MASTER GARDENER
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Washtenaw County Master Gardener Newsletter

Contents

Poinsettias……..1

2010 Awards 2

Much to do with nothing ……..…….....3-5

Tales from the Hive...5-8

"So Easy to Preserve".....……..5

Master Gardener Clothes Available…….8

Master Gardener Tote Bag……..……..8

Master Gardener Alumni News……..……..9

Calendar..…….....10

Poinsettias add color to your Christmas décor…..

The poinsettia, with its beautiful red "blooms" and dark green foliage, has become nearly as popular around the Christmas holiday as the Christmas tree.

The plant, which is native to Central America, was introduced to the United States in the 1820s by Joel Robert Poinsette. He was an ambassador to Mexico and an amateur botanist, who shipped several plants back to his home in South Carolina and sent cuttings to other botanists.

From its simple beginnings, the plant that bears Poinsette's name has increased greatly in popularity through the years.

Poinsettias are readily available around the holidays and are a prefect addition to holiday decorations. They come in a variety of colors from white to red, but the traditional colors of red and dark green remain a popular choice for many holiday shoppers.

Poinsettias like warm temperatures and should not be exposed to freezing conditions. It is important to protect the plant even on a short trip to the car. If a poinsettia becomes chilled, it may drop its leaves.

At home, keep the plant in bright natural sunlight, but do not expose it to direct sun. Make sure the plant never dries out and keep it away from drafts or heating ducts.

Drainage is important to the health of the plant. If the plant is in a plastic pot or foil wrapper, pierce the bottom and place it in a waterproof container. Do not allow the plant to sit in water or the leaves will turn yellow and drop. Keep the soil evenly moist.

Most people toss the plant after the holidays; however, it can be a lovely houseplant. It can even be placed outdoors in a lightly shaded area for further enjoyment throughout the year.

By Dianne L. McCagg, (MG 2006) Ypsilanti Garden Club, Reprinted from the Ypsilanti Courier, December 2002

2010 Master Gardener Awards

BASIC CERTIFICATE

James Babcock
Scott Blomquist
Mary Boyce
Kathy Buttermore
Dr. April Campbell
Marlene Chockley
Ruth Ann Cooperthwaite
Michael Donley
Barbara Fike
Wanda Fleming
Janice Greatorex
Jane Hopkins
Geoff Kroepel
Elizabeth Lindsley
Hajnal Minger
Elaine Mogerman
Lissa Oliver
Corinna B. Parker
Patricia Patail
Jesse Raudenbush
Christine Roy
Karen Santini
Leann Seebruch
Kim Sensoli
Dorothy Williams
Amanda Woodward

Basic Certification: Front Row, left to right: Karen Santini, April Campbell, Hajnal Minger, Lissa Oliver, Wanda Fleming, Betsy Lindsley.
Second Row. ;left to right: Geoff Kroepel, Christine Roy, Kim Sensoli, Mary Boyce, Janice Greatorex, Kathy Buttermore, Corinna Parker, Amanda Woodward, Barb Fike, Patricia Patail, Marlene Chockley, Jesse Raudenbush and Dorothy Williams.

100 Hours

Mary Bruening
Mary Duff-Silverman
Jodi Gagnon
Judi Graber
Maurita Holland
Erich Jensen
Lynda Norton
Esther Petrovich
Helen Prussian
Victoria Roberts
Marianne Rzepka
Norman Scherr
Deanna Searls
Candie Sorensen
Marion Spencer
Mary Topham
Daniella Williams
Bonnie Winkelman

100 hours: Front Row, left to right: Marianne Rzepka, Deanna Searls, Candie Sorensen.
Second Row:, left to right: Norm Scherr, Helen Prussian, Mary Bruening, Maurita Holland, Erich Jensen and Lynda Norton.

Distinguished Volunteer Service Award: Kathie Mann is this year's recipient. The award is given for exceptional volunteer service to the community working through MSU Extension.

250 hours: Front Row, left to right: Judy Parsons, Barbara Frederick.
Second Row, left to right: Mary Robinson, Richard Mendel, Anita Sandretto.
500 hours: Carole Buttrum, Kathie Mann.

ADVANCED CERTIFICATE

Sara Bertsch
Mary Bruening
Kathy Buttermore
Mary Duff-Silverman
Jodi Gagnon
Judi Graber
Maurita Holland
Judy McArthur
Janet A. McCarthy-Henkel
Nancy Murphy
Lynda Norton
Nancy Quay
Norman Scherr
Deanna Searls
Mary Lu Stone
Jane VanBolt
Bonnie G. Winkelman

Advanced Status: Front Row, left to right: Deanna Searls and Nancy Quay.
Second Row, left to right: Norm Scherr, Maurita Holland, Kathy Buttermore, Mary Bruening and Lynda Norton.

State Awards

Inge Ferguson—250
Barbara Frederick—250
Richard Mendel—250
Veronica Muscat—250
Judith Parsons—250
Mary Robinson - 250
Anita Sandretto—250
Mary Lu Stone—250
Carole Buttrum—500
Kathie Mahn—500

Great Job

Much to do with Nothing

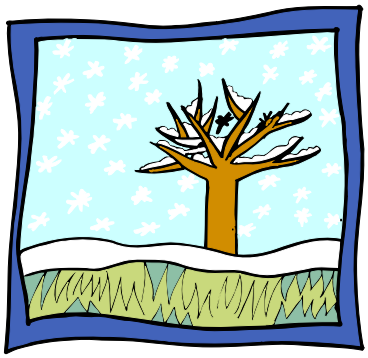
by Billy Shakedown

(Submitted by: Jesse Raudenbush - MG 2010)

Are you going absolutely nuts yet?

Are next summer's gardens already fully planned down to the last ridiculous detail, including the preordered custom brushed brass plant markers? Have you pulled out your green thumb only to feel the sweet burning kiss of frost bite?

Personally, I've done all of the above, although the brass plant markers are on my wish list, as they are way out of my price range. I've also cleaned, oiled and stored all of the garden tools, exchanging pitch fork, shovel and spade for snow blower, snow shovel and salt (which I use sparingly).



Dear reader, I mention this all not to boast or brag about my garden sanitation practices or planning and organizational skills. I speak of these things simply as an appeal to those who might relate. I am going crazy with gardening withdrawal, and winter is not yet halfway through! I've fussed with my poor houseplants to the point that I think I may actually be doing more harm than good. I mean seriously, how necessary is it to repot a houseplant three to four times so that the flower pot better compliments the plant foliage? I've got a wax begonia that, I swear, wilts a little whenever I look at it now.

As I contemplated a topic for this month's newsletter, the thought occurred: Why not kill two birds with one stone? I decided to find some winter gardening-type activities for myself, and then pass the compilation off as a well-researched article for the newsletter.

Most of the following ideas are not tremendously interesting or challenging for an avid gardener. Others you may have heard of or completed yourself in the past.

I'm trying to prepare you to be un-wowed folks. Better yet, maybe refer back to this "well-researched article" as the winter wears on. Some of this stuff may start to sound downright good by then. I'll be attempting a couple of these with my 5 year old just to spice things up a little.

Lastly, just so you know, some of the names of these activities have been changed to protect the fact that this is a well-researched article and not just some random time-killers found on the Internet and in the outdated garden magazines I found in my basement underneath my wife's special Christmas ornaments.

Ye old avocado plant thingy

Making any guacamole dip this holiday season? Save the pit. You're going to wash it thoroughly and then dry it for a couple of days on a window sill or near a heat register or vent. Peal or scrape off any skin as best as possible, then carefully cut about a quarter inch off the top (pointed end). I reiterate, carefully cut, as these puppies are very hard. You don't *have to* cut the pit, but this does greatly reduce germination time. Take some toothpicks and poke them into the side of the pit so you can suspend it – cut side down – at the top of a glass of water with only about a quarter inch submerged. It's important to maintain the water level until the pit eventually splits and shoots begin to sprout. After a few strong shoots are apparent, you can plant the pit in soil. I did this last year, and kept the sprouting pit in the glass for quite a while for the visual appeal and as a conversation piece. I told my friends it was a rare octopus egg and asked if they wanted a baby octopus in a few weeks. Non-plant people are so gullible and ripe for leg-pulling like this.

Pot sniffing

No, don't even go there, girlfriend! I'm talking about unpleasant soil odor in your indoor potted plants. After ruling out the serious possibility of feline shenanigans, there are a couple other usual suspects when it comes to funky-smelling soil. I always love those brilliant articles that go something like this excerpt I came across during my acclaimed and extensive research: "The easiest remedy for odor soil in indoor plants is to prevent it from occurring." I almost can't even finish reading pieces with such groundbreaking pontifications like that. This is almost like saying, "Well, the best way not to die is to keep breathing."

Ah, but I digress. Stinky soil usually occurs due to overwatering, inadequate ventilation or the overabundance of dead fall foliage.

Obvious remedies would be to ease up on the watering, put a fan in the vicinity (leaving it on low is usually enough - we just want to stir the air a bit) or clean out any dead and fallen leaves in a timely manner. If these don't work, it's probably best just to repot with fresh soil. Lastly and most importantly, don't forget to keep breathing.

Proactively fighting the winter blues

The easiest way to avoid the winter blues is not to get them. (Gee, thanks Captain Obvious. You're the best!). If you are like me and expensive getaways during the harshest parts of the winter are not an option, do not fret. You can still take a brief day or afternoon vacation better suited to your travel budget. For instance, how far I travel depends on how much gas I have in the car. Again, there are no brilliant new ideas here, but maybe some helpful reminders of fun and interesting things to do while we wait for the warmer spring breezes to return.

Matthaei Botanical Gardens, specifically the

conservatory and greenhouses, are a wonderful respite. I find that an afternoon in the well-lit (real sunlight) and exceedingly warm environment does wonders for my attitude and overall demeanor. There is the chance that my choice of swimwear will be declared as inappropriate for family settings, and I'll admit the tinfoil and bamboo stake contraption was a little over the top, but seriously, Americans are so prudish about the human body.

Most of you have probably been to Matthaei, but I, for one, had been going to the gardens for years before taking in the conservatory. I finally decided, hey, what's a few bucks for my sanity? It's cheaper than a shrink or a flight. Although, now that I think about it, airport security may in fact appreciate my swim suit, as it would most definitely make their jobs just a tad bit easier.

The Museum of Natural History is always a nice change of pace, and let me tell ya, if you want to be warm for a few hours this is the place to be. I recently took a walking field trip with my daughter's kindergarten class and just about fell out from heat exhaustion. I'm sure chasing 5 year olds off dinosaur displays had something to do with it, but it is really toasty in there. Also, if you are somewhat of a "space cadet" like me, the planetarium is in there too.

Winter Rain Barrels

This year I beat the weather and disconnected my rain barrels before I ended up with two 33-gallon blocks of ice - again. Last year's fiasco ended with a really sore back, one busted rain barrel and two pretty bad ice sculptures that haunted me well into spring, as I had to explain to several people how I was introduced to really bad ice sculpture as a hobby.

This year, I have a way to get rainwater for my house plants during the winter. I have set about a half dozen 5-gallon buckets outside to collect snow. When full, I simply bring them into the basement to thaw and warm to room temp. Of course, the snow-to-water ratio leaves a lot to be desired, but I have an abundance of unused 5-gallon buckets, so what the heck. I am also told that, for the time being, rain water and snow melt are still free.

Recipe for disaster

Ever make your own CO2 generator, and why the hell would you want to? Well, let me explain.

As we all know, CO2 is necessary for plants to complete photosynthesis. During the summer months, open windows and doors usually provide our plants access to enough natural CO2, which is absorbed through the leaves. However, during the winter months, with doors and windows closed tight, not so much.

You will probably have all the needed materials for a CO2 generator on hand, because as Master Gardeners, we can never keep enough useless crap around since we are sure it will probably come into good use at some point shortly after we die. I seem to remember this fact being listed somewhere as a prerequisite in the MG application process.

This recipe is figured for a 2-liter bottle or larger, as long as it has an airtight top.

You also will need:

Dry activated yeast
Regular sugar
Lukewarm water
"Aquarium" tubing
A clean and dry funnel
A drill and tiny drill bit (a hardy needle will work in a pinch)

Drill or poke a hole in the top of the container just large enough to fit the tubing in snugly. Also, drill or poke tiny holes into half the length of the tubing, starting from the end not to be plugged into the bottle top. You will want to do this BEFORE you mix your ingredients (trust me on this one).

Fill the bottle about a third full with lukewarm water. Using the funnel, add a half cup of sugar, swirling it around until it dissolves thoroughly. Next, add a tablespoon of activated yeast and again swirl to dissolve. You will probably want to add more yeast, but start with a tablespoon and observe the reaction before adding any more. You want it to bubble but not erupt.

Put the top with tubing back on the bottle. Drape the tubing around the base of any particular plant you want to give a little boost to. Alternatively, you can forego the tubing altogether and just set the bottle near a plant or group of plants. You will want to shake your generator every few hours or so to keep the reaction going. A 2-liter bottle mixture should last about a week before a new batch is needed.

And here are some ways to ensure disaster:

- Having a 5-year-old assistant - though this is where all the fun happens.
- Create your mixture before you fix the top and tubing.
- Shaking the tubeless version without holding your finger over the hole,
- Putting a top without a hole in it on the container.
- Having your better half hide the unsightly generator so that you forget about it for an entire year until you need it for writing an article, at which point you locate it underneath a plant stand covered with drapery. Then picking it up and moving it to take a picture, unwittingly awakening a slumbering odor that is too hideous to describe. (I threw up in my mouth a little bit.)

For your benefit, I have thoroughly tested each of the above disaster scenarios and found several positive outcomes.

- Your generator gives off the faint smell of beer due to the yeast and sugar.

- Within maybe two or three days, you notice your plant's color becoming much more vivid and stems becoming straighter and stronger. It's like Viagra for plants! OK, maybe that's not such a good analogy, but you will notice a definite improvement in plant health.

- If you are creative and use enough tubing - some of it not even connected to anything - you can make folks think you are really smart, while actually maintaining your less-than-average intellect. When company asks what that thing in the corner is, be sure to use technical lingo. Something like: "Oh that? That's a carbon dioxide generator, a key element in promoting photosynthesis. It's pretty complicated and probably won't interest you." Then, quickly direct their attention toward your rare octopus egg before they notice that half the tubes are not connected to anything.

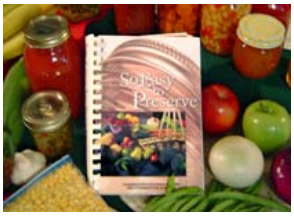
A few years ago, I was self-diagnosed with ADD, not to be confused with the better known Attention Deficit Disorder. I have what is known as All Day Dumb. I've gotten second and third opinions from some good friends who assure me this is definitely what I've got.

In closing, if you are ready to choke P. Allen Smith for allowing his shows to be rerun in such proliferation; if you have invented new cuss words for those lucky souls that live above, say, zones 7-11; if your spouse has basically given you an ultimatum regarding "that look on your face" or the frequency of seeing your face in general; or, if you're like someone I know (who's married to my wife), you're contemplating the purchase of a shotgun just to help the groundhog "come to the right decision" next January 29 , you might want to try a couple of the above-mentioned time killers - I mean, well -researched ideas and activities.

Chin up, my fellow gardener. As far as I know, spring generally falls sometime after winter.

"So Easy to Preserve"

Have you ever had an abundance of fresh produce from your garden and wished you had the skills to preserve it for later use?



The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension is offering the fifth edition of its popular book "So Easy to Preserve."

This 375-age book contains the latest U.S. Department of Agriculture recommendations for safe food preservation and has more than 185 tested recipes, along with step-by-step instructions and in-depth information for both new and experienced food preservers.

To get your own personal copy for only $18, contact Cindy Fischer at 734-222-3948 or email her at fischerc@ewashtenaw.org.

TALES FROM THE HIVE

Richard Mendel (MG 2009)

This is a question and answer column dedicated to honey bees and bees in general. I will answer any questions of general interest pertaining to bees and how they interface with agriculture, humans, animals and the environment. Please send your question to me at brescue@att.net . Questions of interest to most readers will be answered in the monthly newsletter. Some of the questions and answers may be short, which means many can be published. If you have an urgent question or safety issue concerning honey bees, such as removing a swarm, please call me at 734-660-8621.

At our last Master Gardener Alumni meeting, Marianne Rzepka, the newsletter editor, asked about the health benefits of honey and specifically about therapeutic uses of bee venom. She found our discussion and the information fascinating and thought an article dedicated article to the subject would be useful.

Apitherapy is the use of products from the bee hive to heal a variety of medical conditions and promote health.

It is considered one of the oldest methods of the healing arts that can help relieve a wide variety of physical and emotional health problems. It is one of the oldest natural therapies to use the most advanced products designed and produced by nature. The sole producer is the very small, and yet very noble, dedicated and tireless honey bee.

The term apitherapy is derived from the words apis, meaning bee, and therapy, from the Greek word meaning caring service. Apitherapy is claimed to be effective against a wide range of medical conditions that include multiple sclerosis, arthritis and chronic pain, as well as serious medical conditions such as cancer and stroke.

There is documented, peer-reviewed scientific evidence in some areas and minimal or anecdotal evidence in others that support many of the claims of the apitherapists, who hold that bee products promote healing by improving circulation, decreasing inflammation and stimulating a healthy immune system.

I, for one, can happily relate that I have had a positive personal experience in resolving the pain of a muscle spasm in my back through the direct application of bee sting venom. A strategically applied bee sting

accomplished what a prescription opiate could not.

History of Apitherapy

The exact origin of apitherapy is not clear, but its history can be traced back thousands of years to ancient Egypt, Greece and China.

The use of honey has been clearly documented in several religious texts including the Veda (Hindu scriptures) and the Bible. The oldest written record of it having a medical use is a prescription written on a Samarian clay tablet (circa 2000 B.C.)

Honey also was used extensively in ancient Egypt. Certainly the phrase, "The land of milk and honey, " comes to mind. There are descriptions of bees making propolis, a gummy material from trees, in writings and pictographs on vases and ornaments found in archeological digs.

Egyptian kings were packed with honey as an integral part of the mummification process in preparing them for the long trip to the next world.

Hippocrates, the great Greek physician renowned as the father of medicine, used bee venom to treat joint pain and arthritis. Ancient Greek athletes used honey to boost energy during battles and games.

In 79 A.D., the Roman scholar Pliny wrote about the healing properties of propolis in book 11 of his 37-volume series "Natural History," claiming that it reduces swelling, soothes pain and heals sores.

John Gerard, an English herbalist wrote in 1597 about the healing powers of propolis in his book "The History of Plants."

Honey again was the subject of studies conducted in 1919 that confirmed it had antibiotic properties.

The modern systematic study of apitherapy was initiated through the efforts of the Austrian physician Phillip Terc. He published the results of intentional honey bee stings in his article "Report about a Peculiar Connection between the Bee Stings and Rheumatism" in 1888.

Around 1920, Bodog Beck, a physician from Hungary, brought apitherapy to the United States. Seven years before his death in 1942, he compiled his research into his book "The Bible of Bee Venom Therapy".

The history of apitherapy is closely associated with the late beekeeper Charles Mraz from Middlebury, Vermont. His research and passionate curiosity is credited with popularizing bee venom therapy over the past 60 years in this country.

Today, apitherapy is an established form of alternative therapy and is practiced by thousands of medical professionals and lay practitioners.

There are six popular honey bee products used in apitherapy: bee venom, bee pollen, raw honey, royal jelly, propolis and bee wax. Each of these bee products works differently for various ailments.

Bee Venom

Bee venom is most popular for the treatment of multiple sclerosis and many forms of arthritis.

Various studies have shown that bee venom contains various substances, including adolapin and melittin. These compounds are very potent chemicals with anti-inflammatory activity exceeding those of steroids. Melittin also stimulates the production of cortisol, a natural steroid compound with anti-inflammatory properties.

Bee venom is considered a rich source of enzymes, peptides and biogenic amines. It is a clear liquid characterized by a sweet taste, soluble in water but insoluble in alcohol and ammonium sulfate. When bee venom comes in contact with air, it forms grayish-white crystals.

Because of its anti-inflammatory properties, bee venom is used to treat tendonitis, bursitis and arthritis, both rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

There is scientific data supporting the use of apitherapy for treatment of postherpetic neuralgia, and other reports suggest that it may be useful in the treatment of infectious, autoimmune, cardiovascular, pulmonary, gastrointestinal, neuropathic pain and other chronic pain conditions.

Some patients may have an allergic reaction to bee venom, so allergy testing should be done prior to administration of bee venom. This treatment should be undertaken only under the care of a trained apitherapy practitioner. Once the safety of bee venom is established, the treatment may be done at home.

The venom is administered through injection or bee sting. If a bee sting is used, the apitherapy practitioner will place bees on the skin, typically close to the joints, muscle or other effected body parts.

For a simple condition like tendonitis, two or three sessions may be needed. Two to ten bee stings might be used in each session.

If the treatment is for a more serious condition like rheumatoid arthritis or multiple sclerosis, longer treatment may be required, perhaps up to three sessions per week with two to three stings per session, for six months or more.

Apitherapy using a bee sting may be painful, but not as painful as wasp or hornet stings.

The treatment may be followed by local discomfort, inflammation, stiffness and soreness or itching. Usually an icepack treatment is given after the bee stings to reduce these side effects.

Bee pollen

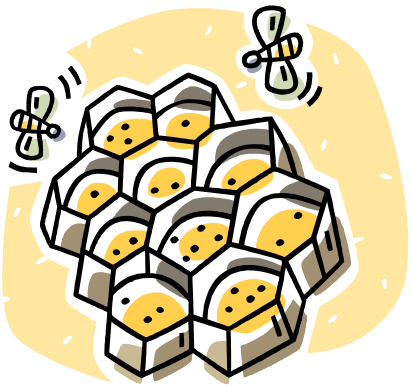
Besides honey, which provides calories to burn as

fuel, bee pollen is all that bees eat.

In the evolutionary process, pollen has become the richest fuel possible, providing the nutritional building blocks needed to nurture the young and grow the population of the hive.

Pollen is collected by worker bees from flowers and used as the protein part of their diet.

In the spring, when bees start to bring pollen back to the hive, it's a signal to the queen that she can start laying eggs.



Bee pollen can be used to treat seasonal allergies, because ingestion of small amounts of pollen may desensitize the patient.

There are various claims about the benefits of bee pollen. Some claims, including its potential to improve performance of athletes and anti-aging properties, are not supported by scientific evidence.

Bee pollen is available over the counter in many forms, including capsules, powders, cream and lotions for internal and external uses.

Raw honey

Honey is made from the nectar collected by bees from many different flowers. The bees store the nectar in the concentrated form of honey, mainly for their own food.

Honey is a good source of energy, because of its carbohydrate content, along with vitamins and various minerals.

Apitherapists use raw honey that has not been filtered, heated or processed in any form.

Raw honey is shown to be better than the processed honey in some studies. It's used in apitherapy to suppress bacterial and microbial infections, especially those associated with skin wounds. A mixture of raw honey and olive oil was a standard recommended field dressing as late as World War II.

In some areas where medicines are unavailable for reasons of cost or remoteness, the beehive is looked upon as a self-replenishing medicine chest.

In Africa, honey is an important ingredient in the potions of traditional healers. In Russia and Eastern Europe, honey is regularly used to treat burns, open wounds and septic infections.

Raw honey is available in many health food stores or from your local beekeeper.

Since honey is a live food product, make sure you are satisfied that is has not been heated over 140 degrees or strained through a 500 micron filter. This heating process can kill the live enzymes, and the filter will remove the beneficial pollen.

Another very special raw honey is called Manuka honey, a form of monofloral honey (from a single plant variety) produced by bees that feed on the flowers of the manuka plant, better known as the tea tree in some regions of the world.

(A similar honey is made in Australia with bees that feed on the jellybush.)

According to studies, manuka honey has a few interesting properties. The tea tree is known to be antibacterial and antifungal, and it is has been used for decades as a source for mouth washes and disinfectants.

Manuka honey harnesses the properties of the tea tree, combining them with the natural antibacterial properties of honey.

In addition to tasting good, manuka honey can be used in wound dressing to prevent infection or fungal colonization, and some people believe that consuming it is also beneficial. Honey is a natural antiseptic, speeding healing while protecting wounds from infection. It also has the added benefit of acting as a lubricant, preventing bandages from sticking.

Interest in manuka honey has revived the practice of using honey as an antibacterial, and it has even been packaged in a product called Medihoney, a self-contained wound dressing that can be carried in a first aid kit.

Royal jelly

Royal jelly is the milky white waxy substance produced by the salivary glands of the worker bees.

The queen bees are fed this during the whole of their larval period, but worker bees are fed this only for the first three days of their larval period.

This encourages correct development, and the secret of the queen bee's long life is believed to be related to consumption of royal jelly. It is also believed to cause increased fertility in the queen bee.

Scientists know that royal jelly is mostly carbohydrates, proteins, sugars and fats, along with vitamins like the B complex, niacin, folic acid and enzymes.

Royal jelly has been used for a variety of medical conditions, including fatigue, infertility, lack of appetite and asthma.

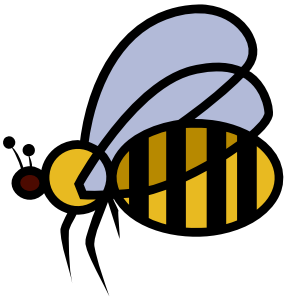
There are many reports on the benefits of royal jelly for other medical conditions, but these claims are not largely supported by clinical studies.

Some animal and human studies have shown that royal jelly is capable of lowering cholesterol levels.

Royal jelly is often used in women's cosmetics, including wrinkle creams, though there is no scientific

evidence to support the claim that royal jelly retards the aging process in human beings.

Royal jelly is also available over the counter in many forms, including capsules, powders, cream and lotions for internal and external uses. Since it is rare and difficult to collect from hives, it can be quite expensive. It is not a regulated medicine.



Propolis

Bees make propolis, which they use to glue their hives together, mixing beeswax and other secretions with resins from the buds of conifer and poplar trees. They also apply a thin coat on the inside walls of the hive as an antibacterial agent. They have also been known to mummify an intruder, such as a mouse, in propolis after they have stung it to death.

Those resins have natural germicidal properties. For centuries, people have used propolis on wounds and as a remedy for ailments including acne, cancer, osteoporosis, itching and tuberculosis.

Today, propolis is used in the manufacture of chewing gum, cosmetics, creams, lozenges and ointments and is being investigated as a dental sealant and tooth enamel hardener.

A number of studies have tested its effectiveness in humans and animals as a treatment for burns, minor wounds, infections, inflammatory diseases, dental pain and genital herpes.

Propolis also serves as a source of flavonoids, potent anti-oxidants shown to heal injuries to damaged cells.

While promising, the results of these studies are preliminary. Some of the studies were too small and too poorly designed to yield significant findings. Drug companies actively purchase propolis from beekeepers sometimes for more than $40 a pound.

Bee wax

Bee wax is secreted by the worker bees from glands

This wax is created in the spring when the bees are increasing the capacities of their colonies and so their brood-rearing ability. It is usually initiated by the spring and summer flows of nectar, which the bees collect and utilize.

There are many practical and industrial uses for bee wax globally. In the field of apitherapy, it is combined with other ingredients, such as olive oil and essential oils, in the creation of face and hand creams, ointments, lipsticks and lip salves. The pharmaceutical industry uses it to coat tablets and manufacture capsules.

Legally and medically

In summary, apitherapy is a holistic medicine relying on the natural products of the beehive to improve and maintain health and alleviate pain and disability, whether from injury or illness.

The American Apitherapy Society (AAS), which was founded in 1989 by Mraz, is probably the best known source and lone body for the research and education of the healing art of apitherapy (www.apitherapy.org).

No official body in the United States has recognized apitherapy as a standard treatment. From the legal and medical view point, apitherapy is considered an experimental approach, although the FDA has approved the use of bee venom for the purpose of desensitization only.

Remember that some apitherapy may involve serious risk of allergic reactions and may even cause death. It should only be undertaken after careful thought and discussion with a qualified apitherapist and your own family doctor. The therapy should be carefully monitored for any adverse events.

So do not attempt to collect bees and start stinging yourself, as this may prove catastrophic.

Therapy with other types of bee products usually does not require the supervision of a trained apitherapist.

In the future, you may look at honey bees differently, and every time you see one, you may wonder what new curative discovery will this tireless little miracle of nature bring to our lives today.

Master Gardener Clothes Available for Purchase

You can order items from a line of Master Gardener clothing, including T-shirts, sweatshirts, denim shirts, polo shirts, fleece vests and hoodies – both pullover and zip front. The clothing is offered in a variety of colors.

Payment will need to be made at the time of the order. Prices range from $9.50 to around $50.

Orders will be placed on a monthly basis. If you have questions, please contact Cindy at 734-222-3948.

Master Gardener Tote Bags

Master Gardener canvas tote bags are for sale at a cost of $15 each.

The bag has the Master Gardener logo and “Master Gardener Volunteer” printed on one side. It has a zipper closure across the top and is large enough to hold the Master Gardener manual.

There is a bag on display at the MSU Office for viewing. Stop by the MSU office to purchase yours.

January-February Calendar

Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arobretum

1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor 734-647-7600
http://www.lsa.umich.edu/mbg/
Call for classes and to register

Winter A.M. Hiker
Various locations visit website or contact 647-7600
Wednesdays, January 19, 26 and February 2
9 am - noon

Intergrated Pest Management
Saturday, March 26
10 am - Noon

Dragonflies and the Aquatic Environment
Session I
Sunday, April 10
2 - 4 pm

Session II
Wednesday, April 13
7 - 9 pm

Washtenaw County Parks Nature Programs

734- 971-6337
http://parks.ewashtenaw.org see calendar of events
Visit the web site for more info on classes

Our Michigan Birds and Winter
County Farm Park Administration Building
Saturday, January 15
10 am - Noon

In Search of Winter Stoneflies and Snow Fleas
Parker Mill Park
Sunday, February 20
2 to 4 pm

MSU Extension Washtenaw County

734-997-1678

Dial A Garden for January - February

Phone 734-971-1129 to listen to current topics

- Preventing Damage from Deer, Mice and Rabbits
- Recycling Your Christmas Tree
- Overwintering house plants
- Light & House Plants
- Reducing salt injury to plants
- Caring for Holiday plants
- Forcing flowering branches indoors
- Winter protection on trees and shrubs
- Shaking off the winter blues

* these topics will go on-line after the first of the year

Frederik Meijer Gardens

1000 East Beltline Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525
North of I-96 on East Beltline, between Bradford St. and Leonard St.
Toll-Free: 888-957-1580

Call for more info on classes, registration and costs.

Repotting Orchids
Tuesday, February 8
6 - 7:30 pm

Plant Propagation Made Easy
Tuesday, February 22
6 - 7:30 pm

Master Gardener Alumni Association of Washtenaw County News

The Master Gardener Alumni Association of Washtenaw County meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month starting at 7 p.m. in the basement conference room of the County building at 705 N. Zeeb Road. The MGAAWC "year" runs from September through the following May. **The next meeting will take place on January 18th. Topic to be announced in the weekly update.**

Annual dues are $20 and may be paid at any meeting or mailed to the MGAAWC Membership chairperson. (See the application form elsewhere in the newsletter.) Non-members may attend any meeting for $5**.** MGAAWC meetings provide an excellent and easy way to obtain the educational credits needed to meet the requirements for MG re-certification.

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Michigan State University
Washtenaw County MSU Extension
705 N. Zeeb Rd.
P.O. Box 8645
Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8645

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL ENCLOSED
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

Office Hours: 8 a.m. — 6 p.m., Monday—Thursday, CLOSED Friday

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E-mail:……..msuextension@ewashtenaw.org
County website:…….. www.eWashtenaw.org
State website:……web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener

Robert J. Bricault, Jr.

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Extension Educator,
Horticulture & Natural Resources

This newsletter is a publication of the Washtenaw County/MSU Extension Master Gardener program.