

# Roots & Shoots



Master Gardener  
Society  
of Oakland County



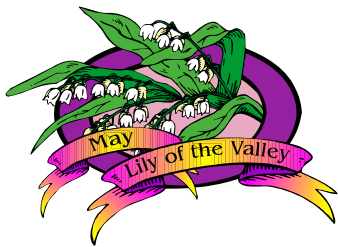
April / May 2009



April 7, 2009 @ 6:30pm  
MGSOOC General Society Meeting & Location  
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Speaker : Bob McGowan –Education: “Plant-A-Row Gardens”

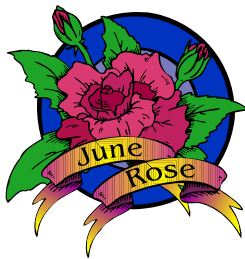
A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational Program.



May 12, 2009 @ 6:30pm  
MGSOOC General Society Meeting & Location  
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Speaker : Bill Pioch–Education: “Tomatoes”

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



June 2, 2009 @ 6:30pm  
MGSOOC General Society Meeting & Location  
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Speaker : Sandie Parrott–Education: “MGSOC Trip Photos”

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

## Carol's Corner



Happy Spring!! This is a very busy time of year for me and I'd like to share some of things that are in the works.

The banquet committee is busy working on the details for the Master Gardener Volunteer Recognition Banquet. The invitation will go out the first week in April but please put May 28<sup>th</sup> from 5:30-8:30 on your calendar. We need to wait until the one year deadline for the 2008 classes to turn in their hours. The theme for this year is **April Showers Bring May Flowers**. If you would like to donate a door prize item, please let me know. For those of you in business, we'd love to get certificates for free garden design consultations or free admission to classes or anything else you can think of to give as door prizes!

We are also getting ready for the information booths at the various Farmers Markets in the county. This year Wixom is starting a market and would love to have an information table for their market customers. If we can get a volunteer team leader we will move forward and make that the 8<sup>th</sup> market we have a presence at! I still want to give the MGVP Training Class 1<sup>st</sup> crack at signing up for the markets, so once the class ends on April 9<sup>th</sup> we will advertise it to all of you.

The letters have gone out to the retailers for Ask a Master Gardener Program. This year there will be 5 ACO stores (with garden centers) that would like to participate. This is our main fundraiser for the MGVP, so I hope you will consider volunteering once that message appears in the Oakland Gardener. Denise Jones is once again taking the lead on this program. We could not manage this without her!!

I have been busy selecting and purchasing books for our new Master Gardener Lending Library. I'm hoping that when you are doing research for presentations you will take advantage of the library. You will be able to check books out for free. The only *caveat* will be is that you need to be a currently certified Oakland County MGVP or Candidate. I will post the list of titles in the next issue of Roots & Shoots. The books will range from children's garden activity books and stories to horticulture therapy (accessible gardening) books to vegetable gardening and everything in between!

Lastly, the Continuing Education Committee is busy working on a basic Garden Design Class that will be a 4-week Saturday morning series in August/September, so look for more information on it in the future.

The snow is gone (hopefully for good) and I know we are all so antsy to get into our garden beds. I find myself just milling around my yard waiting for the soil to dry out enough to get started. I hope you've had a good rest over this winter and you are raring to go out and volunteer! Thanks for all your efforts!

# *2008 Annual Master Gardener Volunteer Program Report At-A-Glance*

## 2008 Oakland County Master Gardener Volunteer Activities

Total volunteer hours:	26,013
Full-time employee equivalents:	13
Economic value to Oakland County citizens:	\$507,514 (\$19.51 per hour)
Number of residents reached:	437,701 + to date

## Oakland County Master Gardener Volunteer Program Ten -Year Summary

<u>Year</u>	<u>MGVs Trained</u>	<u>Active MGVs</u>	<u>Hours Logged</u>
1999	66	192	8,799 hours
2000	208	252	11,639 hours
2001	159	310	13,632 hours
2002	173	377	16,315 hours
2003	85	442	20,076 hours
2004	121	508	22,138 hours
2005	118	458	20,105 hours
2006	119	546	31,470 hours
2007	106	534	25,206 hours
2008	109	543	26,013 hours
	<b>1,164</b>		<b>195,393 hours!</b>

### 200+ Community Outreach Projects

Environmental Stewardship  
 Improving Community & Quality of Life  
 Helping Youth Succeed  
 Enhancing Agriculture Profitability



MICHIGAN STATE  
 UNIVERSITY  
 EXTENSION

## Membership Bulletin Board



MGSOC meetings are free to MGSOC members. MGSOC members are requested to wear their Master Gardener badges.

**Visitors or MGSOC members without their badges will be subject to a \$3.00 fee.**

Complimentary refreshments are served at the MGSOC meetings. Additionally, dinner of soup or salads may be purchased for \$3.00.

If you have any questions or comments please email the MGSOC Program Coordinator, DeeAnn Bauer, at <mailto:DMBauer@comcast.net>.



The Master Gardener Society welcomes the following new members to our group. We look forward to Master Gardening with you in the future.

Philip McPeck  
Patricia Keenan  
Paul Nelson  
Magda Moursi  
Debby Leh

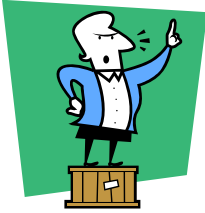
—Julie Kowalk – Membership

## Seeking Bower Farm Team Leader (or Co-leaders)

The Master Gardener Society of Oakland County is seeking to fill the vacated position of Bower Farm Team Leader who coordinates its Master Gardener activities at the farm. Responsibilities include: directing volunteers in maintaining the Society gardens, purchasing supplies and plants, presenting orientation for new volunteers and speaking at the Master Gardener candidate volunteer opportunity classes (or designee). In addition, the team leader is responsible for communicating announcements/opportunities through the Oakland Gardener, Roots and Shoots, etc. Attendance at the majority of Society educational meetings and board meetings is required as well as submission of a team budget. This person(s) also serves as the liaison between the volunteers and farm

manager/staff. If interested, please contact any Society officer or the resigning team leader Martha Humphrey (248-892-0935 or [mlhgrows@ameritech.net](mailto:mlhgrows@ameritech.net)). Bower Farm is located in Bloomfield Hills on Square Lake Rd. between Adams and Squirrel.

## MGSOC Programs for 2009 – Speaker Information



Note: all meetings for 2009 (except October 6, see below) are at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, 5631 N. Adams Road, in Bloomfield Hills, located between Long Lake Road and Square Lake Road.

- January 6 Michael Saint of Good Earth Landscape – Creating a Winter Garden
- February 10 no speaker – member Q & A session on pruning
- March 3 Don LaFond – Rock Gardens
- April 7 Bob McGowan of Bittersweet Farm – Plant-A-Row
- May 12 Bill Pioch - Tomatoes
- June 2 Sandie Parrot – Photos from Master Gardener Society Trips
- July 7 Bob Green – Dry Bean Industry in Michigan
- August 4 Lillian Dean, Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority (SOCWA)  
Rain Gardens/Rain Barrels
- September 1 Michele Arquette-Palermo of Clinton River Water Authority  
Native Plants for Your Yard and Water Quality
- October 6 George Papadelis – Ornamental Grasses  
**NOTE: meeting at Telly's Greenhouse**  
3301 John R, between Big Beaver Road and Wattles Road  
Troy, MI (phone (248) 689-8735)
- November 3 Mary Schwark – Art in the Garden

## ROCK GARDENING



Don La Fond ([plantjunkies@charter.net](mailto:plantjunkies@charter.net)) describes himself as “obsessed” with rock gardening and is a member of the North American Rock Garden Society ([www.nargs.org](http://www.nargs.org)) and the Great Lakes Chapter. He shared his knowledge and enthusiasm with us at the March membership meeting.

Rock gardening probably originated in China, and the idea was exported to Japan where rock gardens were thought of as a metaphor for nature. English rock gardens of the 1800’s were more about rocks than plants. Modern rock gardeners are usually plant collectors, and the N.A. Rock Garden Society has a seed exchange with 4000 varieties!

Rock garden plants are adapted to extreme climate conditions like high altitudes, deserts, high winds, long winters and droughts. The plants can often be quite short compared to their relatives that grow in easier climates, but their flowers are often large in order to attract pollinators. They need good drainage especially in winter. Where these plants grow naturally and in man-made rock gardens, there are many microclimates, and careful observation is necessary to give each variety its ideal conditions. Plants that grow in the sun on top of a mountain naturally may need a shadier spot in our gardens. Woodland plants like hellebores, orchids and trilliums can be used in shady places in rock gardens.

Building a rock garden is a very personal undertaking, balancing plants, rocks and drama. Rocks can be gathered from many places and mixed and matched according to the gardener’s taste. They can be placed on edge, flat or in mounds creating little niches for plants. Tufa occurs naturally in lime-rich soil and has lots of holes that can be used for plants and provide the perfect drainage required by alpine plants. Rock gardens can also be built with gravel. Pea stone and rocks are used for mulch to control weeds.

Hypertufa can be used for troughs. [Creating and Planting Garden Troughs](#) by Fingerut and Murfitt is an excellent book giving directions.

Don had a plethora of excellent photographs with his talk. Especially wonderful to me were the pictures of natural rock formations and plants in the mountains of the American west. Many years ago on my first trip out west, I had the beginner’s luck of going to Rocky Mountain National Park in early July when many flowers were in full bloom. Such a treat to see different varieties of familiar species, one hundred years old and only inches tall with huge bright flowers!

—Submitted by Jean Gramlich

## Olbrich Gardens

For those of you who want to take a weekend journey around Lake Michigan, venture to the capital city of Wisconsin - Madison. The more adventurous can take a car ferry across Lake Michigan to Wisconsin. If you choose to drive, you must cross through or around the Windy City. Once you survive the wiles of Chicago and its traffic, you will need to travel about 150 miles northwest to reach Madison. Besides being the state capital of America's Dairyland and an isthmus, it is the home of the University of Wisconsin, Oscar Mayer, numerous microbreweries, cheese houses, and bratwurst dens. While this alone is enough to keep my attention for the weekend, you must summon your strength to take a short drive from downtown and visit the Olbrich Gardens. You will be richly rewarded.

The gardens are named after Matthew Balthazar Olbrich who was a Wisconsin law grad and follower of the famous Wisconsin reformer Robert "Fighting Bob" LaFollette. Olbrich's original land purchase was in 1916, at that time a polluted marshland. I will spare you the detailed history but very significant improvements were made over the years. Today you can stroll through 16 acres of outdoor display gardens (seems like more). While in the gardens, be sure to visit the Thai Pavilion. It is quoted as being the only one in the continental US and the only one outside Thailand with a garden. It was built in Thailand, disassembled, shipped to the States, and then reassembled at Olbrich by Thai artisans. There is even gold leaf. In addition to the Thai Pavilion, there is a lovely two acre Rose Garden (my favorite) in a Prairie-style design. Amidst the floribundas and grandifloras, perennials, grasses and ornamental trees are delicately woven in to the enticing environment. There are also a Sunken Garden (formal, traditional English-style), a Perennial Garden (includes a stream, three pools, and a bog), an Herb Garden, a Meadow Garden, a Hosta Garden (minus the slugs), a Rock Garden (alpine plants and dwarf conifers with two streams and a waterfall), and, well you get the picture. Oh yes, there is an indoor conservatory (Bolz) that features a myriad of tropical and sub-tropical plants, orchids, free-flying birds, and a waterfall.

Hopefully I have wetted your horticultural taste buds. Admission to Olbrich is extremely reasonable, free to the outdoor gardens (donations gratefully accepted) and \$1 for the Bolz Conservatory. Parking is free as well. The Gardens are located just a short distance from downtown Madison. Please see the Garden's Website [www.olbrich.org](http://www.olbrich.org) for all the details. You will definitely need your digital camera because you will want to blow up some pictures for your walls. Certainly don't forget to enjoy the brats, cheese, local beers, and the Saturday Farmer's Market around the State Capital Building.

—Submitted by Jim Oldani

## Notes from Nutcase Nursery

I like to think I'm ready for spring, the season of hope itself. How else could we face the tasks ritually performed at this time of year without some kind of hope? As much as I think I might be ready for spring, I don't actually know I am. In my heart I feel that it's not so much faith as it is the perennial sense of hope.

Of course there's "The List" whether written or mental. Every season there is a list ticking like the clock. Some tasks are more important than others but necessary just the same. I already found the nail polish I need to wear when I'm weeding, which seems like always. It's a lovely shade. It looks exactly like the last drops of oil that come out of the lawn mover at maintenance time. "Sludge" likely would never have sold as well as what it's actually called, but it surely fits.

I've cleaned my hori-hori knife, oiled it and painted the handle red. I lost it last year for a couple of weeks and Himself almost had me committed. I've considered tying it around my neck but that seems a wee bit dangerous for a klutz. Previously I wrapped the handle with gold, green and red metallic ribbon but with the colors of autumn it blended right in the landscape. It's not that I'm absent-minded as much as I am interrupted. You would have thought I had learned my lesson years ago when I finally realized how important the color wheel is in gardening. Wearing red nail polish when strawberry picking is very counterproductive and completely frustrating.

My seed purchases have been sorted and scheduled for starting. Those that need to be stratified are either lolling in the freezer or already winter sowed. Others will be soaked overnight when it's time to plant. Vegetables have priority over perennials. Food first, flowers second; that's a rule. There are a few more purchases to be made but since I haven't been able to find what I want locally, the catalogs are neatly dog-eared and scattered all over the place. Of course there's a wish list.

I would dearly love to purchase two of the recently released baptisias. The pale blue and the yellow are my choices to go with the one I started from seed and waited 25 years for the first bloom. I bought a few at an end-of-season sale but they didn't survive the winter. But for \$1.27 how could I feel bad. Truth is, I did feel bad but not as much as if I had spent more on them. Some of my late purchases fail but that is just the nature of things. My concerns for this season are the marginal plants that lost their snow cover when we had the thaw and then were subjected to freezing temps and desiccating winds. Even when mulched, their survival is somewhat precarious. I generally like to try a plant 3 times before I give up so maybe they will do better the next time.

I like to collect certain plants like heuchera, hosta and hemerocallis but land is at a premium here at the nursery. I refuse to lose any of the vegetable territory and I am running out of lawn to banish. You really do need some lawn area just to set off the gardens. I used to re-edge the borders in the front of the house every spring and Himself finally asked me if I was going all the way to the sidewalk one year. I decided to put in

permanent edging since I doubted I could stop on my own. But those coral bells are so cooperative and the new releases are too pretty to be ignored. Ginger Ale, Miracle, Midnight Rose and Tiramisu call to me from the pages of several catalogs. Snow Angel, bought locally, has been somewhat of a disappointment because it de-constructs no matter where I put it. The problem with catalog shopping is that what arrives is nowhere near what you imagined it would be. I sucker for the picture and wind up with a sprout in a 2-inch pot or worse yet a bare-root thing that looks like something left over from a sewing accident. After years of experimenting we have found that “potting up” rather than just planting such prizes directly into the soil is much more successful. Plus, flora in pots gets much better attention around here when things get busy.

I am not really against catalog shopping at all, but buying locally is my main goal. Catalogs have a tendency to exaggerate and it took a while before I learned that lesson. And they are seductive. If I buy just \$50 worth of merchandise I will receive one of those seed planting devices. I’ve always wanted one of those things. But I will be strong and use my simple method of dipping the tip of a pencil into a bottle cap filled with water and aiming it at each individual seed whereupon the pencil tip acts like a magnet attaching the seed to be gently released in the hole I made with the eraser. Oh, simple technology, thy name is Cheapo.

One plant I have no desire for is something I could not find in either of the two plant encyclopedias I have. It’s called Herniaria. And if that’s not bad enough, it’s common name is Striped Rupturewort. I had enough trouble getting over the common name of lungwort for pulmonaria. I have a deep suspicion that this plant might have roots that go halfway to hell and you could hurt yourself badly trying to dig it out. I’ll have to check the web because I could be way off and it might be just a pretty benign groundcover. If there is such a thing.

So back to my prep list. I have cleaned all the utensils needed for propagation and seed-starting. The flats and pots were washed with hot water and a bit of bleach. The big bags of frozen potting soil have been dragged in from the garage and are almost completely thawed. The price goes up every year, the bags get smaller but I swear they get heavier. The garden gloves are washed. I do need to make more plant labels. Leftover pieces of vertical blinds make excellent plant labels. I cut them to whatever size I want with a paper cutter and then cut one end into a point with scissors. I just don’t like how the cut pieces fling themselves into the air and become a pain to pick up. Instead of felt tip markers I use a grease pencil or laundry marker to scribe the plant names. I bought black and white at the art store and the only problem I’ve ever had was misplacing them. The white is for writing directly on the green plastics pots we recycle. It last so well you almost have to scour the writing off season to season. I know that “indelible” isn’t and the markers I use stay on much better than any pen I’ve tried. And I’ve tried a lot of markers. Just don’t leave them where they can get wet. Okay, so I’ve had two problems. The “lead” is wrapped in a wood pulp that you peel away and it absorbs moisture and deteriorates quickly after it gets puffy.

For fertilizing and weed control, several bags of corn gluten were purchased in the fall. My major concern at this point is that they may have little teeth marks in them compliments of the critters. My major concern in a few weeks is that I might miss the window of opportunity for application. We time our applications by the habits of forsythia. Generally, a good rule of thumb for pruning roses and putting down weed controls is to do it before the last blooms fall from those happy yellow shrubs. But that often is too late when trying to thwart crabgrass, especially around the edges where lawn meets concrete. The soil heats up much faster in these spots and if you are fighting the battle you've noticed that crabgrass congregates more at the edges than elsewhere. The experts say that it is better to be early than later. So far, corn gluten can be pretty pricey but I am hoping that if we all start using it the demand will reduce the price. Unfortunately the ethanol situation has made the price of all corn products increase, unless that's just another trick of economics. But the experts also say that by using corn gluten you cut down the number of applications to two per year instead of the perennial "holiday" schedule of four and it results in a 50% reduction in weeds after three year's use. It can be a savings money-wise and certainly saves the earth from more toxic solutions.

So, I think I'm ready for spring except for one last little item on my wish list. I'm afraid that it's too politically incorrect to wish for a stud-muffin who would do the grunt work for free while I sunned myself sipping lemonade on the chaise I bought three years ago but have never actually managed to use. Oh well...maybe next year.

Contact Nutcase Nursery at [nutcase\\_nursery@yahoo.com](mailto:nutcase_nursery@yahoo.com).



## 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**  
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### **MSU Extension Oakland County Coordinator**

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

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**Hospitality: Chris Covell.....(248)852-1890**  
**Membership: Julie Kowalk .....(810)655-2228**  
**Programs: DeeAnn Bauer .....(248)828-7385**  
**Door prize Coordinator: Janie Grissom.....(248)887-6096**  
**Trips & Tours: Sandie Parrott .....(248)394-1532**  
**Corresponding Secretary: Margy Truza..... [mat4744@aol.com](mailto:mat4744@aol.com)**

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**Webmaster: Sheri Trout [sheri@oaklandweb.com](mailto:sheri@oaklandweb.com)**  
**Web Site Calendar: Chris Wilder [cwilder@wowway.com](mailto:cwilder@wowway.com)**

**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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May 15 for June/July issue  
September 15 for October/November issue

March 15 for April/May issue  
July 15 for August/September issue  
November 15 for December/January issue

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