December 2010 / January 2011

Date Change: December 14, 2010 @ 6:30pm
MGSOC General Society Meeting & Location
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Holiday Potluck

January 4, 2011 @ 6:30pm
MGSOC General Society Meeting & Location
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304
Speaker: Sue Grubba, advanced Master Gardener
Education: “Dramatic Garden Lighting”

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

February 1, 2011 @ 6:30pm
MGSOC General Society Meeting & Location
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304
Speaker: Gary Eichen of Mike’s Tree Surgeons
Education: “Healthy Tree Care”

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

The Fall 2010 Training class ended last week. It was a fun class and the Candidates had a great time as they learned. A few years ago we started letting the class participants volunteer while taking the class as long as they didn’t staff information booths, so you may have already seen some new faces at your favorite volunteer sites. Please welcome them warmly.

**Many thanks to Wayne Lapinski for being the Class Mentor for this class.** This volunteer job entails coming to every training class.

The next Master Gardener Training Class starts January 27. I’m working on the schedule now and will post it ASAP. The deadline for participation is January 1. If you know anyone who might be interested have them contact Linda Smith at 248-858-0887 for the application packet. With the new Volunteer Selection Process, last minute registrations are not possible.

The Farmers Markets Information Booths are over for the year and the PAR Gardens have been put to bed. Thanks to all of you who worked so hard to make them successful. This goes for all the projects you put your heart in to this year. I hope you realize that the work you are doing as a Master Gardener Volunteer is very meaningful and that you do change the lives of the people you work so hard for.

There have been some new projects this year that some of you have been involved with and I hope will continue to be involved with in the coming years. The Royal Oak Township Community Garden project is one of them. This project is serving a small community that many people don’t even realize exists in Oakland County. **Jim Greenwood** (winter 2010 class) has taken the lead on this and he could sure use some more help next year. Look for advertisements in the Oakland Gardener late winter and please consider helping. The other project is the Youth Farm Stand project. A hoophouse has gone up at Tollgate and one is in the process of being erected in Pontiac. This is collaboration between 4H Youth Development and the MGVP and is led by **Bill Pioch**. I know there are many more programs worthy of mentioning but I’ve run out of time and space!

With the colder weather, the volunteer season is winding down now. Hopefully you’ve all taken advantage of spring and summer to do your hours.

**The deadline to recertify (December 31**th**) is approaching fast!** To refresh your memory you’ll need at least 15 volunteer hours and 5 educational hours. Instead of waiting until the end of December to submit your accumulated hours for 2010, please consider submitting them NOW.

**All of us at Oakland County MSUE wish you and your loved ones the best this holiday season. We are grateful that you have taken so much of your precious time to serve the community through the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. You inspire us to do our best to serve you. Thank you!!!!**
2011 Bus Trip will be to the Bruce Peninsula - Canada

Private rural gardens, waterfalls and wine
Dates of trip - July 15-17
Must have passport valid through October 2011
Brochure and pricing coming soon.

The Year at a Glance—MGSOC Meetings for 2011

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<td>January 4</td>
<td>Sue Grubba</td>
<td>“Dramatic Garden Lighting”</td>
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<td>January 24</td>
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<td>February 1</td>
<td>Gary Eichen</td>
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<td>Dale White</td>
<td>“Organic Fertilizers and Soil Amendments”</td>
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<td>April 5</td>
<td>George Papadelis</td>
<td>“Spring Blooming Perennials”</td>
<td>Meeting is at Telly’s Greenhouse in Troy</td>
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<td>May 10</td>
<td>Peter Bray</td>
<td>“Loss of Soil Carbon”</td>
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<td>June 7</td>
<td>Ruth Vrbensky</td>
<td>“Native Plants to Attract Wildlife”</td>
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<td>July 5</td>
<td>Janet Macunovich</td>
<td>“50 Favorite Gardens, Before and After”</td>
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<td>August 2</td>
<td>Rick Lazzell</td>
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<td>August 15</td>
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<td>October 4</td>
<td>Joe Peterson</td>
<td>“Growing and Caring for Orchids”</td>
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**Election Results**

At the October 5, 2010 Master Gardener General Meeting, nominations for the 2011 Officer Election were closed in accordance with the Master Gardener Society By-Laws. At that time, only one person for each open position had requested to be on the ballot for the upcoming 2011 Officer Election. The positions that were to be filled were Vice President, Secretary, and Team Administrator. As only one Society member per position came forth, the 2011 election mailing became unnecessary.

Therefore in 2011 and 2012, Tom Hershberger is your new Vice President and Ruth Vrbensky will remain Secretary Treasurer.

Susan Tatus McLarty will remain the Team Administrator for 2011.

If anyone has any questions regarding the election, please feel free to contact an officer or they can contact me.

Julie Kowalk  
Membership Team

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**Native By Design With A Focus On Plant Communities**

Trish Hennig from American Roots Nursery presented our October program. She grew up on a farm in Michigan and is a lifelong gardener; her evolution from a cottage gardener to an advocate for native plants started with attending conferences of the Wildflower Association of Michigan. Many books also influenced her as well: Noah’s Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yards by Sara Stein, American Plants for American Gardens by Edith Roberts and Elsa Rehmann, Native Plants of Michigan by Lynn Steiner and Douglas Tallamay’s Bringing Nature Home.

As she looked at her own cottage gardens, she saw few natives and began to ask how she could help to knit the ecosystem back together and support wildlife. A first rule to live by is not to plant invasives like barberry and myrtle. Native plants are defined as plants that were indigenous before European settlement. They have deep roots that make the plants drought tolerant, absorb water after heavy rains and filter out pollutants before the water reaches waterways.

In making a garden with native plants, we are creating a habitat for many different kinds of organisms that have evolved together over the millennia. We attract beneficial insects and native pollinators as well as predators that keep insects in balance. Butterflies and moths often specialize in certain plants, and it is important to have many different kinds of plants to offer host plants to a variety of caterpillars. Trish distributed a list of trees and shrubs that are adult nectar sources and larval hosts. Although a cultivar of a native is better than a non-native plant, native plant nurseries grow local genotypes that evolved over the years to grow in the special conditions of your area.

Trish emphasized creating ecosystems and plant communities. National Wildlife Federation has training in habitat creation. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) website shows the natural plant communities in your area to help you recreate the ecosystem that existed before development. A native plant garden is very alive and makes you an integral part of the place you live.

—Submitted by Jean Gramlich
Fall And Holiday Designs For The Home

Cindy Domagalski from Ye Olde Flower Barn in Troy wove her magic for our November program. She made bows, centerpieces and other decorations out of simple elements like boxwood, pinecones, candles and ribbon. Pot pourri and cinnamon sticks embellish an arrangement with the spicy smells of the holidays.

The living parts of decorations can be kept alive by putting them in oasis and drizzling them with water every day. Cindy showed us how to make topiary in a pot using pieces of fern made to look like a tree. She used boxwood in many of her arrangements with oasis and recommended using a spray to make the leaves shine. Red and white carnations added color to many of the pieces with oasis as the base. Some of her arrangements were based on pine boughs laid on a tray.

Many decorative objects, such as pheasant feathers, grapevines and corkscrew twigs, which we find outdoors, can be a special part of decorations for the home. Osage oranges can be sprayed with gold, silver or copper paint, as can various pods and stems. Red twig dogwood stems add natural color.

Fruits of the season like pomegranates, citrus slices and kumquats make a centerpiece sparkle. Candles, especially tall red ones, add holiday flair.

Found objects can form a base for a design. A pair of children’s ice skates with red ribbon for laces can be filled with greens and hung off a doorknob. Picture frames from dollar stores can be woven with boxwood and decorated.

Cindy demonstrated making big bows using ribbon with a metal edge and made the process look easy (not so for me!). After the holidays a bow can be stored in a plastic bag in a tube. If it gets crushed, it can be refreshed with a curling iron.

Cindy’s enthusiasm made us all want to go home and start decorating.

—Submitted by Jean Gramlich
Our friend this month, grew up in Detroit in a house built by her father and grandfather. How wonderful to be living in the downstairs area with her parents and sister Julie, and having the convenience and enjoyment of her grandparents and aunt living upstairs.

Mary’s mom had a green thumb and some of it must have rubbed off on her. Her mother had beautiful smelling roses and flowers, as well as a vegetable garden. As a little child, she remembers plucking carrots out of their garden and eating them right on the spot, and since her mother loved tulips, Mary thought it was okay to pick the tulips from the neighbors yard and bring them to her mother. What an enlightenment it was to learn that she must only pick what was in her yard. As she grew older, her chores were to prune and shape the Barberry bushes, cutting and edging the lawn, as well as pulling weeds in the garden.

Mary attended a small Lutheran grade school of 40 students, went on to Commerce High School, and graduated from Madonna College with a degree in Business Administration, while working for General Motors.

Who is our mysterious Mary? It is Mary Sheipline, married to Bruce Sheipline. They met at a dance where Bruce was surrounded by two or three smiling women. She looked at him but did not smile; a scowl would be more like it. Intrigued, he asked her to dance, he asked her name, but she would only say she was Mary the Fox. She would not give him her full name or telephone number, so he introduced himself as Bruce the Hound. Now to a man with a degree in psychology, he had to investigate this further. Somehow, he found out where she worked and her telephone number. He called her for six months before she finally accepted a date with him and they talked for many hours, finding out they had a lot in common. They dated for ten years, while she worked on her degree. They have now been married for 23 years. This year they attended the wedding of their son Brian to Jill, in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. It was a wonderful, different experience having a wedding in another country . . . so beautiful. They are hoping they won’t have to wait too many years for their first grandchild.

Mary has a friend who is a Master Gardener; she kept talking about the wonderful classes she took. Mary took the class in 1998 and got her Basic Master Gardener Certificate. Mary and three other people she met at the class sat in the front row, keeping the speakers on their toes with lots of questions. She studied hard and discovered she really loved the science of gardening. She came to the conclusion that the more you learn, the more you realize how little you know. In 1999, she received her Advanced Master Gardener Certificate.

Getting her first 40 hours was not a problem for Mary. She held a meeting for interested gardeners at GM and told them about the Plant-A-Row program. At harvest time, the people brought in food from their garden once a week, and she took it to Haven, a domestic shelter in Pontiac. Mary also started a PAR program at Our Lady of Refuge Catholic church in Orchard Lake. She put out a basket and people brought their food. Although she implemented the program, others from church delivered the food. That program is still in full force today.

Mary worked at the Michigan State Fair, Ask a Master Gardener, Farmer’s Market, was a Garden Leader at Tollgate, worked on Hospitality for MGSOC, and participated in the Rouge River Frog
Survey, and learned how to make the mating calls of 23 different frogs. At Cranbrook she has been involved in the plant sale, wild flower rescue, Cookies & Cocoa with Santa, and a docent for Holiday Tables. She takes part in “The Great American Bird Survey” by Cornell University. For the past 2 1/2 years, Mary had been a mentor for the Master Gardener classes. At the present time, she is interviewing people who wish to take the Master Gardener Class. She is also on the MSU Extension Leadership Council. Mary says, “We are appointees whose mission is to help elected officials understand the purpose of MSU Extension and know the importance of programs that take place in their district, so that we may continue to remain in their budgets. For instance, from Oakland County alone, we donated an equivalent of 3.8 million free labor hours in a ten-year period and since 2009 we grew and donated over 10,000 to 15,000 lbs. of fresh vegetables to food banks, such as Gleaners.”

When Mary and Bruce moved into their home, their backyard was full of trees. After removing many trees, they now have a wonderful organic garden, and Mary uses corn gluten for fertilizer. Some plants come with wonderful memories like the shrubs, trees, and lava rock garden Mary received from her parents. She likes to buy tiny plants and watch them grow. Her front and back yard gardens are filled with a variety of flowers: Peonies, Cacti she received from Lansing MG conference classes, a rescued Pea Tree, Rugosa Roses, native Monardi, an Ice Plant from Iran that has fragrant blossoms in January, a Kiwi Vine, and all kind of Hosta, including one called “Sum of All”, that will get 3 ft. high and 5 ft. wide. The queens of the garden are her roses; she tries her best to keep them happy. Every year Mary likes to make a water garden or goldfish pond in the tub in her back yard among the interesting garden art, including the huge dragonfly. Mary and Bruce make a wonderful team working in the garden together. Maggie, their Labrador of 14 years likes to watch them work in the garden and loves to pick her own tomatoes off the vine.

Gardening is not Mary’s only interest. For seven years she worked with the Oakland County jail in a jail ministry at Camp Gilman in White Lake Twp. Mary and Bruce are both interested in their township affairs. She has served as a chairperson of her precinct at some time during the last five years and is now a co-chairperson. Mary delivers Meals on Wheels to seniors and makes home visits to assess clients already in the program. During the school year, she has the delightful task of helping her neighbor’s daughter off to school in the mornings.

In their leisure time Mary and Bruce like swimming, kayaking, using their wave runners, being out on their pontoon boat, and golfing. It sounds like a busy, wonderful life to me:

full of the love of nature, love of people, and love of doing things together.

—Submitted by Sylvia Schult
Well, it’s that time of year again. The circle of life has once again arrived at a distinct season. I believe it’s pronounced “Cold.” While some embrace the cool, crisp air in anticipation of winter activities, others become mole people, never leaving the basement. There are as many reactions to the autumnal equinox as there are colors, shades and hues in the fall painting of the trees. How fortunate that Michigan provides its citizens with not only regular seasons, but also “trick” or “bonus” seasons.

Celebration of the January thaw, which usually lasts about 1.5 days is most wonderful if it occurs when you can enjoy it. Bonus season for sure, but if you blink you’ll miss it most years.

Remember how the summer of 2009 brought a brief fall in August in this area? It was extreme enough to upset the tomatoes and pepper plants with its too cool night temps resulting in damaged flowers and even fruit drop. It also triggered a myriad of maladies in veggie patches around Michigan, if the number of questions at last year’s last State Fair were any indication. Definitely in the “trick” category.

But that coin had two sides, like any other story. While we did suffer a short-term autumn in August, we also enjoyed a lovely bonus season when the real fall arrived. The weather was unseasonably mild and you didn’t have to wear two pairs of longjohns and a jacket that makes you look like the Michelin man while doing your fall cleanup. BONUS!

And who can forget earlier this year? Last spring was a most perfect example of a bonus season in recent history. While it’s not unusual to get two, maybe even three, “warmer than normal days” in a row, at least periodically, this April, we got almost two full weeks of unusually warm weather. So much so, that the gardening season got one fantastic kick in the asters.

This November, we had a prolonged Indian summer for close to two weeks. It’s much nicer to do fall cleanup without bundling up. (Notice how I’m not mentioning the nasty drought.)

Such weather quirks are impossible to plan for, even when you faithfully follow your favorite weather prognosticator. Remember the Thursday we were promised a beautiful day and the fog didn’t lift until four o’clock in the afternoon? And then came dusk. You win some, you lose some, so it’s best to just note those quirks and not keep score. Compost happens.

But---Were not the sunsets extraordinary in late October and early November? High on my list of favorite skies were the marvelous mixes of clear, bright blues and brilliant oranges and apricots, although it signaled having only minutes to put away the tools and stop whatever I was doing in time to find everything while it was still light. One morning I was informed that I had left the lawnmower out all night. Instant guilt. We must respect the tools and equipment, Obi-Wan. I was horrified. Other than sporting a tortoiseshell from the heavy dew, it didn’t seem to mind its abandonment for the night. Then a week later I couldn’t find my favorite broom. Another casualty of dusk.

I checked its normal hanging place three times, went to the shed, back to the garage and stared at its empty spot. It suddenly dawned on me that if I had left the mower out it could be very possible that the broom might be in the same neighborhood. Yes, it all came back to me. Unfairly, all of my major lapses seem to be related to some kind of interruption. It might be that ADD again but I’m thinking it’s not my fault. I blame it on the time change.

But as usual, I digress. Back to the sunsets.
There was one that arrived with crisscrossing stripes of brilliant, almost day-glo orange on shades of blue that rival plumbago, just above the horizon, that appeared to have been painted by a giant Dali, huge brush in hand, and it was later showcased on the eleven o’clock news. I was so ridiculously thrilled to have been a part of it, as if just because I was there for the real thing I had something to do with its wonderfulness.

Another sunset-related happening that has always enthralled me is that period just after the sun sets when the sky is an absolutely clear diamond blue that makes every limb and leaf of the steadily denuding trees so starkly visible and sharp. It seems to me to be the pure essence of twilight. It lasts mere minutes yet takes my breath away every time.

Of course not everything that takes my breath away is that uplifting. Discovering that the puppies found the box of creamers when the pantry door was left open took my breath away. Not quite as disgusting as finding your car egged the morning afterwards, but still a real pain to clean up after. The only thing that made it halfway pleasant was the vanilla scent left on the shelves, door, floor and surroundings. Just like with the seasons, this was a trick with a really small bonus.

Every gardening season has its ups and downs. It’s just a fact of life. That’s how we learn our lessons.

I probably would have had a nice display of reblooming iris this year had I not dug up the entire bed in mid October to try and diminish the lily of the valley’s domination. Who knew? I repeat for the umpteenth time, think long and hard when you get the urge to introduce groundcovers to the landscape. Yes, they were family heirlooms but remember that sentimentality comes from the heart and not the head. Consider strongly being more mental than sentimental.

I’m not sure I learned my lesson, but I definitely understand why I shouldn’t become so engrossed while weeding that I fail to consider the possibility that what’s growing there I might have actually planted. For the last few years, my efforts at growing tithonia were thwarted by bands of marauding rabbits or chipmunks, the very same criminals who munch my little zinnias. Of course I love the splash that these annuals make in the landscape. Tall and gangly with obscene orange flowers, they look marvelous in the back of a border and the wildlife appreciates them. So, instead of direct seeding them, I decided to start them in flats and transplant them when they reached about six inches. Both the zinnias and the tithonia seem to be left alone when they are about that height. Maybe they aren’t as tender or perhaps they have a different scent when they are a little more mature. Unfortunately, while on a weeding rampage around the shed, I mistook them for the velvetleaf weed and furiously pulled out several and dumped them in my bucket, all while the voices in my head were busily questioning why they were there because we never had a problem with velvetleaf before.

From the corner of the shed I ventured just a few feet further south and found more of them growing in the perimeter of a small brick-edged bed where there are two blueberry bushes and some clematis growing up an obelisk. This time I paused. Something wasn’t right. This can’t be. Well, duh, it finally clicked. These can’t be velvetleaf, they’re much too well organized. I quickly dumped my bucket and fished out the others and went back and replanted every one. And they all took, blooming happily until frosted upon. Once again a trick turned into a bonus.

I am impressed that even the vegetable garden participated in the trick or treat game. One of the zucchini plants played a neat trick and produced a bonus white offspring. I’m saving the seeds to see what happens next year.
Again, you win some and you lose some.

Fall cleanup gave the Dingo the advantage by exposing more area to destroy. I spent the better part of one day removing the wire cages I installed on the side of the house to prevent her from digging up the garlic, peonies and four o’clocks. I cut everything back after a light frost and pondered whether or not to put the cages back. Darned good idea to because by 8 P.M. there was already dirt decorating the driveway. Just another ride at Dingoworld.

Another breathless moment occurred only days ago. One of my neatest gardening purchases of all time was an irrigation edging system. The rigid edging came with slits and emitters and was perfect to use in a three foot wide bed. It came in twenty foot lengths and I had to splice a few sections together to properly cover the area. I decided to make a hose connector between two big sections rather that have to attach a hose at an inconvenient end. I also figured that the pressure would diminish more toward the far end so putting it centered gave each end a 50/50 shot at water. The edging had been pretty well covered by green stuff all summer but fall cleanup suddenly exposed it, naked as a baby bird. So the dingo ate my hose end.

So also the watering apparatus mentioned in a previous issue where I wrote how important it is to have at least one sprinkler head you can outrun? Only the spike survived being a Dingo dessert. Already I have the beginnings of a spring chore list. See how easy that is? Too bad I have hardly made a dent in the current chore list.

Some of the tasks are pleasurable, like making broccoli soup or spinach salads, or putting up beets. Some tasks are satisfying, like emptying the rain barrels and storing gallons and gallons of milkjugfulls in the basement. It’s especially nice when there are no leakers. Hard work, but satisfying, and the indoor plants will appreciate it. I really need to make up to them for the not-so-devoted care they get during the summer. Everything just takes more time than I have allotted.

Besides the pleasure and pain you encounter chugging through your chores, there are moments of wonderment and sometimes horror thrown in just to keep you entertained. When you hop in the tub and discover that the bug swimming in your bath water was probably something that hitched its way in on you, it’s not so comforting. When you find really interesting looking seeds in your underwear and you have no idea where they came from, you’ll be full of wonderment.

Just like with the weather’s tricks and bonuses, there are always more sides to a story. If it weren’t for the tricks, you wouldn’t appreciate the bonuses. The bonus of a snowy winter is the protection for the plants. If we try to avoid the scary, we’ll miss the opportunity for a delightful surprise. Killing predators can upset the natural balance; sometimes the ugliest caterpillar becomes the most beautiful of butterflies.

So, the next time you’re faced with something negative, try to remember the gardener’s version of “It’s better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”:

It is better to just take off your gloves and untie the double knotted laces than to walk around with a stone in your shoe.

Happy Holidays and enjoy your catalogs!
Some Information You Should Know

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President: Christine Covell………………..…..(248)852-1890
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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.
Michigan State University Extension- Oakland County
“Bringing Knowledge to Life”

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Roots & Shoots is a joint publication of MSU Extension-Oakland county and Master Gardener Society of Oakland County.
Submit articles for publication to Dick Wanat rwanat15506mi@comcast.net by suggested deadlines below.

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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.

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