



The Washtenaw Gardener

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Washtenaw County Master Gardener Newsletter

Our Secret Garden

Nancy Quay (MG 2009)

Photography by Helen Prussian (MG 2005)

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The Enchanted Setting



As dawn breaks, fingers of light begin to stretch across the expanse of limestone, highlighting the soft colors of *Thymus Serpyllum* (Creeping Thyme) as it tumbles from ledge to ledge. Sturdy oaks stand like sentinels along the top ridge flanked by junipers still on night watch. On spring mornings, the sweet smells of Miss Kim lilacs fill the air.

The only sounds are birds and a distant, almost subliminal sound of busily buzzing bees. Quiet, neat piles of sand are all that are left of furry nocturnal visitors. The sun continues to climb and birds frantically cross the sky high overhead, hard at work

already.

Later in the season bright yellow *Achillea* (Yarrow) will fill upper levels with astonishing color, and farther along the stone deep purple *Sedum spectabile* (Sedum) draws the eye across the wide expanse.



"Gardens are a form of autobiography" said Sydney Eddison in the August/September 1993 issue of *Horticulture* magazine.

This garden, this beautiful, peaceful, hidden gem on North Zeeb Road, is writing our Master Gardener autobiography.

First, Some History

In early 2002, after the Extension office moved to the newly built address on North Zeeb Road, our Master Gardener program was handed the responsibility of creating beauty from the raw materials of limestone, junipers and oak trees, as well as a few lilacs and sumacs.

The garden area was designed by the building's architect, the limestone put into place, the entire area backfilled and hydro-seeded. The dramatic setting is completely unexpected in an area of angular buildings near a busy highway.



Eight to 12 people formed the dedicated group that worked for several years to add plant material, softening the harsh edges of the beautiful stones, and adding color, texture and scent to make our garden an enticing place. Deb Smith (MG 2001) took a leadership role, designing, planning and collecting low cost or no cost plant additions.

As with any large organization, building managers have changed over time, and the Master Gardening program has adjusted each time to new people, new priorities and new concerns. Deb and Bob Bricault, our county Horticulture Educator, have remained steadfast in their commitment to the garden.

Challenges Galore

There are plenty of challenges in the Extension garden. "It's such a large area," Deb says. "We try to keep a variety of large-scale plants and late season perennials that look good all season. We go for intensity of color against the backdrop of rock using deep roses, purple blues and golden yellows. We try to create both contrast and repetition, creating a view that is simultaneously exciting and soothing."

Helen Prussian (MG 2005), an early and committed worker at the garden, notes that the topography is a particular challenge. "Because of its location, depth and structure, the garden needs consistent watering. Varieties have been chosen to be drought-resistant, but we still need to have the garden watered at least three times per week."

There's No Place Like Home



Deb is passionate when talking about our Extension garden, and she makes a crucial point about our role in the community as gardeners.

"Look," she says, tapping her finger on the table in front of her for emphasis,

"Master Gardeners do work all over the county, scattered and disbursed, often not even knowing what their fellow Master Gardeners have accomplished or created. ***This garden is ours; it's our permanent, tangible reflection of what we do. This is who we are. We have faced tremendous obstacles, but still***

we move forward."

Add to that the reality that anyone can grow beautiful flowers in perfect soil, under perfect conditions. But it takes a *community* to create beauty among the rocks.

Opportunity Knocks...For You

This summer, there is a new program to allow more Master Gardeners to experience the excitement and satisfaction of working on our Extension garden.

You have a chance to adopt a section of the Extension Garden for the entire gardening season. You can work whenever it is most convenient for you. You would weed, add compost and mulch your own little section. The Extension has compost and mulch readily available. There is an area to dispose of the weeds. You would be responsible for bringing your own weeding tools, shovels and buckets. The watering system is all set up and very easy to use.

To participate, there are two requirements:

- 1) Before beginning work at your adopted area, Deb, Bob or Helen would meet with you once to go over the section picked – what plants go, what plants stay, that sort of thing.
- 2) For safety reasons, a buddy system needs to be in place. So it's a great chance to garden with a friend!

And of course, your work goes toward your required volunteer hours. Please contact Helen at hprussian@comcast.com for further information or to sign up.

In Closing

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts," said Rachel Carson, author of Silent Spring.

We can all use some reserves of strength these days. As Master Gardeners, we have available a place that both challenges our mettle and demonstrates our talents.

Waiting for you at 705 N. Zeeb Road, on the south side of the building, is a unique and special place that belongs to us all.

Please stop by to visit...to take in the colors, the scents, and the sounds of our 'secret' garden.

Stay a moment, stay an hour, it is yours to enjoy.

How fair is a garden amid the toils and passions of existence.

Benjamin Disraeli

Earth Day visit to Ann Arbor's First Green Roof

Beverly Yelsik (MG 2007)



What better way to spend time on Earth Day, than to visit a green space high above the buildings in Ann Arbor? In 2008, Master Gardeners, architects, and LiveRoof

professionals installed a growing, flowering landscape on the top of the A3C - Collaborative Architecture building at 210 E. Huron. The A3C building is the winner of Ann Arbor's first Energy Challenge Award and the first in downtown Ann Arbor to be registered with the US-GBC that is designed to LEED-CI Gold Certification standard.

The LiveRoof Company, located in Spring Lake, Michigan, uses a waterproof membrane under a bonded seam



root barrier. Engineered soil is put down on top of the root barrier. The 1' x 2' pre-planted vegetation modules are placed on top of the engineered soil, overlapped and snugly fitted so there are no visible seams. Plants are chosen for color and sustainability. The A3C green roof is planted with a mix of more than 25 plant varieties, including drought tolerant sedum, grasses, fruiting strawberry plants, shrubs, evergreens and flowering dianthus.

A 450 - gallon rainwater collection system and 300-gallon rooftop retaining pond provide water for the green roof during dry weather. The engineered soil is 93% inorganic so it compacts much less than organic soils. It helps filter rainwater going to the roots of the plants and buffer acid rain. Birds bring in occasional weed seeds, but hand weeding is minimal.

Earth Day 2009 finds the green roof alive and well. The plants are recovering from winter, with the sedum displaying various cool weather colors of bright reds, greens, and golden orange. The strawberry plants are healthy and green. The bench and pathways are inviting even on a cool day. It is difficult to remember that one is three floors up, rather than strolling through a spring garden ... until the pathway approaches the outer edges!

An ornamental obelisk is a central focal point near the edge of the upper roof. On closer inspection, it is recognizable as the base of an old Ann Arbor street

light, reincarnated into a piece of art.

The statue, pathways and garden can be viewed from a partially shaded deck outside a 550-square foot conference room. The meeting space can easily accommodate twenty people and is available for use free to nonprofit groups.



The green roof is only one of many major renovations made by A3C since 2007. The roof alone has saved the firm on heating and cooling costs.

There are sensors installed under the green roof and the test roof membranes. According to Daniel Jacobs, director of sustainable design at A3C, on a 76-degree day last summer, a black EDPM roof reached 95 degrees, a white EDPM roof registered 80 degrees, but the sedum roof did not rise above 70. In the winter the engineered soil and plants become a block of ice, remaining at 32 degrees.

Another benefit of this green roof is its ability to grow food crops. The plan for this year includes beans, peas, cucumbers, tomatoes and a number of lettuce varieties. A person sitting at one of the tables on the deck could reach over and pluck a tomato from a vine while having lunch.

The LiveRoof on the A3C building is expected to last indefinitely and continue its contribution to energy savings as it matures. With its reclamation of green space in a city environment, evaporative cooling effect, and ability to reduce storm water runoff, it helps make every day of the year Earth Day.

More at www.a3c.com



Mandevilla

Mary Lou Stone (MG 2009)



Wow! *Mandevilla*! Have you seen it? The first time I ran across it, the plant was in Australia on the fence of a friend. Two years later when we returned, it had covered the fence, and the more

my friend pruned, the more it grew. At that time, I believe she considered it a weed; she called it a fence eater. Oh my, what a beautiful fence eater! Finding it here in Michigan about 8 years ago was a bit difficult, but now I've seen both the vine and bush varieties in many nurseries, Costco and Home Depot. Interesting fact: It was named for Henry Mandeville, 18th century British diplomat in Argentina

Mandevilla is a tropical woody vine and includes plants that were formerly called *Dipladenia*. There are about 100 species of *Mandevilla* and many cultivars, both bush and vines, in colors of pink, red, yellow, white, and dark red.

We grow the vines on a trellis as screening and it's quite effective with large, dark green leaves and big trumpet-like flowers. Growth is vigorous with the vines reaching the top of the garage roof.

It does take some maintenance, guiding the rapid growth to the trellis, bending the vines where I want them, and if necessary, using plastic covered wire to keep them in place. The vines will intertwine with each other and around anything they can reach, ever reaching out and upward. Unwrapping the vines from the large wind chimes after a short holiday was quite a challenge.

Mandevilla is a very tender tropical, if the nights reach 45° - 50° it wants to be covered. Anything below 45° may be fatal, 40° is. Mealy bugs, scales, whiteflies and red spider mites are common pests. Inspect carefully for insects and their eggs. Remove any diseased or dead leaves. Douse insect-infested plants with a forceful spray of water to dislodge the pests, or use insecticidal soaps or other appropriate insecticide. Despite our temperature variations and the possibility of insects, *Mandevilla* are still well worth the bother.

They will grow in partial shade - mine are in about 5 hours of direct sun. They need rich, well-drained, sandy soil with humus added. Provide a frame, and trellis or stake for support. Pinch young plants to

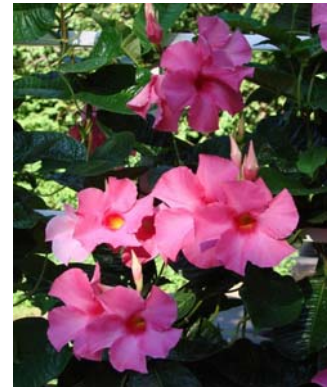
induce bushiness or cut the vines back. I've never tried them in hanging pots but, with the correct variety, it can be done.

Keep them well watered but not soggy, they must be drained if potted. They may be fed every couple of weeks with 10-20-10 fertilizer. This I've not done since my *Mandevilla* are in a rich soil and with humus added every year, they seem very happy. Maybe I'll give fertilizer a try this year and see if they take over the garage entirely.

Although I've never tried it, I understand they can be propagated from hardwood cuttings. Sprinkle single node cuttings with rooting hormone and you should see some growth in about a month.

To get them through our winters, move the plants inside to a well-lit location where the temperature is above 45 to 50 degrees F. Reduce the frequency of watering to coincide with the plants' rest periods induced by cooler temperatures and reduced light. In late winter or early spring before growth begins, prune them by removing old, crowded stems and shortening others. *Mandevilla* can be pruned almost to the ground, and it will bloom the same summer on new shoots that develop from the base of the plants. Our trellis is too large for the house and the plants too big to bring inside, so I must cut them back to get them off the trellis in order to repot them and bring them in.

Thus far, we've found that *Mandevilla* 'Alice du Pont' with her pink flowers does the best job for us. Now that we've had such good results with Alice, we're going to try something new this year. Since hubby isn't fond of pink, the new plants are dark red - he'll love 'em.



Notes on Hydrangeas

Extracts from MSU Spring into Gardening Forum
Ron Carpinella, (MG 2007)



Hydrangeas

Hydrangeas are among the most treasured flowers in a garden. It is reported that there are 23 species of Hydrangeas, of which only five are widely cultivated in the United States. Grown mainly for their showy flower heads, many hydrangeas have ornamental bark and attractive foliage with autumn color. Flower color is affected by the availability of aluminum ions in the soil. Acidic soil

with a pH of less than 5.5 produce blue flowers; soils with a pH greater than 5.5 produce pink flowers. White flowers are not affected by pH. Most species can be grown in either full sun or partial shade. All hydrangeas grow and bloom well in morning sun and afternoon shade. They just need half a day's worth of sun. They grow in a wide range of soils but prefer a rich, moist soil and should be planted where watering is easily accomplished. Avoid dry windy sites, as Hydrangeas have large, soft leaves that lose water quickly causing the foliage to wilt. Fertilize with a slow release balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) in June. For small plants, a quarter cup of fertilizer is appropriate. For large plants, one to two cups of fertilizer spread around the drip line is suggested.

The Hydrangeas most suitable for southeast Michigan are:

1. **Hydrangea arborescence** (Smooth Hydrangea). The most common cultivar is "Annabelle", which produces white inflorescences that may reach up to a foot in diameter. As the flowers age, they develop a pale green color. Plants generally reach 5 feet in height with about the same spread. This is one of two native U.S. species and the only one native to this part of the country.
2. **Hydrangea macrophylla** (Big leaf Hydrangea). This is the most popular species. It produces large inflorescences of white, pink or blue flowers in early summer. The plants reach up to 6 feet tall and 8 feet wide. We are on the northernmost limit for these plants, so special attention is needed to avoid frost damage to flower buds on last year's wood.
3. **Hydrangea quercifolia** (Oak leaf Hydrangea). This is the other native U.S. species. It will grow in light shade or mostly sun. To bloom well it needs very sunny, relatively hot summers. It does not do well in areas that stay continuously wet. Plants grow 6 to 8 feet in height. The leaves resemble oak leaves and turn red in the fall. Its blooms appear in mid-June and last two months. It has white flowers that fade to pink and persist through winter. The bark is cinnamon colored and the branches present an interesting structure in the fall.
4. **Hydrangea paniculata** (Panicle Hydrangea). These are the most cold hardy member of the genus growing 10 to 15 feet in height and 8 feet wide. It produces large creamy-white flowers in mid-summer. As the flowers mature, they may turn pink. The "Pee-Gee" cultivar is probably the most well known plant.
5. **Hydrangea anomala petiolaris** (Climbing Hydrangea). This woody vine flowers in mid summer and climbs up to 50 feet. The older stems develop a brown exfoliating bark. They grow well in shade but tolerate a sunny location. The plants are slow to flower but develop a spectacular white floral display on established plants. The vine climbs by attaching its aerial roots to brick, masonry or wood. One note of

caution with these plants is that the stems leave a residue that is very difficult to remove. Consequently, most plants are trained to climb on trees.

OK...so I am convinced that Hydrangeas are beautiful plants that fit my landscape with wonderfully attractive flowers, but I still have had problems getting them to flower.

There are three possibilities for **lack of flowering among hydrangeas**: 1) Too much shade, 2) improper pruning and 3) weather-related damage. The first two conditions apply to all hydrangeas, but the third applies particularly to the big-leaf hydrangea. This species flowers on previous year's growth, so weather conditions that damage aboveground parts of the plant can reduce flowering. There are a variety of approaches to winterizing the big-leaf plants. The most common is the use of a frame that holds an insulating material (such as leaves or straw) around the plant to insure that frost does not get to the branches. This frame should be kept on until there is no threat of frost.

Most Hydrangeas benefit from some shade, but too much shade will reduce flowering. This is particularly true of panicle hydrangea that grows well in sun. No Hydrangea will do well in heavy shade, as is present under mature oak trees. If grass will not grow in the area, then hydrangeas will not bloom. If you had a plant that bloomed well in the past, but now only sparsely, you should evaluate whether the growth of nearby trees has reduced the light getting to the plant, forcing you to move the plant to a sunnier area.

Established plants benefit from regular pruning. Removing one-third of the oldest stems each year will result in a fuller, healthier plant. This is best done in the winter when the absence of leaves makes it easier to see and reach inside the plants. One also may want to prune to control height or remove old flower heads. The best time for this type of pruning differs according to species. Big leaf and oak leaf hydrangeas, which flower on previous year's growth, should be pruned shortly after flowering. Panicle and smooth hydrangea flower on current year's growth and can be pruned anytime from late summer until early spring (before leaves appear). If you do not know what species you have, then just trim the dead flowers, or visit the website www.hydrangeashydrangeas.com to identify the plant and thus the proper pruning period to avoid losing your blooms.

Ready to purchase some plants? It is best to purchase when the plant is in bloom and from a local dealer. If you are looking for a specific variety that local garden centers do not have, then look for mail order suppliers that are the closest to you.

If you are looking for a good book on hydrangeas, then the authoritative presentation by the foremost American expert on woody plants, *Hydrangeas for American Gardeners*, by Michael Dirr should be your choice.

Interesting Planters

Carol Figarra (MG 2007)

As Master Gardeners, we are always adding to our assortment of plants. Finding containers for each new plant could get expensive. With an ever-constant vigilance for recycling, many "around the house" items can be used. My outdoor grill was getting very little use after my children were grown. Painting the outside a terra cotta color and filling it with plants seemed the most logical fate for the grill. As it already had holes in the bottom, it is an ideal planter, sturdy and easily maneuverable. Given proper drainage, treatment (if necessary) and space for a plant's root growth, almost anything can serve as an adequate container. Used sparingly, novelty vessels can add character and charm to a garden and yard. Too many unusual, wacky containers can make your yard look cluttered and chaotic - and raise a neighbor's eyebrows. Be certain that you abide by any neighborhood association rules and regulations. In the past, I have used old umbrella stands, coal scuttles, assorted crockery, molded plastic doll carriages, doll cradles, wagons, wheelbarrows, dish pans, watering cans, decorated plastic milk jugs and wooden crates. My mother had a pair of sabots from the Netherlands that she hung on the garage with cascading plants. One Mothers Day, my granddaughter planted a marigold in a gardening glove and it was hung on the fence with heavy cord. This and other absorbent materials require a bit more watering. In my travels, I have seen old boots, bathtubs, horse troughs, birdhouses, sewing machine treadles, teapots, colanders, chairs and tires. Should you have little around the house, yard sales are a perfect source of obtaining unusual items for outdoor planters. Often times they also are a cache for old fish bowls and tanks for indoor terrariums. Happy planting!



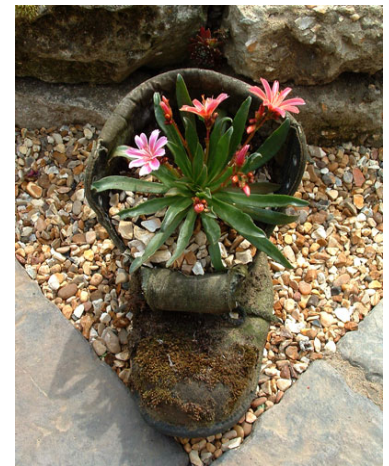
This old Fisher-Price garden cart has great sentimental value. It makes a lovely display on my deck and brings back many wonderful memories of gardening with my grandchildren.



One year my grandson used old field tiling for his exhibit of an outdoor planter at the 4-H Youth Show.



After drilling holes in the bottom, my brother uses old shop-vac canisters he finds at the refuge center. The canisters have wheels



Old boots or shoes of any shape or size can make interesting planters.



An old Weber grill is ideal for a deck planter — it has holes for drainage and wheels for easy moving.

Photo at right. Old tires, otherwise left along the road, were salvaged and painted to beautify this bank in a poverty stricken area Colombia, South America.



July Calendar



Landscape & Turf Diagnostics Tour

MSU Extension - Genesee is sponsoring a Landscape and Turf Diagnostic Tour of the Applewood Estate in Flint, **Thursday, July 16, 2009, 6 to 8 p.m.** This hands-on workshop is meant for commercial pesticide applicators, landscape and nursery professionals, and anyone interested in improving their ability to diagnose landscape issues. 2 MDA credits for either Commercial Core, Category 3A, Category 3B or Category 6 have been applied for. The Landscape & Turf Diagnostics Tour registration brochure has been posted on the Genesee MSUE website at:

www.msue.msu.edu/genesee

Our instructors are Dr. Dave Smitley, MSU and John Stone, MSU Pesticide Safety Ed. For more information, please call 810-244-8512.

Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arboretum

1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor

734-647-7600

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/mbg/>

Call for information, costs and to register

Other Classes & Volunteer Opportunities:

Growing Hope

www.growinghope.net/

Project Grow

www.projectgrowgardens.org/

ANOTHER GARDEN OPPORTUNITY??

I don't know about you, but sometimes Thursday mornings from 10AM to 12 noon just doesn't work out for me to volunteer my time at the Extension Service Garden. I would like to put in two hours a week on my own time. So, we are proposing the following: **ADOPT A PART OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE GARDEN FOR THE SEASON.** Doesn't that sound great!!! Now that the plants are big enough to identify from a weed, and we are in need of more volunteers to maintain this little jewel of a garden, we will be trying something new. We can divide the garden into small chunks. You can pick an area to work on the entire gardening season. That would include weeding, composting, mulching and disposing the weeds in your area. We have compost and mulch readily available. There is an area to dispose of the weeds. You would be responsible for bringing your own weeding tools, shovels, bucket.

Two requirements are requested:

Before beginning your adopted area, Deb, Bob or Helen would meet with the volunteer once to go over the section picked – what plants go, what plants stay.

For safety reasons, a buddy system needs to be in place.

This is an opportunity to take ownership and pride in maintaining your MASTER GARDENER'S GARDEN while getting your volunteer hours. Many of you cannot help with most volunteer activities due to work. Here is a chance to work at the time that best suits you.

Contact Helen at hprussian@comcast.com for further information or to sign up.

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Washtenaw County MSU Extension
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Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8645

**TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL ENCLOSED
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**



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

Washtenaw County MSU Extension.....	734-997-1678
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Bob Bricault, Horticulture Agent.....	734-222-3826
Cindy Fischer, Master Gardener Coordinator	734-222-3948
Garden Hotline.....	734-997-1819
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County website:.....	www.eWashtenaw.org
State website:.....	web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener

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Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by calling the Extension Educator in charge of the program two weeks prior to the program or activity to ensure sufficient time to make arrangements. Requests received after this date will be met when possible.