

ROOTS & SHOOTS

**Master Gardener Society
of Oakland County**

J U N E • J U L Y 2 0 0 3

From the President

Hello Everyone!

This edition of Stepping Stones is coming to you via my new computer. Yes, I've made the step into the 21st century. For a long time I couldn't justify the expense, but with a little help from Uncle Sam, in the form of a tax return, and a lot of sack lunches, we can now proceed. I have had a computer at work for the last two years, and thank the management of my company for letting me utilize this most valuable tool.

I hope all of your gardens are in full bloom at this time, this article is being written in early May. We had a good turn out for the Spring Clean up at Bowers Farm. John Grant has developed an Adopt a Garden program at Bowers. It is a great idea which has had succeeded in the past. Marvin Copley and I have adopted the area by the lower entrance to the farm, next to the Big Red Barn. With the assistance of my sister-in-law, Martha, we have planted many varieties

of sunflowers and hollyhocks. It should prove to be quite a spectacular display, and a focal point as you enter the farm. I took before pictures, after we cleared the many scrub trees and weeds-oh-plenty. All this time we had Lace, Mark's dog, and a very inquisitive Tom Turkey supervising every step of the project.

Mark Seeley has brought new animals on site: baby lambs and horses have been born on site. Bowers Farm is a destination point, one where you can acquire your Master Gardener Volunteer hours, and somewhere that you can introduce your family and friends to the wonders of Nature at its best, and be proud of your contribution. Many School district-sponsored events are planned each weekend, which include several Open Barns throughout the season. We have complete access to the farm from dawn til dusk, with the provision for identification purposes that we wear our MG Badges.

Volunteering at Bowers allows me to do other things in the area. For example, I schedule Blood Donation at the American Red Cross at Franklin and Square Lake Roads, in Bloomfield Hills. I used to be petrified of donating. It's that old needle thing. But after a few times you realize your contribution is saving someone's life, and you get over your fear REALLY quick. The Donation procedure is simple. Nurses, who also volunteer their time, are available to address any of your concerns. They take you through a short questionnaire explaining all of the steps and precautions. I have donated 12 pints of B(pos.) Blood, and am allowed to donate every 56 days. I expect the whole idea is to get into a regular routine. With whatever you do, look at it as an opportunity, not an obligation.

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Society Calendar

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June 4 - General Meeting - 6:30 pm at Bowers Farm: Gabe Tiberio will speak on Ornamental Grasses

June 14 - Open Barn at Bowers Farm with MG info booth, plant exchange, horse show at arena

June - Summer conference at MSU

International MG Conference

Royal Botanical Garden Tour sponsored by MGSOOC

July 1 - Deadline for Roots & Shoots

July 9 - General Meeting - 6:30 pm (Date Change) at Bowers Farm. Shelly Buckman, Director of Horticulture, Deli Unique Restaurant Corp will speak on Container Gardening.

August 1 - Oakland Gardener deadline

August 6 - General Meeting - 6:30 pm at Bowers Farm. Dick Wagner from the Orchid Society will provide the education.

August 18 - Board Meeting - 7:00 pm at the Extension Office.

General meetings held the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at Bowers Farm, 1219 East Square Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status .

NEW COLUMN NEEDS YOUR HELP!

We are starting a member correspondence column with your gardening questions or comments. Please keep your submissions less than 50 words and we will be happy to publish your ideas in an upcoming issue.

All submissions to Roots & Shoots may be emailed to Marilyn Citron at *mcitron@aol.com* or via regular mail to: 1575 Fairway Dr., Birmingham, MI 48009.

Society Officers

- President:** John P. Humphrey..... 248-542-8213
- Vice President:** John Grant..... 248-852-3758
- Secretary:** Ruth Vrbensky..... 248-969-6904
- Treasurer:** Julie Bird..... 248-358-3277
- Team Administrator:** Sherry D. Jones..... 248-442-9866

MSU Extension Liaison

- Martha Ferguson..... 248-858-0900
- e-mail..... fergusonm@co.oakland.mi.us

Team Leaders

- Bowers Farm:** John Grant..... 248-852-3758
- Bill Wallace..... 248-332-9658
- Deeann Bauer..... 248-828-7385
- John Humphrey..... 248-542-8213

Education /Volunteer Committee:

- Linda Rose..... 248-642-4543
- Fund Raising:** Terry Ohrstrom..... 248-544-8658
- Hospitality:** Sylvia Schult..... 248-585-7656
- Membership:** Tom Hershberger..... 248-435-3954
- Bill Wallace..... 248-332-9658

MGSOOC Newsletter:

- Marilyn Citron..... 248-645-5515
- e-mail..... mcitron@aol.com

Nomination Committee:

- Tom Hershberger..... 248-435-3954
- Programs:** Ruth Vrbensky..... 248-969-6904
- John Humphrey..... 248-542-8213

Trips & Tours: Sandie Parrott..... 248-394-1532

Website Administrator: Sheri Trout..... 248-328-0557

e-mail..... sheri@oaklandweb.com

Volunteer Opportunity Contacts

Oakland County Farmer's Market Info Booth

Royal Oak Farmer's Market Info Booth

Rochester Farmer's Market

Farmington Farmer's Market

- Ruth Parulis..... 248-682-2909
- Bowers Farm Manager:** Mark Seeley..... 248-341-6475
- e-mail..... mseeley@bloomfield.org

Let's Go Gardening: Denise Jones..... 586-944-8543

Plant-a-Row for the Hungry Gardens Coordinator

Ann Mathieson..... 248-770-4062

Tollgate Gardens:

- Rene Cottrell..... 248-398-2562
- e-mail..... tyrenee@aol.com



Meeting Highlights

Todd Renshaw - April 2, 2003

Our speaker for the April meeting was Todd Renshaw from Four Seasons Bonsai Club of Michigan. The first thing we learned is that the first syllable of bonsai is pronounced "bone." Bonsai literally means "tree in a pot." The written history of bonsai started in the third century BCE in China. People saw naturally dwarfed and twisted trees with thick trunks and short branches in the mountains and transplanted them into pots for display. Gradually they invented techniques to create the same effects on other trees. The Japanese began emulating Chinese bonsai in the twelfth century, and they continued to refine the techniques.

There are two basic elements of bonsai: horticulture and design. The bonsai artist needs to understand the horticultural needs of the plant he is working with in order to create the beautiful designs. The dwarfing and shape are created by judicious root pruning (cut long roots to encourage short ones), pruning, pinching and wiring. Bonsai plants are often created over a period of time from trees and shrubs that have grown naturally outside. They are sometimes root pruned in place for one or two years and then put into a large box. The long roots and the branches are then pruned back about one-third. They are then gradually pruned to achieve the desired shape and size. The artist encourages the growth of pads of foliage by pruning to let light into the interior of the tree and creates the look of age by wiring lower branches so that they point down.

Bonsai trees are grown in rocky, granular soil because the shallow pots tend to hold water. Bonsai trees need frequent watering. Some hardy trees are grown outside year round, and it essential to protect them from desiccation in the winter. Indoor trees should be fed with half strength fertilizer every 1-2 weeks; the grower should stop using high nitrogen fertilizer on outdoor trees in August or September.

There are basic rules of design such as that the width of the base of the tree should equal the height of the pot and that the branches should be a little wider than

the pot. There are many books about these rules, but they should be considered guides only.

Beginners need one-on-one help, and the Four Seasons Bonsai Club of Michigan is a good place to find advice. Meetings are generally held on the last Sunday of the month at 2 p.m. at Cranbrook House and Gardens. The annual show is scheduled on June 14 and 15 in the Washington Square Building (Washington and Fourth Street) in Royal Oak. For further information call Todd Renshaw at 248-585-9916 or email scott12@wwnet.com.

~submitted by Jean Gramlich

Speaker Highlights

Gabe Tiberio - June 4, 2003

Gabe Tiberio has been a Master Gardener since 1988, a member of the original task force formed to establish the MGSOC, a participant in Tollgate activities since 1990 and has had an interest in ornamental grasses for the past 15 years. He will present a brief horticultural background on ornamental grasses as well as selection guidelines, characteristics of various grasses, recommendations for the Michigan climate and suggestions for uses and companion plantings.

Shelly Buckman - July 9, 2003

Shelly Buckman is the Director of Horticulture for Unique Restaurant Corporation in the metro area. She designs, plants and maintains catering gardens for the restaurants, as well as oversees the care of indoor plants and fresh cut flowers for the tables. A 1985 graduate of Michigan Technological University with both a Bachelor's and a Master's in plant ecology, Shelly can also be found speaking about landscape design and other garden-related topics at area garden clubs, shops and community education programs.

HerbalLore

by Diane Opria

Chervil (*Anthriscus cerefolium*)

For centuries, this herb has been in the English gardens where it has been used as the basis of many herbal salads. Many call it the gourmet parsley because it has a more delicate flavor than parsley, which it resembles. There are two varieties of chervil, plain and curly. It is best known for its use in salads, but it is especially good in sorrel or spinach soup. In Europe, it is custom to eat chervil soup on Holy Thursday since it is a symbol of resurrection. Chervil also adds flavor to fish, eggs, meats, and vegetables, and is often used with oysters.

Pliny said that “chervil was a fine herb to comfort the cold stomach of the aged”. Gerard warns that “it has a certain windiness, by means whereof it provoketh lust”. Culpeper mentions many medicinal qualities of the herb. “Chervil is a certain remedy to dissolve congealed or clotted blood in the body, or that which is clotted by bruises or falls. The juice or distilled water thereof being drunk, and the bruised leaves laid to the place, being taken in either meat or drink, it is good to provoke urine, or expel the stone in the kidneys, to send down women’s courses and to help the pleurisy and prickling of the sides”.

Chervil grows about two feet high, with small flowers shaped in umbels. The seeds look like tiny sticks, and take about ten days to germinate. The seed requires light to germinate, so it should not be covered with soil, but must be kept moist until the plants are visible. The chervil’s root is long, and is therefore more difficult to transplant. If the seed is spread outdoors, a piece of cheesecloth can be used to cover it, keeping it moist, and letting the plants grow right through the cloth. Since moisture is necessary, a partly shaded area may be best. It grows best in cool weather, so it can be considered a spring or fall crop. Leaves will be ready six to eight weeks after sowing.

Fresh chervil is best. The drying process leaves the herb tasteless. A commercial brand, in a glass jar, is a better choice because of the controlled drying.

As Evelyn had instructed, chervil should never be missing from a salad, since it is exceedingly wholesome and “cheering the spirits”.

Stepping Stones, Continued from page 1...

I hope your Memorial Day was one of reflection this year, and every year. I am very thankful to **all** of our veterans who have served, and the many who have died protecting these United States of America. Please take time to honor these brave Men & Women by flying your flag proudly.

Its Dad’s day to celebrate with a new “TIE” on June 15th, Happy Father’s Day Dad!

The Fund-raising Team has opportunities for volunteer hours throughout the summer. Check out our website, **MGSOC.org** for the latest details.

Sylvia Schult and Martha Ferguson are attending the International Master Gardener Conference in Cincinnati, then turning right around and attending Summer Conference on Campus at MSU , Two Super Women!

I will be attending the MG Tour to Hamilton, Ontario, Niagra Falls, and other points of interest the last part of June. These trips are always well attended, and well organized.

Lastly, and on a very personal note. May 1st, 2003 will always be one of the most important evenings of my life. Our Extraordinary Secretary, and new Mom too, Ruth Vrbensky, and I were bestowed the honor of Master Gardeners of the year. Springfield Oaks, was our Host for the 2002/03 Volunteer Recognition and Awards Banquet. I thank everyone involved with the Master Gardener Program, and I share this award with each and every one of you.

Regards,

John P. Humphrey,
President, MGSOC

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

The following minutes are unapproved.

A Board Meeting was held on March 12, 2003.

Meeting called to order: 8:50 p.m.

In Attendance: J. Humphrey, J. Bird, R. Vrbensky, S. Parrott, S. Schult, Sherry Jones, John Grant, Linda Rose, Rosemarie Attilio, Dee Ann Bauer, Janie Grisson
Quorum present.

Motion: John Humphrey moved to approve the printing and postage to mail Royal Botanical trip information of Master Gardeners. The total cost is \$621.00. J. Bird second Approved

Sylvia stated she has registered for International Conference and submitted the receipt for \$345.00.

J. Bird stated that budget information must be submitted by Saturday, March 15, 2003.

Motion: J. Bird moved to adjourn board meeting.
John Grant second. Approved.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:09 p.m.
John Humphrey asked for everyone to be at Board Meeting at 6:30 p.m. if possible.

General Meeting March 12, 2003 - Highlights

Bower's Farm Activity dates were announced.

Clean-up: April 26, 2003 at 9:00 am
Open Barn: April 12 1-4p.m. with Seed starting and MG Info booth
Open Barn: May 10 1-4p.m. with MG Info booth
Open Barn: June 14 1-4p.m. with Plant Exchange and MG Info booth
Open Barn: Sept 27 1-4p.m. with MG Info booth
Open Barn: Oct 25 1-4p.m. with MG Info booth
John Grant will obtain all extension handouts for information booths.

Adopt a Garden will be instituted at Bower's Farm. Anyone interested in adopting a garden, be it hummingbird, butterfly, agricultural, shade, etc. please contact John Grant at 248-852-3758

Volunteer Opportunities

The Fund Raising Team needs volunteers to staff a vendor table on June 21, from 11 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the First Congregational Church in Birmingham. To sign-up, or for further details, contact Terry Ohrstrom at 248-544-8658 or tohrstrom@msn.com.

Are you a photographer with a digital camera? The Fund Raising Team would like to have pictures taken of the items that they are selling to be posted on the MGSOC website. To volunteer contact Terry Ohrstrom at 248-544-8658 or tohrstrom@msn.com

The Fund Raising Team of the Master Gardener Society needs volunteers, in 3-4 hour blocks of time, for the following events:

September 13th (Saturday) Growing with Master Gardeners, 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. This is a day-long conference put on by the Master Gardener Association of Wayne County. It is held on the campus of U-M Dearborn. Contact Terry Ohrstrom at 248-544-8658 or tohrstrom@msn.com to schedule time.

September 20th (Saturday) Tollgate Farms Fall Festival, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Contact Terry Ohrstrom at 248-544-8658 or tohrstrom@msn.com to schedule time.

New Members:

The Membership Team would like to welcome the newest members to the Society:

John DeHart, Jr.
Shirley Dobie-Bloom

Lathrup Village Home & Garden Tour

June 21st, 2003, from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

The 8th annual event, co-sponsored by the Lathrup Village Historical Society and the Village Gardeners, presents a wonderful opportunity to view the interiors of five of Lathrup's most interesting homes and to stroll through four beautiful, private gardens on a self-guided tour. The newly expanded Children's Garden and historic Community Congregational Church will also be part of the tour. Proceeds support beautification projects throughout Lathrup Village, which is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its founding in 2003.

A Garden Boutique will offer plants, garden statuary, unique garden accessories, and original art from local artists. The Boutique will be located at the gazebo in the park adjacent to the Municipal Building located on Southfield Road. The Young Astronauts will operate the a Garden Cafe, selling refreshments as a fundraiser. SOCRRA (Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority) volunteers will staff display tables during the day with information on tree and flower selection, composting, garden maintenance, and lawn care. In addition to local residents who serve as docents in the homes, Master Gardener volunteers will be stationed in each of the gardens and in the Garden Boutique to answer questions and assist guests.

Tickets will be sold in advance for \$12.00 per person or \$15.00 the day of the tour. Seniors are offered a discounted entry price of \$8.00 per person. Ticket vouchers will be available after June 1st at the Lathrup Village City Offices located at 27400 Southfield Rd. 3 blocks north of I-696, between 11 and 12 Mile Roads. **Call Pat Gore at (248) 559-0488 or Richard Reeves at (248) 569-5610 for tickets or tour information.**

Four Seasons Bonsai Club of Michigan Annual Bonsai Show and Sale

Featuring the Ancient Art of Miniature Japanese Trees. Includes a Bonsai Exhibit and Demonstrations on Growing Your Own Bonsai. Bonsai, Pots, Tools, and Accessories for Sale. Enter the Bonsai Raffle.

Saturday, June 14, 10 am - 9 pm (Demonstrations: 12-2 pm, 3-5 pm, 6-8 pm)

Sunday, June 15, 10 am - 5 pm (Demonstrations: 1-3 pm, 3-5 pm)

Admission: \$3 (Children Under 12 Free.)

Location: Washington Square Building (Corner of Washington and 4th Street, Royal Oak, Michigan)

Held in Conjunction with The Royal Oak Clay & Glass Show. Over 150 juried artists from more than thirty states bring some of their best traditional bowls, mugs, tea pots and vases, as well as giant hand blown fountains, life size human sculptures, garden statuary, and stained glass windows. This event has more clay and glass artists than any other single Michigan art fair.

For more information on the bonsai show, visit the Four Seasons website at: www.geocities.com/fsbcm/ or contact Todd Renshaw, (248) 585-9916, email: scott13@wnet.com

An Editorial Farewell

As indicated in our last issue, I will be stepping down as editor of Roots & Shoots to have another baby (the ultrasound says a boy this time!). It has been my pleasure to serve our Society in this capacity for the past two and half years, and I do hope to continue contributing to our newsletter as time will allow. Marilyn Citron has graciously stepped up to fill the position and I am sure will provide Roots & Shoots with wonderful leadership. Everyone is encouraged to submit their articles to her. Her email is : mcitron@aol.com and she can be reached via phone at (248) 645-5515. Thanks to a everyone who has been a part of our team and will hopefully continue to be!

Sincerely,

Linda Mayernik

Growing Vegetables Organically

SOIL PREPARATION IN SIX STEPS

by Peter Bray

Soil preparation is best done in October and November, when warm-weather crops have stopped producing. Fall is the best time to add organic matter or minerals to let them become assimilated into the soil before spring. And, obviously, the soil needs to be prepared in late summer or fall for over-winter green manure crops.

Step #1: Double digging. It's a pity that this has to come first, because double digging is hard work. But take heart; once you have done it, it need never be done again, as will be explained later. So, plan to do a little every year. The aim of double digging is to produce light, airy soil which gives roots plenty of oxygen and lets them penetrate deeply. This makes intensive cultivation possible. It also helps rainwater to infiltrate down into the soil. Double digging means loosening the soil to the depth of two spade blades. It involves digging a trench and moving the trench down the plot; you loosen the lower level with a garden fork and move the upper level back a row, loosening it as you go. Consult a diagram in a gardening book or on the Internet to see just how this is done.

Double digging need only be done once because you will never step on that soil again. Why expend energy to put air into the soil, only to squeeze it out again by putting your weight on the soil? The way to avoid stepping on the soil is to organize your garden into narrow beds, say 4' to 5' wide, narrow enough so that you can reach the middle of the bed from either side. To make this possible you will need paths about 1½' wide between the beds. You will be able to grow intensively, in blocks rather than in rows, without any open space between each plant. So you will be able to grow more, not fewer, vegetables. The soil level in narrow beds will rise because of the air in the soil and become "crowned" beds. Crowned beds thaw out sooner in spring, which enables you to plant early crops two weeks earlier.

Step # 2: Soil Test. Test, Don't Guess. Don't add minerals to the soil, either in fertilizer or rock powder form, unless a soil test says you have a deficiency. Initially, you need only test and amend the major nutrients: calcium, phosphate, potash, magnesium, sulfur, and nitrogen. Get them into balance first (i.e. no deficiencies or excesses) before you test and amend trace minerals. You need only test every three years or so.

Step # 3: Clear Weeds and Crop Residues. Remove any remaining weeds and crop residues, shake the soil off the roots, and put them in your compost pile. Some soil will

still cling to the roots, which is the best compost activator available. It's a good idea to pull weeds during the growing season before they flower and set seed, which they are apt to do very quickly.

Step # 4: Incorporate Organic Matter. The most important soil amendment of all is organic matter because it promotes life in the soil and retains rainwater. When your soil test shows that organic matter is less than 5%, you should add more every year. When soil organic matter is above 5%, you can continue to add more, so long as your soil test says there is no mineral that is excessive. Be warned though, you can have too much of a good thing, so don't add more organic matter than your soil can decompose.

The best sources of organic matter are compost, natural mulches, shredded leaves, and green manures. Incorporate ½" to 1" of compost into the top 3" of your soil every fall. This is best done with a rake. If you used a mulch of shredded leaves during the growing season, incorporate the remaining leaves into the soil evenly along with the compost. You will find that at least half of the leaves will have decomposed during the summer and you might find a thick layer of valuable worm castings underneath the leaves.

If you haven't used a leaf mulch, then spread some shredded leaves sparingly and incorporate them with a garden fork. Make sure they don't clump together otherwise they won't decompose. Leaves take three non-freezing months to decompose. You can aid the process somewhat by spraying vegetable beds with molasses (two tablespoons per 100 sq. ft. dissolved in a watering can of water). Be aware that leaves, as well as compost imported from outside your garden, will add minerals to your soil, especially phosphate and potash. This may be welcome, but do avoid creating an excess of any mineral. See Step #6 for green manures.

Step # 5: Correct Mineral Deficiencies. The aim is to produce a balance of soil minerals, which is to say no deficiencies and no excesses. Excesses are as bad as deficiencies and are harder to correct. You don't need to provide different mixtures of minerals for different vegetables; a garden with well balanced minerals will provide proper fertility for every kind of vegetable. If your soil has well balanced minerals, lots of soil organic matter, and a good decay system, then your pH should be close to 7 -- that is neutral. Slightly acid (about 6.5) is best for vegetables. You can tweak your pH by spraying apple cider vinegar (2 tablespoons per 100 sq. ft. added to a watering can of water).

The first rule of adding minerals is Test Don't Guess. In this part of Michigan a common situation is low phosphate, high

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Soil Preparation, Continued from page 7...

potash or magnesium, and pH over 7. If you are short of both calcium as well as phosphate, then a good soil amendment is soft rock phosphate, which provides both, together with small quantities of all the other minerals. If you are short of calcium, or have both an excess of either potash or magnesium, and have high pH, then gypsum (calcium sulfate) is the best soil amendment. The calcium helps to balance out potash and magnesium, and the sulfate reduces pH. Be aware that Dolomite limestone contains both calcium and magnesium; so only use it if your soil tests short of magnesium.

Once the macronutrients are in balance, address trace mineral deficiencies. The amounts required in fertile soil are very small; so be careful not to add more than the amount recommended in the soil test. If your soil has been overworked in the past or is otherwise poor, you might consider the Remineralize-the-Earth approach. (There is a useful website with that name.) Good soil amendments that supply trace minerals are kelp meal and granite meal. Apply 2 to 3 lbs. per 100 sq. ft. for 2 to 3 years, and then test your soil again.

Step # 6: Cover Bare Soil. Cover bare soil in the fall to prevent spring rains from eroding the soil or breaking up its surface crumb. You can either cover a bed with a mulch of leaves or straw, or sow a green manure crop. Green manures are preferable. Green manures take about 30 days to decompose. Where you are going to plant an early crop such as peas or lettuce, a green manure won't have time to decompose, so you should use a mulch. Your rotation plan should tell you what will be planted in each bed next year. One advantage of an over-winter mulch is that it will be in place ready to use in the next growing season. Just pull it aside, and plant.

Clover and cereal rye are good over-winter green manures. Sow them by broadcasting the seed by hand, and then pressing it down to ensure contact with the soil with the butt-end of a rake. Sow clover before end-August. Clover is a legume and will fix nitrogen in the soil. Sow cereal rye any time up to mid-November. Rye kills off weeds and small-seeded vegetables, even after it has been buried. So follow rye with peas, beans, potatoes, or tomato plants. When burying green manures in the spring, make sure that no green is left showing, or it will continue to grow.

FIRST CLASS

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