

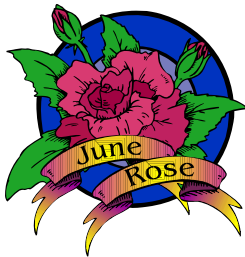
Roots & Shoots



Master Gardener
Society
of Oakland County



June / July 2009



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.



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

Speaker : Bob Green–Education: “Dry Bean Industry in Michigan”

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



August 4, 2009 @ 6:30pm
MGSOOC General Society Meeting & Location
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Speaker : Lillian Dean, Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority
(SOCWA)–Education: “Rain Gardens/Rain Barrels”

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



Carol's Corner

Another Volunteer Recognition Banquet has come and gone. 116 people came together at White Lake Oaks to either receive awards or watch their friends and family receive awards. Everyone seemed to have a great time catching up with classmates and friends they have made along the volunteer path. Much to the delight of the attendees we had 2 plant vendors selling their wares on the patio. Oakland County Master Gardener Trish Hennig, owner of American Roots, had Michigan wildflowers and native plants, and Wilson Garner, President of the Southeastern Michigan Dahlia Society had dahlias for sale.

The evening ended with the **Master Gardener of the Year awards being given to Priscilla Needle and to Tom Hershberger.**

Priscilla Needle was a member of the fall 2003 training class. In her own quiet way, she has demonstrated leadership from day one. While still a member of the Fall 2003 class she volunteered to be a Team Leader for the then new Walled Lake Farmers Market. She is very active at Tollgate including the activities committee for the Fall Fair. If you've ever been to the Tollgate fall fair you know what a huge job that it! Priscilla is also very involved with SOCWA. It seems like she is everywhere, which you have to be when you put in 250 + hours per year!

Tom Hershberger was a member of the 1992 training class. He immediately took the lead for Oakland County volunteers at the State Fair and has been doing this every year since. He attends the Fair almost every day to make sure this very highly visible project goes smoothly! He has been heavily involved in the MGSOOC since 2003 starting with a cookbook committee he took the lead on to now serving as President. Tom has always stepped up when asked needed. The latest example being recently when the MGSOOC outgrew it's meeting venue he was able to secure a new very comfortable venue at his church. Tom put in over 200 hours yearly!

Please give these two very deserving people your hearty congratulations next time you see them!

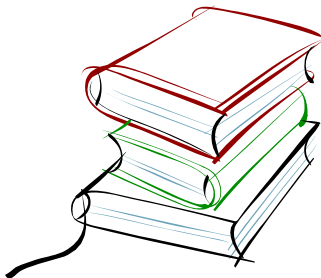
A number of special recognition certificates also were given out. **Gail Lutzky** achieved a certificate for most hours worked with a whopping 746 hours! **Martha Humphrey** was recognized for her leadership role at Bower Farm since 2001. Class mentors **Beth Brown** and **Mary Sheipline** were recognized for coming to all the MG Training classes in 2008, both winter and fall (a priceless service to help me facilitate the classes).

Other happenings around the Master Gardener office:

If you haven't already noticed, the interest in **edible gardening** is sky rocketing. If you are volunteering at information tables this summer, expect to get vegetable culture questions. If you want to learn more about growing vegetables, please take advantage of educational opportunities on this subject or another great learning tool is volunteering at one of the many Plant-a-Row for the Hungry gardens in the county.

The Continuing Education Committee is working on a **4-week Garden Design series**. It will be Saturday mornings from 9am-1:00 on Aug 22, August 29, September 12, and September 19. Stay tuned for the brochure and registration materials for this series.

Master Gardener Lending Library



ANY CERTIFIED MASTER GARDENER MAY CHECK OUT PUBLICATIONS FOR A 2 WEEK PERIOD (10 BUSINESS DAYS). THE LENDING LIBRARY IS OPEN FROM 9:00AM-4:30 PM MONDAY-FRIDAY.

TREES

400 Trees and Shrubs for Small Spaces, Diana M. Miller

Evaluation of Hazard Trees in Urban Areas, Nelda P. Matheny & James R. Clark

Forest Management Guidelines for Michigan, Michigan Society of American Foresters

Green Industry Evaluation of Michigan Urban Trees, Kerry Marie Boris & J. James Kielbaso

How to Detect, Assess and Correct Hazard Trees in Recreational Areas, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Identify Trees of Michigan, MSU Extension

Tree Finder, Mary Theilgaard Watts

Water Quality Management Practices on Forest Land, MDNR

Arboriculture, Richard W. Harris

FLOWERS

Common Roadside Wildflowers, Federal Highway Administration

A Passion for Daylilies, Sydney Eddison

Flower Finder, Jacqueline Heriteau

Garden to Vase, Linda Beutler

Growing Orchids, Brian & Wilma Rittershausen

Growing Orchids in Your Garden, Robert G.M. Friend

Perennials for Michigan, Nancy Szerlag & Alison Beck

The New Book of Salvias, Betsy Clebsch

The Orchard Thief, Susan Orlean

The Perennial Garden, Jeff & Marilyn Cox

The Time Life Encyclopedia of Gardening Annuals, James Underwood Crockett

The Time Life Encyclopedia of Gardening Perennials, James Underwood Crockett

How to Save Seeds from Flowers (video)

Ortho's All About Successful Perennial Gardening, Janet Macunovich

Alpines & Rock Garden Plants, Richard Bird & John Kelly

The Well Tended Perennial Garden, Tracy DiSabato-Aust

Roses- The Gardener's Collection, Better Homes and Gardens
The Complete Guide to Garden Flowers, Herbert Askwith
The Plant Book, various writers
8 Months of Color, Janet Macunovich

SOIL AND CONPOSTING

Teaming with Microbes, Jeff Lowenfels & Wayne Lewis
Secret's of the Soil, Peter Tompkins & Christopher Bird
Worms Eat My Garbage, Mary Appelhof

MISC

Botany for Gardeners, Brian Capon
Encyclopedia of Exotic Plants for Temperate Climates, Will Giles
Growing Concerns 1994, Janet Macunovich
Growing Concerns 1995, Janet Macunovich
Growing Concerns 1996, Janet Macunovich
Growing Concerns 1997, Janet Macunovich
Growing Concerns 1998, Janet Macunovich
In and Out of the Garden, Sara Midda
Passalong Plants, Steve Bender & Felder Rushing
Seeds of Wildland Plants, James A. & Cheryl G. Young
Smyth & Hawk'em, Tom Connor & Jim Downey
The Hoophouse Handbook, Lynn Byczynski
Illustrated Encyclopedia of Gardening, Derek Fell & Ann Reilly
The Perennial Gardener, Frederick McGourty

HEALTH AND HORTICULTURAL THERAPY

Accessible Gardening, Joann Woy
Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul, various authors
Essential Oils in the Bath, Colleen K. Dodt
Health Through Horticulture, Maria M. Gabaldo, Maryellen D. King, Eugene A. Rotherr
Horticultural Therapy: A guide for All Seasons, Martha R. DeHart & Joan R. Brown
Living with Plants, Donna N. Schumann
Plenty- Eating Locally on the 100 Mile Diet, Alisa Smith & J.B. Mackinnon
The Art of Simple Food, Alice Waters

NATIVE AND INVASIVE PLANTS

Bringing Nature Home, Douglas W. Tallamy
Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, Elizabeth J. Czarapata
Gardening with Native Wild Flowers, Samuel B. Jones, Jr & Leonard E. Foote

GARDENS

Crockett's Indoor Garden, James Underwood Crockett
Crockett's Victory Garden, James Underwood Crockett
Miniature Gardens, Sheila Howarth
Natural Gardening, Wilfred H. Erhardt
Onward and Upward in the Garden, Katharine S. White
The Small Garden, Sue & Roger Norman, Polly Bolton, Lallie Cox
Weather in the Garden, Jane Taylor

Your Kitchen Garden, George Seddon & Helena Radecka
Growing Herbs in the Home Garden, University of Connecticut
Organic Garden Design School, Ann Lovejoy
Plant Driven Design, Scott Ogden & Lauren Springer Ogden
The Best American Gardening, Ken & Pat Kraft
The Organic Salad Garden, Joy Larkcom
Home Landscaping, A countryside book

HERITAGE GARDENS

For Every House a Garden, Rudy & Joy Favretti
Restoring American Gardens, Denise Wiles Adams
Heritage Gardening-Vegetables, MSU

IPM-INSECTS AND DISEASES

Common Tree Fruit Pests, Angus H. Howitt
Directory of Exotic Forest Insect & Disease Pests, Deborah g. McCullough & James E. Zablotny
Diseases of Trees & Shrubs, Wayne A. Sinclair, Howard H. Lyon & Warren T. Johnson
Insects That Feed on Trees & Shrubs, Warren T. Johnson & Howard H. Lyon
The Truth about Garden Remedies, Jeff Gillman
The Gypsy Moth: Research Toward IPM, USDA 7 Charles C. Doane & Michael L. McManus
The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual, Barbara Pleasant

FRUIT, BERRIES, VEGETABLES

The Backyard Berry Book, Stella Otto
The Backyard Orchardist, Stella Otto
The Time Life Encyclopedia of Gardening Vegetables & Fruits
How to Save Seeds from Vegetables (video)
How to Grow Fruits, Nuts & Berries, Sunset books
Vegetables & Fruits, Time Life Encyclopedia, James Underwood Crockett

CHILDREN

Worms Eat Our Garbage, Mary Appelhof, Mary Frances Fenton, Barbara Loss Harris
Love the Earth, Patty Claycomb
Welcome Spring, Megan E. Bryant
The Runaway Garden, Jeffrey L. Schatzer
Gardening is Easy, Dianna Simmons
Growing Together, Betty Morgan
Dirt Cookbook, Miami Soil & Water Conservation District
Wetlands are Wonderlands-Youth and teacher guide, University of Illinois & Purdue University
Digging Deeper, Joseph Kiefer & Martin Kemple
Ready Set Grow, Suzanne Frutig Bales
Kids Nature Book, Susan Milord
Gardening Wizardry for Kids, L. Patricia Kite
Tops & Bottoms, Janet Stevens
Indoor Gardening in the Classroom, The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
Junior Master Gardener Instructional, Texas Cooperative Extension

Membership Bulletin Board

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

Mrs. Mary Benjamin
Ms. Denise Brown
Mrs. Cathy Buckmaster
Mrs. Carole Carroll
Ms. Cecilia Ellis
Ms. Anna Garratt
Mrs. Mary Golla
Mrs. Marlene Haack
Ms. Geri Harubin
Mr. Paul Luksiewicz
Ms. Debra Maes
Ms. Delores Manoogian
Ms. Laura Miehl
Mrs. Susan Minkus
Ms. Carolyn Morrison
Ms. Diana Ottinger-Euken
Mrs. Gail Reading
Ms. Jennifer Sung Fleming

—Julie Kowalk – Membership

A Note from Richard Gleason

March 30, 2009

Dear Carol:

I was awarded “2009 Michigan Certified Florist of the Year” recently by the Michigan Floral Association recently at the Grand AM Hotel in Grand Rapids, MI.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Oakland County Master Gardening Program for your key roll in this honor. After a fulfilling 20 year career of living and ministering in Chicago’s South side inner-city and being a Mississippi Freedom Rider in 1961, I returned to Michigan.

My grandmother’s blooming flowerbeds, grape jelly made from fruit of the backyard vines, and beautiful bouquets of fresh cut flowers from the garden decorate my childhood memories. These “seeds,” planted years ago, were instrumental in my pursuing a second career in horticulture and floriculture.

Completing certification requirements for the MSU Master Gardening program enabled me to become an MSU Advanced Master. That in turn led to my employment in the largest garden center in the Detroit metro area. I worked in the perennial, tropical plant and floral departments. Working in each department had a profound affect on my future.

Working in the perennial and tropical plant department led to employment as a senior technician in two of the country's largest interiorscape companies. Now, I own my own interiorscape company, PlantScapes, LLC. We provide interior plantscapes, floral work and party/holiday staging for high-end homes and businesses.

Working in the garden center's floral department led me to the Michigan Floral Association. A coworker convinced me to attend my first MFA Conference. That in turn led me to rolling up my sleeves and becoming a Michigan Certified Florist. My skills in floral artistry enables me to provide floral and party/holiday staging.

My knowledge, experience and certifications have made it possible for me to be an adjunct faculty member at Macomb Community College for the past seven years. I have the opportunity of sharing with my passion of horticulture and floriculture with others.

Being a Oakland County, Advanced Master Gardener has been vital for success in my second career. It was your generous scholarship that gave me the start, for which I am forever thankful.

With kind regards,

Richard Gleason

Bittersweet Farm



Bob McGowan talked about his Plant-A-Row for the Hungry project, begun in 1991, at Bittersweet Farm north of Clarkston at our April membership meeting. PAR is a nation-wide program established by the National Garden Writers Association. The produce from the 11,000 square foot garden goes to Gleaners Community Food Bank; last year the yield was 4227 pounds.

Bob started out without a lot of know-how on raising vegetables and made mistakes like using a weed barrier for mulch. He soon found that newspapers and organic mulch worked much better. Jim Tesnar joined the volunteer team and brought his extensive horticultural knowledge to the task. They double-dug the soil and built raised beds so that the soil would be warmer and well drained.

Soil fertility is improved through the use of leaves from the good people of Clarkston who rake them so assiduously and leave them at the curb. Aged horse manure is also

used as well as compost from crop residues that has been heated to 160 degrees. They also plant buckwheat as a cover crop and turn it under in the spring. They wait two weeks while bacterial activity is very high and then seed. Ideal soil pH is 7, and cover crops tend to lower the pH. Sulfur can also be used for the same purpose.

They built a fence to keep the deer out of the area and use other organic means to control pests and weeds. Before planting in the spring they rake out the weeds shortly after a rain moving only the top inch of soil. After several repetitions of this procedure, there are few weed seeds left in the top inch where weed seeds will germinate. When planting transplants, they put them in a crack so that they will not bring up the weed seeds that are farther down in the soil. Companion planting is a method of keeping pests from eating our crops, either by attracting pests to the companion plants or repelling the pests – mint and borage are examples of repellents. Planting onions with squash repels squash borers. Toads are insect gourmands, and gardeners can encourage them by providing rock caves for toad habitats. Row covers stapled into the ground also protect vulnerable crops.

Soil temperature is an important factor in seed germination. For example, carrots will germinate at 55 degrees, but most weed seeds germinate at 70 degrees. Thus, the wise gardener can give his carrots a head start and shade out the weeds with frilly carrot tops.

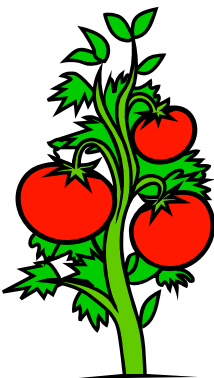
Plant density is limited only by the amount of sunlight required. The standard planting recommendations in books are often dictated by equipment design rather than the needs of the plants. For example, they plant corn in rows 16” apart, one seed every 6” rather than the wider rows used by farmers using tractors.

Because of the way the gardens are designed and planted, there is not much weeding and watering except in June. Mulch helps to retain water, and weeds are limited by raking them out and shading them out early in the season.

Master Gardeners are needed throughout the season to help Bittersweet Farm produce so much food for the hungry. Bob can be reached at robmcg27@comcast.net.

—Submitted by Jean Gramlich

Tomatoes



Our timely topic for May was tomatoes, and our speaker Bill Pioch has been growing them commercially for many years. He grows plants for sale at nurseries and at the Oakland County Farmers’ Market in Pontiac and grows tomatoes in the field as well.

The first step to a successful tomato crop is a soil test – preferably one through MSU that has detailed recommendations. Tomatoes do not need much nitrogen but do need potassium, calcium and micronutrients.

Bill starts his plants 6 weeks before planting time in a plug 1/8" deep. He then transplants them to a 3" pot and then to a 5" pot using soilless mix. This method creates a strong root system. He waters from the bottom and uses a heat mat to promote germination and growth. He uses fluorescent lights 16-18 hours a day about 1" from the top of the plant.

He plants them outside in the first week of June after hardening them off. The soil temperature should be 60 degrees, and the night temperature should be at least 55. Place the plants a little bit deeper each time you transplant. Pick all the first blossoms off because the plant will then grow stronger roots. A tomato plant needs at least 4 square feet of growing space. Train to one or two stems and pinch off the side growths. They can be trained up a pole or woven on strings between 2 posts or surrounded by cattle fencing. If you use cages, be sure to put in a sturdy post.

Tomatoes do not need a lot of water but need it regularly to avoid blossom end rot. He uses mycorrhizae, fish emulsion, kelp and humic acid in foliar spray. He mulches heavily with straw. The only major pest is the tomato hornworm which is easy to pick off by hand. Leaves that turn yellow should be removed immediately, and the clippers should be dipped in alcohol between cuts. Early in the season, weeds should be removed every week or 10 days. When the plants are fully established, weeding is not so important.

To get the best most flavorful and bountiful crop, cut off the tops toward the end of August, strip off the small tomatoes and all the blossoms. The plant will fight to produce more blossoms, so you have to be persistent.

Bill mentioned several favorite varieties: Sungold, Big Boy, Early Girl, Better Boy, Japanese Trifle Black, Coyote, Matt's Wild Cherry, Rosalita, Red Oxheart, Purple Cherokee, Mortgage Lifter and the Brandywines.

Tomatoes can be raised on the patio, but need at least a 5-gallon pot. Use a good potting mix with manure, sphagnum moss and fertilizer. Water only when the soil is dry 2-3" down. Weekly foliar feeding is recommended. Raising tomatoes in a basket "topsy-turvy" is not worth the trouble.

Saving seed is a wonderful way to continue favorite varieties. Cut a big tomato in half and squeeze out the seeds into one tablespoon of water. Let this mixture ferment for about 10 days (it will smell pretty foul). Rinse off the seeds several times and save only the seeds that sink. Dry them for a month and put them in a paper envelope in a zip lock bag and store them in the bottom refrigerator drawer. They can be stored for 8-10 years.

Happy summer gardening!

—Submitted by Jean Gramlich

Organic Gardening Notes

YELLOW ROADSIDES IN MID-MAY

In mid-May, roadsides and waste places show masses of yellow. It's a paler yellow than the splendid April yellow of dandelions or the June yellow sweet clover. It is yellow rocket (*Barbarea vulgaris*). It's sometimes called wild mustard, which is entirely understandable because it belongs to the mustard family and is certainly wild. One thing against that name however is that yellow rocket has distinctive glossy leaves that are darker than those of other wild mustards. And "wild mustard" covers quite a lot of wildflowers. Yellow rocket is also called winter cress and St. Barbara's cress, and no doubt has many other names. The only other common Michigan wildflower with the name rocket is dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*). It blooms a bit later than yellow rocket and has attractive white, pink, and purple flowers. It's an English garden favorite and looks handsome in our hedgerows; but it's a harmful invasive in native woods.

The mustard we put on hot dogs comes from the seeds of black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and white mustard (*Brassica hirta*). They have the same yellow flowers and round-lobed leaves – like radish leaves – as yellow rocket, and Chinese mustard and field mustard as well. Field mustard (*Brassica rapa*) also called rape or canola and it's what is growing when a farm field is yellow. It is a good over-winter cover crop used for disease control. The mustard family includes many other cultivated plants: cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, watercress, radish, turnip, rutabaga – and others I'm sure. The botanical name for the family is Crucifera, because they have flowers with four petals somewhat in the shape of a Maltese cross. The flowers are usually small and plentiful, at the top of the main stem and branches. The flowers are followed by seed pods so that flowers and seed pods, lower down the stem, are usually present at the same time. A common example of this alongside footpaths in early spring is shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), which has very small white flowers and heart-shaped seed pods. The seed pods of yellow rocket and other wild mustards and brassicas are rather like minute pea pods, but with a little beak. Pea pods, by the way, split open on both sides; the name for this is legume.

According to *Edible Wild Plants*, in the Peterson Field Guides series, the leaves of yellow rocket are edible raw in salads. The leaves must be picked in late winter when the leaves are still in a tight rosette because they become bitter as they grow larger. The flower buds, before the flowers open, are edible steamed like broccoli. Mention of the rosette reminds me that many members of the mustard family are biennial. Some produce small rosettes of leaves in their first year, which over-winter ready to grow to maturity early in the second year. Cabbages don't produce a rosette but, if you happen to preserve one over winter, it will split in the second year and send up a tall flower stalk. Every one of the plants mentioned in this piece, whether wild or domesticated, is an alien. The wild ones, which include many garden and farm weeds, were imported for the same reason as the domesticated plants: they were useful, as many still are, for kitchen and medicine.

—Submitted by Peter Bray

Chicago Botanic Garden

Many people from the Midwest sojourn to the Windy City for a variety of reasons: shopping on Michigan Avenue, visiting the myriad of world renowned museums, scarfing down deep dish pizza, and chomping on Chicago hot dogs. One of my tavern favorites is The Billy Goat Tavern Original on N. Michigan Avenue (famous for the Chicago Cubs Curse and inspiration for a Saturday Night Live skit). Eventually you will need to take a break from all the concrete, the art, and The Loop. Have I got a beautiful and peaceful place for you – the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Surprisingly, the Garden is actually in Glencoe, Illinois, about 20 miles north of Chicago, accessible by car via the freeways, not tollroads. As for background, the Chicago Horticultural Society was granted about 300 acres of forest land in 1963. Groundbreaking began two years later with the Garden opening in 1972. I am proud to say that the Garden has a Michigan influence as one of its master planners was John O. Simonds, a Landscape Architect graduate of Michigan State University. It was Simonds' intent to have a garden become a way for humans to create a relationship with plants. Upon visiting the Botanic Garden, you will acknowledge his genius and success.

Here is a quick breakdown of the 385 acres: 100 wooded acres; 81 acres of waterways; 15 acres of prairie (no surprise being it's Illinois); 23 gardens, 9 islands, and so on. A brief listing/description of some of the 23 gardens is as follows: an Enabling Garden with Whitespire birch, northern catalpa, and three-flowered maples; an English Walled Garden that contains wisteria, golden rain tree, and hydrangea; a Dwarf Conifer Garden (for you woody lovers); an Aquatic Garden with water lilies and the usual suspects (frogs) if my memory hasn't failed me; a Rose Garden; a Native Plant Garden; and a Waterfall Garden (my favorite) that is comprised of three levels with barberry, white birch, red twig dogwood, drooping Norway spruce, and hydrangea.

Greenhouses include Arid, Tropical, and Semi-tropical and all the wonderful plants and flowers that one would expect. Be sure to visit the Elizabeth Hubert Mallot Japanese Garden. Completed in 1982, it contains almost 300 types of plants conducive to Midwest gardens. Mallot was designed by Dr. Koichi Kawana as a stroll garden with curving paths. The pines have been pruned to allow for viewing distant landscapes while framing the lakes, grassy hills, woods, and gardens beyond. A focal point is the traditional Japanese lantern, with Korean boxwood symbolizing islands behind the lantern.

Admission to the Garden is free, but wait, there is a Parking Charge (it seems you can't go anywhere in Chicago without paying for Parking). While I normally prefer to walk, there is also a narrated Tram tour during peak season (for a fee). Hours of operation are 7AM to 9PM in the summer (June 6 through September 7) and from 8AM to sunset for the rest of the year. Food is available at the Garden Café which features locally grown, seasonal products. And yes, there is a Garden Shop for your end of day purchases. Group Visits can be arranged.

Please see the Chicago Botanic Garden's website <http://www.chicagobotanic.org/> for beautiful pictures and explicit details prior to your visit.

—Submitted by Jim Oldani

Notes from Nutcase Nursery



A long time and far away friend recently confided that she loves to garden but hates the toting, pulling, digging, raking, trimming, dragging, pruning and, I think, bugs. I thought it was hysterical. It reminded me of when a neighbor stopped by years ago to comment on the front gardens. I was on my hands and knees fighting the never-ending battle for truth, justice and weed-free beds, decorated by soil, sun and sweat. She stood over me with one hand on her hip and said, “Isn’t gardening a lot of work?”

I sat back for a few seconds and contemplated the question. Replaying a tape of the day, I thought about everything I had worked on up to the present moment. I have a difficult time saying I accomplished anything because nothing ever seems technically accomplished. Everything is in progress because I never seem to get the job done to my liking. Big jobs always take more than a day by definition and there always seems to be a disconnect. If I try to weed the flagstone path, especially without killing the moss, I can’t seem to finish in one day. Often my agenda says “Weed after a rain.” Then the weather always butts in with its own agenda. (That might just be another excuse I employ in an attempt to hide my attention deficit disorder.)

Anyway, I quickly thought about the edging and pulling and digging and weeding. Then I took in the sight before me and saw beautiful, dark and fluffy soil setting off the various plants in the bed and how they looked so clean and neat and happy to be there. All I could say was “If I thought of it as work I probably wouldn’t be doing it.”

That’s “the thing” about gardening. It’s a challenge and a grace. As long as your body can take it, the soul carries on triumphant, simply because after the hard stuff is done the reward produced is so much more exquisite. Of course if I had a good gardener, especially one who charged less than I pay myself, I could skip the whole backbreaking workout and just sit and enjoy the state of the estate.

Like that’s ever going to happen.

For now, I need to make my lists, buckle down and get to the business of making what needs to happen, happen.

And things are constantly happening out in the gardens! With me and without me. May takes off like a jet. So much to do, so little daylight. It can be 80 one day and 40 the next but heck, that still makes the daily average 60 degrees. And the winds seem relentless. Great for hanging laundry in or kite flying but not transplanting. I swear it’s gotten windier as the years pass. Last year many trees were lost in this area and the winds have been the worst ever. It’s extremely difficult to pot plants in the breeze. Their roots dry out and their leaves become even more desiccated with all that flying around. But the work has to be done in order to properly celebrate June.

June is the month that makes or breaks the rest of the season. Things have been growing at breakneck speed so it’s time to make sure your plant supports are in place before things get too carried away. Hopefully you recycled some of your tree and shrub prunings to use for pea fence and plant crutches. Pruning activities should be curtailed now except for emergency surgeries, although lilacs, rhodos and

azaleas should be shorn after bloom. Remember to feed them also. Anything that blooms before the solstice is a spring bloomer and now is the time to finish their trimming and get on with what you've been waiting for. There is no longer a need for sharp cutting implements because IT'S TIME TO PLANT.

Hooray, hooray, the first of June! Didn't get here a minute too soon! Time to plant the warmth lovers and safely leave out the hanging baskets. This would be the point at which I should admit that we often make it a practice around Nutcase to "push the envelope" so to speak. Everybody does it, sooner or later. And while you're running around dazzled by the beauty of it all, don't forget to spray the powdery mildew-inclined with a low dose of horticultural oil, one teaspoon per gallon of water. A dose of hort oil will also benefit any woodies bothered by scale. And it's also time to feel guilty if you haven't already pinched your mums once because they're already due for number two, with the third scheduled for the next national holiday.

Every gardener has a favorite place to garden. It could be the rose garden, or orchids, or grasses, hostas, tomatoes, ephemerals, irises or any combination thereof. The favorite garden could be the shady berm garden, or the apple tree garden, or wherever they garden. Sometimes the favorite garden becomes the reward for working in a higher priority garden and playing there has to wait until the higher priority is handled. The priority at Nutcase is definitely the food gardens. Beets, peas, spinach, potatoes and lettuce were planted in April. Tomatoes, peppers and eggplant were started in April. Asparagus have been harvested since late April. It's now time to sow beans, corn, cukes and squash. Here we start the cole crops in late April for transplanting later in the season. As lettuce and spinach are harvested, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts are tucked in wherever a good spot is vacated. Careful planning pays off in a two big ways. Interplanting often confuses even the most organized insects. Mixing it up in the veggie patch makes it more difficult for an insect attracted to a particular type of vegetable to hone in on its prey. Consider strategically distributing protected pots of mint throughout the garden to throw off the pests with their odor. Just don't let the mint loose. Don't think it's pretty. And it smells good when you nudge it. Secure the pots. This has been a public service announcement brought to you by Gardeners Anonymous.

The other benefit of careful planning will allow you to utilize the optimum spots for planting a second crop of peas, lettuce, spinach or other cool weather vegetables. At Nutcase we plant those types of crops on the shadiest side of the most western corn rows. When we begin pulling the stalks we leave a row or two for shading the young after being transplanted.

Mom always said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions and a big item that tends to fall through the cracks here is maintaining the fruit tree spray schedule as the month takes off. We need to work on that. We also have to find the time to pick up all of the fallen fruit that the trees abort to make sure insects don't party down at the free buffet. It's good to have someone short do the bending and picking. I used to have one of the dogs help with this task but my current garden assistant insists it's not in her job description.

As the summer advances, we also have to remain mindful of managing the outdoor entertainment areas on a more regular basis. The birdbaths have to be cleaned and filled, sometimes on a daily schedule. The fountain has to be monitored constantly to make sure the water level doesn't get so low that the pump has a heart attack. As foliage fills in, solar panels have to be rescued and readjusted in the jungle. The

birdhouses and feeders, especially the hummingbird feeder, need to be cleaned and sometimes repaired. We don't really worry about the birds going hungry in the summer because we expect them to dine on any pests that have the nerve to bug us. We will enjoy the June strawberries but only if they are netted. All this as well as remembering to watch out for the toad with the death wish who only comes out when I cut the lawn.

Suddenly it's July and you realize the days are already getting shorter and your job lists aren't. The Japanese beetles will be arriving any minute. Bug watch is happening big time. Are there hornworms on the tomatoes, squash vine borers underneath that wilted leaf? Who's eating what out there? What are those little bumps on the cucumber leaves? Water, water, feed, pick, water. The houseplants are on auto-pilot and not liking it. Very few of them spend the summer outside. It's for their own good because they die more slowly inside where it's safer.

When does the enjoyment part of all of this kick in?

When a Mourning Cloak butterfly rises from beneath the leaf debris against the house and chooses to spend its first moments warming itself on the brick, right next to where I'm standing. And when the first hummer of the season becomes enamored of a multi-colored windspinner on a string, it makes me smile. When the peonies bloom and I cut a bouquet and the scent is the best perfume of all; the downside of this is ants on the countertop, but I still do it. When neighbors bring their lawnchairs over to watch a moonflower open, I enjoy entertaining. When color combinations work so stunningly I want to kidnap people off the street to look at the display, I have to admit it's enjoyable. When the viburnum and the flowering currant bloom and it smells like what I think is heaven, it soothes me. When the most kept-up albums I have are completely devoid of non-plant material photos, I must admit I'm enjoying myself.

When I pick pea pods, pak choi, garlic and Egyptian walking onions to concoct a delicious, incredibly fresh, first stir fry of the season, I feel it. When I proudly announce at dinner that we are the parents of a bouncing baby zucchini, I show it. When I pick raspberries and manage to make five little jars of jam, I smell it. When I give two of my brothers golumpki made from wonderfully tender savoy cabbages for Christmas, they taste it.

And all the work is worth it. It comes with the territory, as they say. But for me it's not really work, it's all just part of gardening.

And while you're out there enjoying yourself, remember, even more important than clean underwear...get your tetanus shot and wear your gloves and sunscreen. Enjoy your summer!



Some Information You Should Know

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**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.

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