

# Roots & Shoots



Master Gardener  
Society  
of Oakland County



April / May 2008



April 2, 2008 @ 6:30pm

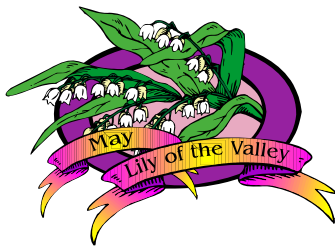
**MGSOOC General Society Meeting & Location**

Bowers Farm, Alternative School Building, 1219 E. Square Lake Rd.

[http://mgsoc.org/Images/Bowers\\_streetMap.jpg](http://mgsoc.org/Images/Bowers_streetMap.jpg)

Speaker : **Jim Veldheer**—Education: “Tulips”

A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational program.



May 7, 2008 @ 6:30pm

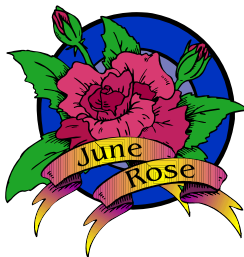
**MGSOOC General Society Meeting & Location**

Bowers Farm, Alternative School Building, 1219 E. Square Lake Rd.

[http://mgsoc.org/Images/Bowers\\_streetMap.jpg](http://mgsoc.org/Images/Bowers_streetMap.jpg)

Speaker : **Joel Miller** –Education: “Hydrangeas”

A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational program.



June 4, 2008 @ 6:30pm

**MGSOOC General Society Meeting & Location**

Bowers Farm, Alternative School Building, 1219 E. Square Lake Rd.

[http://mgsoc.org/Images/Bowers\\_streetMap.jpg](http://mgsoc.org/Images/Bowers_streetMap.jpg)

Speaker : **Bob Koenders**—Education: “Alliums”

A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational program.

## Carol's Corner



Well spring is officially here but as I look out my window there are snow flurries flying. The snow and cold isn't keeping my daffodils from poking up and I'm already thinking of doing a mass planting of *Galanthus* next fall! I guess we should all be used to it by now because it's a typical Michigan spring, but as I've talked to a lot of you over this winter, it seems to have been a harder one than most for so many of us. Soon it will only be a memory!

We will be finished with the Winter Master Gardener Volunteer training class on April 3, so if you see new faces at your favorite volunteer projects, please be sure to make them feel welcome. As you know, the truly wonderful world of being a Master Gardener Volunteer is just beginning for them.

The Banquet Committee is busy planning the Volunteer Recognition Banquet. This year we moved it back to May 22 which should make it easier for last year's MGVP Training classes to get their hours in for their basic certification in time to make it to the Banquet. The deadline we give the winter class is April 1 or 15 and if they waited until then to give us hours it was too late to register for the banquet. Our Banquet theme for this year is *In the Merry Month of May* and it will be held in the beautiful White Lake Oaks Country Club. I hope you plan on attending! I'm charged with the extremely tough task of naming Master Gardener of the Year. I hope you know that there are so many of you who deserve this award it is always a hard decision. If I could hand out dozens of these awards, I would!

The volunteer season is upon us and we are getting more and more solicitations for volunteer help in the *Oakland Gardener*. Most of the **Farmers Markets** will be starting up in May. That is a long season and there are always plenty of volunteer slots available. We are also gearing up for the *Ask a Master Gardener...Helping People Grow* fundraiser.

By the time you read this we will have started our first 3-week *Junior Master Gardener (JMG) Program "Train the Trainer" Series*. These trained MGV's will then be able to take the curriculum out into the community. We already have a number of groups who are busy lining up kids to take the JMG program! Oakland County Farm Bureau has generously given us money to have supply totes made up for each chapter. So we will be ready to jump into this really cool programming this summer! If you want to get a group of youth together and help run a program be sure to contact me. The curriculum is for 5th through 7th graders but can be tailored for any age. A few years ago we used it very successfully for a group of developmentally disabled adults! Thanks to **Michelle Dunham** for taking the leadership on this program. She is a semi-retired teacher who has run the class a number of times, so I know we are in good hands!

## Useful Websites

Master Gardener Volunteer Record Keeping System (to report your hours online): <https://mi.mgrecord.com>

Oakland County MSU Extension Website: <http://msue.msu.edu/oakland>

MSU Educational Bulletins: <http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/>

Turf/Lawn: [www.turf.msu.edu](http://www.turf.msu.edu)

Weeds: [www.msuturfweeds.net](http://www.msuturfweeds.net)

U.S.D.A. Plant Database: <http://plants.usda.gov/>

Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program Website:  
<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/>

Master Gardener Shopping Mall:  
<http://www.mastergardenershoppingmall.com/>

American Horticultural Society: <http://www.ahs.org/index.html>



## 3-Day Garden Bus Trip to Indiana August 1 – 3, 2008

Only a few seats remain available!!!

View BROCHURE and RESERVATION FORM:

<http://www.mgsoc.org/Trips/INDIANA2008.pdf>

(click on it or copy and add to browser)

We will travel to:

Minnetrista (Oakhurst Gardens), Shipshewana, (Antique Market weekend only twice a year!), Amish Acres (Arts/Crafts Show, Thresher Dinner), Carolee's Herb Farm AND Nursery, International Friendship Gardens, Tabor Hill Winery...hey, check out the brochure!

Hope you can join us for fun, games, gardens, prizes, samples and great company!

Sandie Parrott <mailto:RSBirdy@Comcast.net> or call 248.394.1532

## Clematis – A Plant That Keeps on Giving



Clematis, no matter how you pronounce it, is certainly a plant that provides a full season of beauty with vertical or horizontal habits, fine green leaves, magnificent flowers and fascinating seed heads.

Cheryl M. English is a certified Advanced Master Gardener from Wayne County, who expertly cultivates at least fifty different clematis on her tiny lot in Detroit, growing them in every nook and cranny available. There is no front or back lawn at her home - - just beautiful cultivars who are carefully fitted in on vertical supports or allowed to engage their sprawling habits in leafy mounds.

Formally educated as an art historian, Cheryl has parlayed her varied training and experience into a career as a landscaper, potter and public speaker. She is President Emeritus and current Programming Chair for Master Gardeners of Greater Detroit and writes for the group's newsletter, *The City Seedling*.

Cheryl spoke at the March meeting and oohed and awed us with her beautiful photos but her emphasis on pruning types seemed the most welcome part of her presentation. One of the most troubling aspects for gardeners trying their hands at raising clematis is learning when to prune. Clematis cultivars generally fall into three categories which are differentiated by whether blooms form on new wood, old wood, or a combination of the two. Cheryl assured us that the best way to deal with this type of quandary was simply to pay attention to the bloom times. If a particular cultivar is an early bloomer, it obviously blooms on last year's or old wood. Those that bloom from mid-summer on, bloom on new. Those that graciously provide us with a double showing bloom on both old and new wood.

Group 1 cultivars, the early-flowering varieties, prefer a sheltered, sunny site with well-drained soil. This group contains *C. alpine* and *C. macropetala* which bloom on the previous year's shoots and occasionally on new growth in summer. The alpine 'Constance' has semi-double deep purplish pink flowers followed by gorgeous seed heads from late summer to autumn. The cultivar 'Blue Bird' is a macropetala which puts out lots and lots of small, open, semi-nodding mauve-blue flowers followed by just as many seed heads she calls "old man's beards." Both alpine and macropetala stay fairly short at 6 to 10 feet. These should definitely not be pruned in spring.

*Clematis montana* is another member of Group 1. 'Pink Perfection' is a very fine specimen with 2-3 inch rounded pink flowers and a strong vanilla scent. *C. montanas* are very vigorous vines growing up to 22 feet. This family also needs no pruning but since they are only hardy in zones 6 to 9, Cheryl suggests trying them, and all marginals, in a microclimate.

For containers, she suggests *C. flammula* 'Pretty in Blue,' a Group 3, which is also scented but is not reliably hardy here. If you try it, don't forget it needs support as it can reach a height of 20 feet. For a groundcover, *C. recta* 'Purpurea,' another Group 3, is recommended. A bonus is its young purple foliage.

A Group 2 family, *Clematis florida*, is hardy in zones 6 – 9 and includes the 'Alba Plena' which flowers from early summer to early autumn on both old and new wood. 'Sieboldii' has creamy

white flowers with stunning dark purple stamens which are not huge but make a huge impact in the landscape.

Group 3 varieties, those that bloom late, are maybe the easiest to deal with. All previous year's growth should be pruned back to a pair of strong buds 6 to 8 inches above the ground before growth begins in the spring. 'Mme. Julia Correvon' is a viticella producing single bright wine-red flowers 3 inches across. Cheryl recommends not pruning for health but pruning hard. She suggests pruning this one at 18 inches to the two strongest buds. 'Polish Spirit,' another viticella, has saucer-shaped rich, velvety, purple-blue flowers with red anthers from mid-summer to late autumn.

There are more than 200 species of evergreen or deciduous, woody to semi-woody climbers, sprawlers, and even shrub-like clematis, like the *C. heracleifolia* 'China Purple.' Cheryl says to keep this small blue-flowered variety at the front of the border and prune lightly if at all.

Cheryl also provided many words of wisdom. She cautioned all growers to pay attention to the seed heads and seed dispersal. *C. terniflora*, the Sweet Autumn clematis, can be invasive. She suggested opting for *C. virginiana*, aka 'Virgin's Bower,' which is a native here instead. No matter what we grow we have a responsibility to protect the environment from unwanted seedlings which jeopardize native plants with their opportunistic abilities. She warned against using wooden supports as opposed to metal because they just don't last and supports are very difficult to replace without a lot of pain. If a plant doesn't bloom or otherwise fails to thrive, it's in the wrong spot. Cheryl advised us to spend time with our clematis for a number of reasons. First and foremost, know when it blooms to know when to prune. Also watch for signs of clematis wilt, which enters the plant through a wound. Locate the wound site and prune out everything from the first node below the wound site. And the standard rule "Feet in the shade and head in the sun" is not so much "feet in the shade" but "feet kept cool." All varieties need to be in well drained locations. Roots need to be cool and moist but definitely not wet. Some varieties can be burned in full sun and others' flowers fade too fast in full sun.

I especially appreciated her suggestion to have patience, which is a must for all gardeners. Clematis aficionados have a saying, "The first year they sleep; the second year they creep. The third year they leap!"

Cheryl English can be reached at [cenglish@blackcatpottery.com](mailto:cenglish@blackcatpottery.com)

*Submitted by Susan Tatus McLarty*

## Notes from Nutcase Nursery



This time of year is about the only time of year some of us can find time for reading. The chunk of catalogs starts taking up way too much space and decisions must be made. Action plans must be created. Beds must be thought out. Crop considerations are critical.

But, after a suitable seed inventory it can be quite entertaining to peruse the printed piles of fake photos, foolish statements and other bits of weird science and science fiction. Even those who enjoy graphic gardening horror stories, with pictures of child-eating cabbages and pumpkins, and cornstalks obviously irradiated by aliens, will find amusement as well as utility.

We at Nutcase have our favorite plants to grow and usually we find little room for experimentation. You want entertainment on a Michigan winter's day when venturing outdoors is suicidal? Have a discussion on the pros and cons of growing a 15 pound radish. Drink hot toddies while you're at it and you could wind up giving them out at Halloween. You never know - - - fifteen-pound round root vegetables might just be the next big craft item, like those shriveled apple-headed little voodoo dolls that were the rage years back. We could even sell them on QVC. Note to self: Contact Martha Stewart immediately.

As Master Gardeners we are put in positions where processing information is a must. To maintain certification we need our education hours. To be field extensions of the Extension we need to be able to share accurate detail at every information booth, market table, neighborhood or class we assist. We have a responsibility to our community by being part of MSUE-Oakland County and "Bringing Knowledge to Life."

And it isn't always a pleasant thing to do. As an Emerald Ash Borer Scout, it was heart-breaking to tell someone with 16 ash trees of various ages that buffered his lot from a two-lane that all were infested. They all had to go. It was sad fact that we were oppressed with facing. But life goes on. It surely does go on.

Sometimes it takes over!

When you work information booths at the markets or "Ask a Master Gardener" days in May, you meet a lot of people with questions who honestly need assistance. And of course, "show-and-tell" helps us answer them. Surprisingly to me, people who come and play "Stump the Master Gardener" are happy to jump in their vehicles to retrieve a sample from home. Of course it's much more humiliating when you can't answer someone who's dangling a wilted something-or-other in your face because you haven't been able to visualize the problem due to the lack of proper information. "It's green and it grows on the fence" just isn't a narrow enough search for my brain to complete successfully. But that's the chance you take when you put yourself out there.

It's always a gamble when you're in that kind of situation but there are always more winners than losers. There is great satisfaction when you and your partner loudly and proudly declare in stereo to the red-faced gentleman racing back with his sample, "It's

crownvetch!" Identified from over 15 feet away. We smiled in the face of the noxious weed while patting ourselves on the back.

After that, we had to gently suggest how to survive the rampant grower and take back his beds a little at a time. While not overjoyed with the verdict, he and his wife were grateful for the ID and tips because they had just moved to a new house that drew them in with its tiered gardens and large lawn beds, and unfortunate groundcover. The previous owner might just have been someone who was seduced by the brilliant marketing use of phrases like "Spreads rapidly to form a lush carpet of rich green foliage." Whoever conjured up that phrase never, and I mean never, walked barefoot on lilies of the valley in this part of town. The write-up for crownvetch boasts a problem solving dream of a plant that "Needs no maintenance. Thrives in any soil in full sun or semi-shade! Chokes out weeds and resists drought, disease and insects." They forgot to mention that a plant that talented also grows through concrete bunkers.

How about this teaser - - "Here's your opportunity to grow something your friends and neighbors don't already have"? That's like sugar water to hummingbirds for a gardener who collects. Don't worry, your neighbors will have their very own houttuynia soon enough. Do you know why they really named it the chameleon plant? Not because its multi-colored beauty can blend so well with so much. It's because you don't notice it taking over. It works that way with buttercups (ranunculus) as well. Beware the swapper with a large supply of a particular variety at plant exchanges.

Then there are situations where choosing unwisely was never an option. Why did I have to buy a trumpet vine that never bloomed but refused to die when all I had to do was wait three years and the neighbor's vine, a whole yard away, sprouted up little pups all through my asparagus patch. I hadn't learned about vines at that time. Plus, who was I to deprive hummingbirds food? Maybe I'd actually get some of those little flying jewels. It looked so good in the picture. Yea, I say unto thee, I have seen backhoe-resistant pachysandra.

And that, boys and girls, is how gardening teaches patience.

But all is not a painful experience in the field. There are perks. It's actually more fun than depressing telling a gaggle of new gardeners that the plants in the catalogs are really not that blue, unless of course they are plumbago. Please note:

"While they might appear a marvelous shade of blue,  
the plants and flowers in those photos  
were shot through blue filters or otherwise enhanced."  
(Most reds are enhanced as well.)

It would be a service to the community if we would put that on cards and pass them out, along with a few other oft-repeated gems such as "Identify it before you try killing it," "Use slow-release fertilizer," "Don't forget your tetanus shot," "That's why wearing gloves is good for you," and "Knowledge is understanding the tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting one in a fruit salad."

And now we're back to the topic of vegetables and 15 pound radishes. I seriously doubt that there will be any planted this year at Nutcase but over the years we have tried different crops with hit and miss results.

We tried lima beans a few times but there never seemed to be enough of them for the space they needed. We were on a Romano kick for a while, thoroughly enjoying the nutty flavor. There was a yellow wax bean period, but they didn't freeze well and I never really liked them as a kid. So we stick to bush Blue Lake and Contender green beans.

I planted cantaloupe in black plastic because my husband said he liked it and I happened to be a relative newlywed with a much nicer attitude. But he never ate them and I don't get along with the melon family. Another not-too-bright waste of space scratched off the seed list. But we must always grow radishes. Not necessarily for food mind you, but himself just likes to see them grow. I think it's because radishes are the very first to harvest and for my husband it's like "Opening Day" for the garden. One year I simply broadcast the carrot seed without mixing in radish seed because I figured nobody ate them anyway since my Dad passed away. I learned that my assumption had no bearing in the real world because growing radishes and eating radishes are two different things according to my mate.

According to the [Michigan Gardening Guide](#) by Jerry Minnich, there are 66 common and not-so-common vegetables grown in our state. Minnich's recommendations come from his own experience and the library of Extension bulletins and documents but he only lists forty-some in his charts. He apologizes for not being able to include a lot of detail because of space, but there are many important tidbits that I have found nowhere else. I had no idea that beets were "notorious consumers of potash." He suggests incorporating hardwood ashes or potash rock in the soon-to-be beet bed in early spring. I was thrilled to realize that we have been doing just that when we empty the fireplace. Dumb luck wins again providing yet another Hallmark gardening moment.

One of the beauties of gardening is the enjoyment you get when you experience an "aha" moment or two. A significant discovery made, a correlation noticed, a bit of bonus information gained - - those are elements in the life of the Master Gardener regardless of what or where you grow. And when there is opportunity to share these things coupled with actual fruits of our labor, the satisfaction increases exponentially. While space in a vegetable garden is usually rare, it's so worthwhile to put in a little extra for Plant A Row food banks. Both Tollgate and Bower Farm have provided hundreds if not thousands of pounds of Master Gardener grown bounty for various food banks and Forgotten Harvest. If you don't have a particular place to donate your extras, English Gardens locations will be happy to take them off your hands. So plan and plant a little more this season. Many times in the realm of backyard gardening when a certain crop ripens somehow we are surprised at how much there is of it. The perfect candidates for a trip to a drop point. Onions, leeks, and herbs are just as welcome at a food bank as tomatoes, peppers, squash and carrots. Cherry tomatoes not so much; they just don't enjoy the trip.

You know, since the County likes to keep tally on the amounts that are contributed by MGs, maybe we should plant a couple of rows of those 15 pound radishes.

To contact Nutcase Nursery, email [nutcase\\_nursery@yahoo.com](mailto:nutcase_nursery@yahoo.com).

## Protect Your Hands



Each spring when we purchase our seeds, buy our potting soil, choose our fertilizer, we also begin looking for a new pair of gloves. There are so many choices, styles and colors. We remember what worked well in the past. Everyone, I am sure, has come upon a favorite over the years. Some gloves begin to show wear in the first couple of weeks. If you find your fingers poking through around July, your choices for a replacement will be very limited. That is when it's nice to have a spare pair hanging around, One friend, Sherri, says she buys three pair of cotton gloves with nubs on them, since she know from past years, that is how many she will need. This style fits her needs, and she likes the idea of them being washable. The variety of cotton or canvas gloves is enormous. Like my friend Jan told me, gloves are dispensable, I buy a new canvas pair every year. Since they can be found in the grocery store, the hardware store, the dollar store, or the garden store, it's no problem finding what I want.

Some specialty gloves have emerged. One such pair is called the Wonder Glove. So far I've only seen them in catalogs or on line. They are a tough vinyl outside and seamless cotton inside. They are mainly for fall and winter gardening or for wet conditions. You know how uncomfortable cold, soggy, muddy fingers can feel. So this might be a brand worth trying. An added feature is that you can get them to FIT. A measurement around the knuckles and the use of a chart can get you very close to your size. Colors range from purple to pink to terra cotta. The prices range from \$6.95 to \$10.95. One point remains important, FIT! All gardeners interviewed were strong on this fact especially small handed people. It is nice to see a brand that is labeled women's, and then to see small, medium, and large.

Another specialty glove that has emerged is the Nitrile Glove. Their claim is to fit like a second skin, and wear like leather. Nitrile seems to be an alternative to latex for the fact that they don't cause allergic reactions. I found this out at my last doctor visit. I noticed a dispenser of exam gloves on the wall that were called Nitrile. When I asked the doctor why he used them he said the girls do the ordering, he just pays for them. So I asked the nurses before I left the office, and they told me some girls were allergic to the latex gloves so they ordered the nitrile. This fact isn't mentioned in the advertisement of the glove. The palms and fingers are made of nitrile and the back is a stretchy fabric. The cuffs come up quite high and seem to fit tightly. The price is \$7.95.

Some gardeners vary their choices. Smart! Certain gloves are better for certain chores. Marie keeps three kinds on hand. First, she has a knit glove with a smooth latex coating for planting. These are called MUD Gloves and are washable. Next is a weeding glove called Midwest Gripping, which has latex also, but with ridges. Last, is a clean-up glove with leather palm and fingers, and a Spandex back.

Then we can't forget good old fashion leather gloves. Of course, there are different leathers. My favorite pair was made of goat skin and came from Lee Valley. They were so comfortable I used them for everything from planting to clean up. That was the mistake, because they didn't last the season, and they don't offer them anymore. Plain cowhide works well. They are breathable and sturdy. Adeline has some special pair of leather glove that she told me she cherishes like a string of pearls. These she uses for raking or digging. I have to find out what kind that is. Some people can be very persistent in their choices. Diane purchased a new glove years ago when we attended the Home and Garden Show downtown. She still has them, and still uses them yearly. No tags are visible since they were purchased so many years ago, so we can't quite figure out what brand they are. (Maybe they are the Wonder Glove!)

As you can see, the choices are numerous. Tight wrist to keep dirt out, long cuffs to protect from rose thorns, vinyl or nitrile for wet, cotton or leather for hot, pink for Sunday, yellow for Thursday, and on and on.....

*Submitted by Diane Opria*

## **Master Gardener Society of Oakland County Board Meeting Minutes: January 28, 2008**

Quorum present

- **Motion:** J Gramlich moved to accept minutes of November 19, 2007 with corrections. S.T. McLarty support. Approved.
- **Motion:** S.T. McLarty moved to approve the Treasurer report January 1-28, 2008. J. Gramlich support. Approved.
- **Motion:** J. Gramlich moved all 2007 receipts submitted for reimbursement must be submitted to her by Feb 15, 2008. S.T. McLarty support. Approved.

*Trips and Tours:* S. Parrott presented. Indiana is the destination.

- **Motion:** R. Vrbensky moved to support the Indiana trip presented and issue a check for \$355 for the bus deposit. S.T. McLarty support. Approved.

☞ All reports and submissions are available to every member, upon request, from the Secretary.

*Submitted by Ruth Vrbensky*



## Some Information You Should Know

### MGSOOC Board Members

**President: Tom Hershberger ..... (586)573-3954**  
**Vice President: John Grant.....(248)852-3758**  
**Secretary: Ruth Vrbensky .....(248)969-6904**  
**Treasurer: Jean Gramlich ..... (810)714-2343**  
**Team Administrator: Susan McLarty ..... (248)673-8092**

### MSU Extension Oakland County Coordinator

**Advisor: Carol Lenchek ..... (248)858-0900**  
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### Team Coordinators

**Bowers Farm: Martha Humphrey**  
**[mlhgrows@ameritech.net](mailto:mlhgrows@ameritech.net)**  
**Project Support: Clay Ottoni ..... (248)454-9800**  
**Hospitality: Pat Banaszek ..... (586)677-2048**  
**Membership: Tom Hershberger ..... (586)573-3954**  
**Programs: John P. Humphrey .....(248)542-8213**  
**Trips & Tours: Sandie Parrott .....(248)394-1532**  
**Web Site: Sheri Trout ..... (248)328-0557**  
**[sheri@oaklandweb.com](mailto:sheri@oaklandweb.com)**

**Corresponding Secretary: Diane Rix [calrix1@comcast.net](mailto:calrix1@comcast.net)**

**Web Site Address: [www.mgsoc.org](http://www.mgsoc.org)**

**Currently Available Opportunities: Communications,  
Education, Project Support, Volunteer Activities**

#### Mission Statement

It is the Master Gardener Society of Oakland County's Mission to assist, enable, and encourage its members to use their horticultural knowledge and experience to help the people of their communities, enrich their lives through gardening and good gardening practices.

Michigan State University Extension- Oakland County  
“Bringing Knowledge to Life”

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The Oakland Gardener only accepts submissions via e-mail. E-mail needs to include a description of request, contact person's name, phone number and email address. This info will be “cut and pasted” into this newsletter.

Roots & Shoots is a joint publication of MSU Extension-Oakland county and Master Gardener Society of Oakland County. Submit articles for publication by suggested deadlines below.

January 1	for February/March issue	March 1	for April/May issue
May 1	for June/July issue	July 1	for August/September issue
September 1	for October/November issue	November 1	for December/January issue

To help reduce mailing expenses, if you have Internet access we encourage you to read Roots & Shoots online at the Master Gardener Society website [www.mgsoc.org](http://www.mgsoc.org).



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