff and redirect it to their landscape. This allows the storm runoff to enter the water table in a slow and natural manner. It also helps prevent pollutants from reaching streams and waterways.



Master Gardeners take a break from lining the seasonal dry creek bed at the El Dorado County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden.

One technique frequently used in rainscapes are rain gardens. These are gardens which rely entirely on the natural cycle of rainfall and require little or no extra watering. We are fortunate to live in an area which in addition to our diversity of native plants we can take advantage of plantings from the Mediterranean Basin, Western and South Australia, Southwestern South Africa and parts of Central Chile. Our gardens can be surprisingly diverse, colorful and water wise.

You can put in dry stream beds to help direct runoff to specific areas of your landscape. Not only are dry stream beds a beautiful addition to many gardens with great visual appeal but they can help deal with landscape problems such as inconvenient rocky areas, large immovable rocks, etc. They can also add a structural underpinning to a garden to help give it a focal point.

In many areas you can collect water from your roof for use on plants both in your landscape and in your house. There are many do it yourself plans for collecting rainwater on the internet. How much can you collect from your roof? Consider

the following example given by The University of Arizona in the "RainScapes" pamphlet.

Measure the area that the collection surface covers then multiply by the rainfall in inches then multiply by 0.6 which is equal to the gallons collected. Following is an example:

A roof that covers 20 ft x 50 ft = 1,000 ft squared

Annual rainfall = 15 inches

1,000 ft squared x 15 inches x 0.6 = 9,000 gallons annually!

Be sure to check local ordinances before installing a rainwater collection system. There are some areas in the country that limit or prohibit rainwater collection although I could not find any ordinances for California.

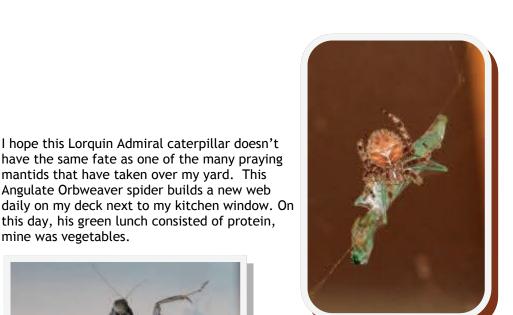
So if you haven't considered a rainscape give it some thought; you might be very glad you did!



Life in My Garden

Kathy Pearson, El Dorado County Master Gardener

As I went out to the garden for a few minutes to cut off suckers from my willow tree I discovered not only Lorquin Admiral eggs but this big guy pictured to the right had survived, too! Having cut off his branch before discovering him, I put it in a water bottle and nestled the branch back up against the tree to hide him so he'll stay within his food source until he's ready to go into a chrysalis.



Orbweaver spider feasting on an unlucky mantid



This Lorquin Admiral caterpillar will hopefully turn into this butterfly





I hope this Lorquin Admiral caterpillar doesn't have the same fate as one of the many praying

mantids that have taken over my yard. This

Angulate Orbweaver spider builds a new web

this day, his green lunch consisted of protein,

Dinner date becomes dinner!

This female praying mantid wasn't satisfied with one mate, she took two! During mating the smaller male often jumps on the back of the larger female. Miscalculating the jump may mean the male becomes a meal. If the jump was successful, the pair mate and during copulation the female may turn and devour the male's head. The body of the male is capable of completing the mating; when complete the female will finish eating the male.

Note: Praying mantid is the name for what's commonly referred to as a praying mantis.

2013 Amador County Master Gardener Tomato Tasting Results

Bobbie Brubaker, Amador County Master Gardener



Mona and Bill Benson of Sutter Creek proudly display Mr. Stripey, the winner of the largest tomato contest.

The results of the 2013 Tomato Tasting are in! Deb Lyons of Pine Grove swept the red tasting category with Big Beef as first prize, Bella Rosa as second, and a "mysterious" tomato variety taking third. Other highly rated red tomatoes of note were Brandywine and Pink Lady grown in Herald, and Porter House from Pine Grove. We received over 25 entries in the red category.

Non-red had 15 entries, with Deb Lyons again winning first and second place with Japanese Black and Tangerine tomatoes. Bernice Honeychurch placed third with Lemon Boy. Other non-reds of note were Jubilee, Golden Girl and Black Prince.

Cherry tomato, with 11 entries, was again won by Dave Brubaker (Sutter Creek) with Sun Gold. Deb Lyons was second with Green Grape, Dave Taylor (Pioneer) third with Sun Gold. Sweet 100 was highly rated.

Biggest tomato of the 6 entries was Mr. Stripey at 2 pounds 5% ounces from Bill & Mona Benson of Sutter Creek.

We plan to score on a scale of 1-10 next year (rather than 1-5), at the judges' request. They felt we wouldn't need so many tie breakers with an expanded range of scoring.

The tomato tasting has been held annually since 1997. We missed the organizational talents of Janice Johnson this year, but tried to carry on the tradition. 16 volunteers made it happen! Many thanks to all who helped. Looking forward to your entries next year!



Mr. Smiley!



Tasters enjoy exploring the variety of tomatoes, picking out new favorites to grow next year.

Plant Sale for Gardeners

Merry Campbell, El Dorado County Master Gardener

Fall is a perfect time for planting, especially perennials, trees and shrubs. We want to make it easier for you by hosting the El Dorado County Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale on September 28, 2013, at the Veterans Memorial Building parking lot. The address is 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville and the plant sale hours are 8am-3pm.

In addition to perennials, trees, and shrubs, we will offer vegetables for fall and winter harvest, ornamental grasses, herbs galore, succulents, and California native plants. The primary mission of the Master Gardeners is to educate the public about the joys and benefits of home gardening. Each of the plant areas will be staffed with knowledgeable MGs who can answer your question whether it is what fits where, does the plant needs lots of water (or very little), does it like sun or shade or something in between.



In addition to the areas mentioned above, we will also have a Premium booth where you will be able to find those plants that required a lot time to propagate or are difficult to find. We will also have houseplants, which can help you through the winter blahs. Joining us at the sale will be representatives of the Gold Country Herb Society to assist you with how to use herbs to enhance your food. And again, back by popular demand, we will have a special area designated as "Birds and Butterflies" to assist you with questions about gardening to attract them.

But plants aren't the only thing we will have. Master Gardeners will be at our Information Booth to answer questions about your existing gardens, whether you have questions about what else to grow, how to handle winterizing your



Master Gardener Bobbie Handen shares her passion for succulents at the 2013 Spring Plant sale. Visit the succulent tent at the fall plant sale.

garden, or just have general questions. Because many of the questions we get in the MG office are related to garden pests, we will also have information on Integrated Pest Management and specialists to help you.

If you specifically like gardening using California native plants, not only will we have many to offer, but the next weekend the El Dorado county chapter of the California Native Plant Society will have their annual fall sale on October 5th from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm in front of County Government Buildings A and B at 330-360 Fair Lane, Placerville. For further information please refer to their website at www.eldoradocnps.org.

The EDC Master Gardeners have office hours on Tuesday through Friday at 311 Fair Lane, Placerville, from 9am-noon. You can also call in questions to 530-621-5512 or email us at mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu.

See you on the 28th!

What in the World is Eating My Tomatoes?

Bonnie Toy, Amador County Master Gardener



Your tomatoes have been growing very well. You have watered them faithfully, mulched the soil around their roots to keep them cool, and have given them an occasional sip of fish fertilizer to help them keep growing those delicious fruits.

Then, one morning you notice that you have some bare stems on your plants. Some even have the tips removed. What in the world could it be?



Then you notice that something has been snacking on your tomato fruits as well, and whatever it is leaves large black droppings at the base of your

plant.

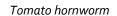


Tobacco hornworm

This hungry fellow pictured on the left is the culprit. Although we commonly call these very large caterpillars tomato hornworms, there are actually two very similar species - the tomato hornworm (*Manduca quinquemaculata*) and the tobacco hornworm (*Manduca sexta*). This particular fellow on the left is a tobacco hornworm.

You can tell because the white markings on his sides form diagonal slashes, and the "horn" on his tail is red.

The tomato hornworm, seen on the right, has a very dark green/black "horn" and the white markings on its sides form V's.



(Continued on page 8)

Both species eat stems, leaves, flowers and fruits, and can denude a tomato plant fairly quickly.

What is Eating My Tomatoes? (Continued from page 7)

Although tomatoes are particularly susceptible to injury, other related plants in the nightshade family - tobacco, potatoes, eggplant and peppers are all candidates for the luncheon menu.

The tobacco hornworm is said to be more common in vegetable gardens, but both may be found together as they generally have similar habits.

These caterpillars are larvae of the Sphinx or Hawk moth - sometimes called "Hummingbird Moths". The moths typically have a wingspan of 3.5 - 5 inches, and travel mostly at night. You might notice one fluttering around your porch light in the evening.





Tobacco Hornworm Adult

Tomato Hornworm Adult

The moth lays single eggs, usually on the underside of a leaf. The eggs are about 1.5mm (1/16") in diameter, and vary in color from light green to white. The eggs will hatch in about 5 days, and the young caterpillars begin munching leaves. They prefer shade, and so will remain in the center part of the plant, making them difficult to detect when they are small. The caterpillar goes through 4 instars, or developmental stages. The 4th and last is the

time when they are extremely voracious and their damage is most often noticed by the gardener. By this time they are 4 - 5 inches long, and a month old. After feeding, they leave the plant and pupate in the soil. During the summer months, moths (the 5th instar) will emerge from pupae in about two weeks, and then begin to deposit eggs of the next generation on tomato plants. In the late summer, the pupae will remain in the ground all winter and emerge as moths the following spring. Thus there are often two generations of these pests in one growing season. The pupa is large, an elongated oval with a pointed end. It is brown or reddish brown.

Yellow jackets, lady beetles and lacewing larvae are all natural enemies of the hornworm larvae.

The hornworm is parasitized by the Trichogramma wasp, which lays Hornworm pupa

its eggs on the hornworm. The hatchlings burrow into the worm to



feed, and emerge to form cocoons on the caterpillar body. I have never seen this, but it is said to be common. If you see a hornworm that looks like it has a bunch of rice granules on it, leave it alone. The worm will die, and the cocoons will hatch more wasps to parasitize other worms.

Control in home gardens is often done by hand picking the caterpillars from the infested plants. The early morning

(Continued on page 9)

What is Eating My Tomatoes? (Continued from page 8)

and evening are the best times to locate the larvae. Their coloring and markings make them look very much like a rolled-up tomato leaf, and you will have to look very carefully to see them. It is said that spraying the plant with water will make them easier to spot. The larvae can be squashed, drowned in a bucket, or snipped in half to kill them. I know one gardener who throws them over his fence as a treat for the forest creatures. If you catch the infestation early enough, the plants can be sprayed with Bacillus thuringiensis (BT), a gut-active bacteria which is not considered harmful to humans. You must wet the leaves thoroughly throughout the plant, both surfaces, because the larvae are only killed if they actually consume the bacteria. This method works best when the larvae are small. Once your tomato plants are through producing, pull the plants out and till the soil thoroughly. This has been shown to reduce the overwintering population by up to 90%. Crop rotation is also effective, but it is best not to plant back to any area that has been planted to a nightshade crop the previous year.

UC IPM mentions some pesticides other than BT that can be used, but warns against the possibility of killing natural predators and other environmental impacts.

The time-tested way to protect your current year's tomato crop is to spend 15 minutes in the morning, and again in the evening, carefully examining the leaves around the top of the plants. My first damage showed up during the last week in August. On the first day I noticed damage, I hand picked over 20 worms. I thoroughly sprayed all my nightshade family plants with BT. I knew that wouldn't help with the larger caterpillars already munching happily away, but hoped it would prevent new little ones from growing up. Since that first discovery, I have picked 3 - 6 worms off my vines in the morning and again in the evening. I believe that next year I will spray BEFORE I see any damage in the early summer, and again in late summer. Perhaps if I do that, the first instar caterpillars will ingest the bacteria and perish, so I won't see any 4th instar at all. Good luck to you in your battles with the hornworm!

Photo Credits

Damaged tomato plant, chewed green tomato, 4th instar tobacco hornworm, 4th instar tomato hornworm - Bonnie Toy

Hornworm pupa - UC IPM Photo, © 2001 Regents University of California Tomato Hornworm Adult - The VegEdge, University of Minnesota IPM Tobacco Hornworm Adult - The Moth Photographers Group, © Jim Vargo

Save the Date!

October 17, 2013, 1:00 to 4:30 PM Groveland Comm. Hall State Highway 120, Groveland, CA

Presented by the University of California Cooperative Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District



Recovering from Wildfire Resources for private forest landowners

What You'll Learn About:

- The role of wildfire in forest development and change
- Post-fire issues and treatment options for private landowners
- Post-fire treatment cost-share programs for private landowners
- Professional assistance for post-fire treatments

Who Should Attend:

- Forest landowners affected by the Rim Fire
- Citizens interested in the future of forests after wildfires
- Staff and decision makers with state, and local, federal and tribal agencies concerned with forest management, defensible space, and water quality

For additional information, contact Susie Kocher at 530-542-2571 or sdkocher@ucanr.edu. Watch for more information and on-line registration Visit http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu for more information and on-line registration.



Firewise Landscaping

Informational Meeting-Learn to protect your home from fire

Sunday, October 20th, 1:00 pm
Presented by Master Gardener Robin Stanley and Mark Stanley

Pleasant Valley Grange Hall, 4765 Pleasant Valley Grange Road Hosted by Pleasant Valley Grange Fire Safe Council http://www.pvgrange.org/firesafe.html firesafe@pvgrange.org

Hundred Acre Olive Harvest & Master Food Preserver Class

Have you considered planting an olive tree in your garden so you can cure and process your own olives?

Would you like to see examples of seven varieties of olive trees to help you decide which type to plant?

Do you want to experience firsthand how to harvest olives?

Are you curious about curing fresh olives?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, we have the perfect event for you!

What: Participate in harvesting an olive orchard. You are welcome to come for an hour, or stay all day. Talk with the orchard owners as you pick and learn about growing olive trees.

When: Saturday, November 2, from 8 am until all the harvest has been picked. Master Food Preservers will present a class on curing olives at 3:00.

Event Host: Hundred Acre Olive Oil, Plymouth

Please dress accordingly; we recommend layers. Bring gloves if you like, but it is not necessary. The fields are not level and gopher/mole holes are a given, so be sure to wear good, sturdy shoes. Kids are welcome but please keep an eye on them.

In exchange for your help and companionship, we will provide lunch, snacks, dinner and beverages of all sorts. Every tree is an opportunity to meet someone new as you pick.

Our trees were planted in 2006 and they spent two years in the pots. We have the following varieties: Arbequina, Frantoio, Mission, Pendolino, Manzanilla, and Leccino. There are also a few Kalamata trees, which produce HUGE olives and are perfect for curing and stuffing with all sorts of goodness.

If you intend to be a part of the harvest party, we kindly ask that you let us know so we will be sure to have enough food. RSVP by email to HundredAcreOliveOil@gmail.com if you would like to participate in the olive harvest or class. Please let us know how many people plan to attend. We will forward the address information and directions at that time.

Visit the <u>California Backyard Orchard website</u> for great information about <u>growing olive trees</u>. <u>Download the free ANR Publication #8267</u>, *Olives: Safe Methods for Home Pickling*.





Public Education Classes & Events for Amador and El Dorado Counties – Free!!



Most classes are from 9 a.m. – Noon. Please call ahead to confirm locations.

Click on the class title to go to our public website and schedule an email reminder for the class.

Amador County

Unless otherwise noted, all Amador classes are at the GSA Building, 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson. Questions? Call 209-223-6838.

October

19: Growing Great Vegetables (Part 4)

Vegetable gardens can be year round producers. As the summer ends, it's time to either close out your garden and prepare it for a winter hibernation, or keep it going with a winter garden. Learn how to do both at this class.

November

16: Apples & Pears

Apple and pear trees provide beauty and food for your family. Learn how to successfully grow and harvest these trees.

Do you want to become a Master Gardener?

Master Gardeners (MG) are agents of the University of California Cooperative extension, trained during an intensive 4½ month, 80+ hour horticulture program.

Classes meet weekly with outside study and training activities. Regular tests and a final examination prepare the trainees to begin the first year as a MG.

El Dorado County will host new volunteer training in 2014. Any resident of Amador or El Dorado County may apply. Master Gardeners commit to donating at least 50 hours of volunteer hours during their first year in their home county. Each subsequent year they complete at least 25 hours of volunteer and 12 hours of continuing education hours.

Interested? Sign our MG Training interest list at http://ucanr.edu/be_mg. We will contact you with details about our upcoming orientation sessions where you will learn more details about the training program.

El Dorado County

Unless otherwise noted, all El Dorado County classes are at the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville. Questions? Call 503-621-5512.

October

5: Yellow Starthistle Control

There is hope! Yellow Starthistle can be controlled. Come to this class to learn some new techniques and procedures for the control of Yellow Starthistle.

12: <u>How to Clone Plants: Divisions, Cuttings and Layering</u>

MGs Debbie Hillel and Gail Fulbeck will discuss different methods of asexual plant propagation and demonstrate division, cuttings, and layering methods. Audience members will have a chance to try their hand and bring home starts for new plants. If time permits, a discussion of seed saving techniques will be included.

19: Putting Your Garden to Bed

The extra effort you put into your yard and garden areas this fall will pay big dividends next year. Learn how easy it is to Put Your Garden to Bed with Master Gardeners Cindy Young and Kate Halvorson. They will discuss yard and garden clean up, cool season planting, tool sharpening and cleaning, composting, mulching, pruning, the importance of collecting those valuable fall leaves, and much more.

26: Landscaping with Ornamental Grasses

Location: Government Center Hearing Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville
Are you looking for an almost "perfect" plant for the garden? Want less maintenance in your yard? If so, THIS is the class for you. In the last several years, grasses have become very popular because they are largely pest-free, easy to plant and care for, and lend themselves to El Dorado County's climate.

Check out the <u>El Dorado County Master Gardener</u> Facebook page.



Master Food Preservers Classes — Free

Amador/Calaveras County

• Saturday, October 5: <u>Jams & Jellies</u>, 10:00 a.m. - Noon Location: Calaveras County Senior Center at 956 Mountain Ranch Road in San Andreas

• Saturday, November 2: Olives, 3:00 pm
Location: Hundred Acre Olive Farm, Plymouth. This class is at a private residence.
RSVP by email to HundredAcreOliveOil@gmail.com to get directions

Call 209-223-6857 for more information. Download the current Amador MFP class schedule.

El Dorado County

10:00 a.m. - Noon. Location: El Dorado County Fairgrounds (Board Room)

• Tuesday, October 1: Conserves, Butters & Marmalade

Tuesday, October 8: Apples, Pears & More
 Tuesday, October 22: Autumn's Harvest

• Tuesday, October 29: Olives

Call 530-621-5506 for more information. Download the full El Dorado MFP class schedule.



Pest Notes

Free Pest Notes are available on a variety of topics. For more information, call or email your local Master Gardener office.



To explore the Pest Notes on the UC Integrated Pest Management (IPM) website, go to http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu.

Amador & El Dorado Counties Master Gardener Newsletter

Editor: Sharlet Elms Layout Editor: Kim Cohen

Not on our e-newsletter distribution list yet? Know someone who would like to receive our newsletters and notifications on classes and events? Sign up online at http://ucanr.org/mgenews.

Get Answers to Your Gardening Questions Online

http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/ Master_Gardeners

- Information about Master Gardeners and even how to become one
- List of public classes
- Calendar of Master Gardener events
- Useful links to gardening websites
- Home gardening publications

Got a specific question? Just email us!

Amador: mgamador@ucdavis.edu
El Dorado: mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu



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