



The Washtenaw Gardener

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Washtenaw County Master Gardener Newsletter

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Matthaei Plant Sale 2010, in Haiku

Jesse Raudenbush (MG 2010)



So I was invited to share a little about my experience as a volunteer at this year's plant sale for the Matthaei

Botanical Garden.

First order at hand was to get the correct spelling for the venue - Google! That was easy.

Second, I wanted to think of a way to make the article interesting - or at least entertaining - to an audience of fellow MGs. This proved to be more complicated than I'd first anticipated.

After no small amount of contemplation, I decided to sprinkle a few well-thought-out, yet horribly juvenile, borderline-appalling haiku into the mix, just to keep readers awake.

Readers please bear with me. It's been almost 20 years since my last haiku, and there is a reason for this.

I signed on for two shifts of pre-sale setup, two shifts in the plant pick-up tent on an actual sale day and one shift for the tear-down.

There was an abundance of other volunteer opportunities, but I figured these would be pretty low-key first-timer type of ventures.

Being a bit self-conscious by nature, I often choose adventures that call for brawn before brain. This approach served me well when I was in my twenties, but I'm beginning to think a new approach is in order. Then again, I did sign up for a task that actually had the phrase "set up" in the description, so maybe I should stick to the physical stuff.

In any case, pre-sale setup involved helping unload vendor trucks, sorting and organizing plants, a bit of inventory and pricing and a lot of cart pushing. Thankfully, there were plenty of friendly sale veterans around to assist with the heavy brain work. These two days were actually really fun, and I think I'll revisit the assignment next year.

Day 1

Plants, smiling faces,
Learning names and laughing,
Weather nice with sun

(According to wordcalc.com, "names" has two syllables, so it's very questionable, but it's not like it will affect the overall "quality" of the work here.)

Day 2

More plants and more carts,
More new faces, happy faces.
Spring is finally here.

My most challenging assignment was in the plant pick-up tent.

Let me start by first saying that I although a bit slow to warm up I do enjoy interacting with people. (End of disclaimer).

That said, I now remember why I got out of the service industry. Sometimes we (and I include myself here) get a little rambunctious after walking around somewhere for a couple of hours. It gets to be around lunch time, and maybe we get a little hungry, which might make us a bit cranky. Maybe we then forget how to drive or read and comprehend traffic signs.

I think that happened to a couple of folks at the plant sale. The overwhelming majority of people were jovial and pleasant.

After a short time, I was able to kind of pick out those few folks who weren't. They were usually the ones who weren't smiling and who pulled up to the tent abruptly. Also, their tires made a slight screeching sound when they braked, and then again when they pulled off.

My tent mates made the difference in these few situations. After helping the rare indignant person, we kind of giggled with each other and reaffirmed that "it wasn't something I did, was it?" Even so, I felt a little twang of sorrow for the poor plants heading off into the distance with them.

There was a great sense of teamwork and comradeship. Truly, my only complaint was the weather - which I haiku below.

I had to laugh as I recalled Nancy Quay's "The Seduction of Spring" article (May newsletter Vol.18 No. 3). I met Nancy, by the way, and she is funnier in person than her article, which says a lot, because if you don't already know, the article is hilarious.

I also saw my buddy Betsy, who unknowingly gave me a much-needed second wind just as the uncooperative weather was making me lose sight of the point of it all.

Day 3

May in Michigan

What hells happened to spring ...you (hey come on, when's' the last time you wrote a haiku, tough guy?)

Snow in Petoskey

Windswept hair abounds

Yes, frost dates accurate

Spirits unchained

My last volunteer day was a "two-fer" - a double shift at the pick-up tent and then for the event tear-down, or what I like to term a Jesse tear-down, break-down, run-down.

The weather took a slight (very slight) change for the better. I think the sun peeked out from the clouds two or three times as if to say "Hey remember me? I'll be back in a couple of weeks to check up on ya".

It was nice to see that the cold did not deter too many people from venturing out on Mother's Day. We were consistently busy with a steady stream of shoppers this last sale day, and I really got a kick out of seeing all the moms being treated to an afternoon of flower shopping.

One of the reasons I really booked myself for so many volunteer shifts was indeed the fact that it was Mother's Day weekend. In a twist of sweet irony and fate, the last time that I saw my own mother alive was on Mother's Day, five years ago this year. I often get morose around this time and find my mind dwelling within itself with mini-bouts of depression settling in. I simply didn't want to do that this year, so I buried myself in work, as it were.

The next best thing to spending time with my mom was spending time doing something she loved -

working with and being around people, plants and the great outdoors!

Yes, my body ached a little more on this last day, but my soul was complacent and my thoughts were outside of myself.

Day 4

Happy remembrances

Proud moms, child that takes the time

Oh, 'twas my back that sound

The Tear-Down (Part 1)

Hey feet, don't fail me now.

Great Scott, blistered heel and toe

Raked up some hours

Tear-Down (Part 2)

Taut muscles must stretch

Sore, head shoulders knees and toes

Feet hurt, shoes all wrong

Ok, there was nothing "borderline" about the appalling haiku. Believe me, it was as painful for me as it was for you, but I bet your still reading this, right? Like a train wreck, you just couldn't turn away.

I'll just wrap up this entry by thanking all those who made this compilation possible. Book signing yet to be announced. But seriously, once again I had a great time doing some useful volunteer work. I met some great people and learned a bunch of stuff about gardening while being able to utilize my MG training to no small extent.

I highly recommend the plant sale as a great way to bank some serious credit hours while having fun. Happy gardening to all, I'm going to organize my sock drawer.

Hotline Greatest Hits Nancy Quay, (MG 2009)

Here are the latest and greatest questions from the Hotline between April 12 and May 5. This column will be updated for each Master Gardener newsletter throughout the growing (and Hotline) season.

Most Frequent Question

Many people seem concerned about their maple trees this year. We've had multiple questions about split bark ("frost cracks"), peeling, holes, and wilted leaves.

Frost cracks, which numerous callers asked about, can occur during late winter or early spring when severe weather is followed by rapid warming. Remember that beautiful 83 degree day in April? That might have been the culprit.



Maple trees, along with fruit trees, are more susceptible than others to frost cracks because they have thin skin.

Usually, frost cracks are not fatal to the tree, although they can certainly open it up to further problems if the opening allows disease organisms to enter.

The Someone-Calls-About-This-Every-Year Question

Snow mold, snow mold, snow mold - who knew this many local people were out inspecting their grass so early in the season?

Snow mold is that ugly gray or pink stuff left on the turf when the snow melts. It is caused by fungi, either *Typhula* spp. (gray) or *Microdochium nivale* (pink).



The gray snow mold only affects the blades of grass and usually resolves quickly. The pink snow mold affects the roots and crowns and may cause more damage.

Treatment of snow mold is primarily focused on care of the turf during late fall, before the winter season is in full swing.

More detailed information may be found at <http://tic.msu.edu/>, the Michigan State University Turfgrass Information Center.

The Oh-My-Gosh-NO! Question

On one of my April shifts, my colleague received a call that set us both back on our heels.

The man on the other end of the phone reported that his beautiful 15-year-old maple tree had a few wilted leaves. The conversation, so I'm told, went something like this:

Caller (C): "I'm thinking I'll just cut it down but thought I'd ask you folks first."

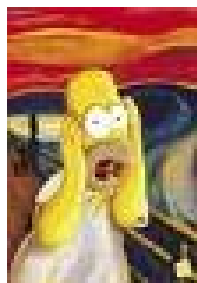
Master Gardener (MG): "Sir, have you checked to see if it needs water?"

C: "No. but I'm sure it has water."

MG: "What about anything unusual happening around it, spraying of herbicides, pesticides, things like that?"

C: "No, I'm just thinking I should cut it down."

MG: "Is the whole tree covered with wilting leaves?"



C: "No, just one part."

MG: "Well, sir, if you like the tree, you might want to consider bringing in a sample so our diagnostic experts can take a look..."

C: "No, I think I'll just cut it down. Thanks. Bye."

Tree Wrapping

Carol Figarra (MG 2007)

On April 26, Master Gardeners participated in wrapping over 2,000 pine saplings for Rural Education Days (RED).

Project RED provides third graders from around Washtenaw County an enjoyable learning experience concerning Michigan's agricultural bounty.

The children are each given a pine sapling to plant in their yards.

The annual event is held during the last week of April at the Washtenaw County Fairgrounds.



Elaine Mogerman, left, and Mary Duff-Silverman, prepare pine samplings for Project RED.



At right, several Master Gardeners work on wrapping the 2,600 tree seedlings given to Washtenaw County third graders at Project RED.

Photos Requested

For our November banquet, we want to include pictures of members' gardens, along with the pictures from volunteer projects. So take lots of pictures of your gardens this summer. Also, please take pictures of any volunteer projects on which you work. In the early fall, we'll provide instructions on getting the pictures to us. Have a great summer!

--- Master Gardener Alumni Assoc. Board

Happy Gardening

Junior Master Gardener Program 2010

Carol Figarra (MG 2007)

The Junior Master Gardener Program of 2010 began on Tuesday, May 6, at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. The six-week program, sponsored by Washtenaw County 4-H and MSU Extension, provides a hands-on fun environment for a positive learning experience in gardening for youngsters ages 9-11. Master Gardener volunteers assist in conducting classes giving the students guidance in achieving the goal of a successful garden.

Each participant in the program will receive a certificate of accomplishment for accumulating ten hours of volunteer hours over the summer. Hours are accrued by attending classes, completing quizzes and assisting in garden maintenance throughout the summer.

In addition to the six weekly sessions, the fun includes a Salad Party in June with fresh greens from the garden. In September, the program hosts a Harvest Party Potluck for the graduates and their families. After the autumn party, all remaining vegetables are harvested and distributed among the participants and their families.



At left, MG Scott Blomquist distributes soil samples to Maggie and Sofi for a lesson in soil composition.



At right, MG Jan McCarthy-Henkel confers with JMG Dominic on the properties of compost.



Above, JMGs Bella (left) and Ember (right) broadcast lettuce and radish seeds under the direction of Garden Coordinator Stan Towers and MG Barb Fike.



JMG Jahi, above, plants both red and white onions under the supervision of MG Ruth Ann Couperthwaite.



At left, Sam (front left) and James (center) plant rows of peas and string beans.

Maya, above, plants carrot seeds in the 20-by-40-foot hands-on garden between the greenhouses at Matthaei Botanical Gardens..



At right, Noah plants peas with the encouragement of MG David Richardson.

**Master Gardener
Spring Conference 2010
Barbara Stark-Nemon (2009)**

What's the only thing that could have kept me out of my garden on a gorgeous May Friday afternoon and all day Saturday?

That would be the 2010 Master Gardener College, held April 30 and May 1 at Michigan State University.

As a 2009 MG graduate, this was my first year attending the event. It was an opportunity to visit the "mother ship" of Extension/MSU facilities and to unapologetically immerse myself to my heart's content in the myriad educational opportunities with my equally enthusiastic fellow MGs. What follows is a personal sampler of what interested and motivated me over the course of the two days, which I hope will encourage others to attend this wonderful event in Grand Rapids next year on June 24 and 25.

I attended "Getting to Know Woody Plants," conducted by Rebecca Finneran, with the MSU Extension office in Kent County, and Mary Wilson, state coordinator for the MG volunteer program.

Do you remember the differences between pines, firs and spruce? (Think needle shape and arrangement, cone and tree shape). Or between a Norway and red maple? (The Norway's leaf petiole has a white milky sap.)

This workshop included a one-hour class followed by a three-hour walking tour of the Lewis Landscape Arboretum and Horticultural Demonstration Gardens.

By the end, we were full of new and re-learned information and ready for the dinner barbecue held at the Crop and Soil Research Farm building. It was also a fascinating look at the wonderful resources that the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources encompass.

On Saturday, Wilson set the tone for attendees by reminding us that we should strive for science-based practice in improving our skills and bringing information to others. Thomas Coon, director of the Extension Service, also welcomed us and described some of the key changes that the redesign of the Extension Service will include.

The statewide priorities for the Extension Service include greening Michigan (sustainability); agriculture and agribusiness; health and nutrition; and children and youth.

Coon also confirmed the importance of the Master Gardener program, as well as the network of volunteer effort, education and the expansion of the role of technology. The increasing richness of web resources maintained for Master Gardeners and the public at large was evident everywhere at the conference, and Coon encouraged attendees to consult and provide input to www.extension.org, <http://4garden.msu.edu>, and <http://advancemichigan.msu.edu>.



The keynote address was given by Art Cameron, MSU professor of floriculture, who used his extensive personal photo library to remind gardeners that science helps to create beautiful productive gardens. The care and devotion to gardening that is the very meaning of horticulture was evident in Cameron's presentation, and he exhorted us to share and exchange with other gardeners, try something different, watch and take notes and take pictures!

Next up was a panel of MSU researchers who presented updates in their areas of expertise.

MSU associate professor of horticulture Burt Cregg reported that using mulch resulted in a substantial increase in the productivity of plants. What was surprising was that the use of cypress mulch resulted in growth suppression compared to pine bark, hardwood or recycled pallets. (Of course, I've been using cypress mulch for years.)

David Smitley, MSU professor of entomology, talked about the development of a new pathogen that causes a disease in Japanese beetles, but only Japanese beetles. Unfortunately, it will take 10 years to adequately spread it in the existing population.

In the case of the emerald ash borer, control is being accomplished with a basal drench of Ameticolpral, with a single application in May or early June for trees up to 12 inches in diameter.

Recent turf farm research suggests that simply setting lawn mowers to a height of 3½ inches results in tripling the root mass of turf, so European chafer grubs damage will not kill the lawn.

Last summer's late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) on potatoes and tomatoes was investigated. Beware of volunteer plants, cull piles, compost piles transplants and airborne spores from neighboring infected plants. Recommended management includes keeping foliage dry, using high quality seed and purchased plants, weeding, maintaining adequate spacing, early detection and use of copper-based treatment products.

Finally, Rufus Isaacs, MSU associate professor of entomology, updated us on conservation efforts on pollinating bees for berry crops. (Fun fact: Michigan blueberry fields are host to 160 species of native bees.)

Isaacs displayed an artful form of conservation: carved wooden bee hotels! He also described the important role of native plants in conserving pollinators in agricultural landscapes.

Once these general sessions concluded, we broke up into two hour workshops across five different tracks. I attended two that were particularly informative: "Citizen Science: Weather and Plant: Pest Relationships" and "Intensely Edible Gardening."

Tracey Aichele, of MSU's geography department, works on the computer system behind the website www.enviroweather.msu.edu, which she introduced to the workshop. This fascinating resource (OK, I admit it. I'm a weather junkie!) has as its mission "to develop and deliver a sustainable weather-based information system that helps users make pest, plant production and natural resource management decisions in Michigan."

The project is supported by a wide variety of agencies and departments including Project Green (there really are three "e"s).

A statewide network of weather data collection stations provides information on wind, solar radiation, moisture (humidity and rainfall), air temperature and soil temperature. From this data, algorithms have been written to determine degree days.

Moisture and temperature interact to influence germination, bloom and maturity of plants, as well as the growth of insects, fungi and diseases. The combination of the collected data allow charts to be constructed for a variety of activities, including planting, irrigation, pest management and harvesting. In coordination with the Integrated Pest Management group, this project and the website are incredibly useful to growers.

Even though the data was highly technical, I found this a fascinating way to tailor gardening activity to actual data. One issue that was discussed was that weather stations are concentrated in fruit growing areas of the southwest and northwest parts of the state. More are needed in other areas.

Where does the citizen scientist part come in? Look at www.usanpn.org: "The USA National Phenology Network brings together citizen scientists, government agencies, non-profit groups, educators and students of all ages to monitor the impacts of climate change on plants and animals in the United States. The network harnesses the power of people and the Internet to collect and share information, providing researchers with far more data than they could collect alone." Similarly <http://www.cocorahs.org/> asks citizens to help measure rainfall.

The last workshop I attended was given by Linda Whitlock, of MSU Extension in Kalamazoo County. "Intensely Edible Gardening" was an information-packed how-to session on siting, building and maintaining an intensive vegetable garden. Spacing

guides, succession plans, soil amending, growing requirements, companion planting suggestions and container recommendations were all provided in the presentation and handouts.

By 5 p.m. Saturday, the 2010 Master Gardener College drew to a close. (No, I didn't win one of the door prizes, but yes, I did serious shopping at the many wonderful vendors who helped support the conference).

I will certainly return in the future for an infusion of new information and enjoyment of fellow MGs.



Master Gardening Clothes Available for Purchase



You now 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 \$35. Orders will be placed on a monthly basis. If you have questions, please contact Cindy at 734-222-3948



"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 a later use?

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension is offering the fifth edition of its popular book "So Easy to Preserve." This 375-page 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 the new and experienced food preserver. Chapters include Preserving Food, Canning, Pickled Products, Jellied Fruit Products, Freezing and Drying.

To obtain your own personal copy for only \$18, contact Cindy Fischer at 734-222-3948 or fischerce@washtenaw.org.

June Calendar

Hidden Lake Gardens

Arboretum and Gardens - M-50, Tipton 517-431-2060
<http://hiddenlakegardens.msu.edu/>
Call for class fees and to register

Frogs & Salamanders

Saturday, June 5
 6 - 9 pm

Growing Shiitake Mushrooms

Saturday, June 12
 11:30 - 1:30 pm

The Moon Garden

Thursday, June 17
 6 - 8 pm

Design Ideas to Shrink Your Lawn

Saturday, June 26
 10 - 11:30 am

Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arboretum

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

Walking to Wildflowers

Wednesdays, June 9 and 30
 4:30 - 6 pm

Composting for Better Gardens

Wednesday, June 23
 7 - 9 pm

The Real Bois Blanc Island

Discover the flora of the island with Ellen Elliott Weatherbee
 June 24 through June 27

MSUE Washtenaw County - FACEBOOK Page

I stepped outside to take out my garbage and found leaves lying on the ground around my red maple. This tree has never been happy growing in the heavy clay soil between the sidewalk and the curb but this was something different. Leaves were missing pieces of their petioles (leaf stem). Each spring the Extension office gets calls on this phenomenon caused by a small insect called a Petiole Borer.



The small larvae feed on the petiole and cause the leaf to drop with the larvae still inside the remaining portion of the petiole. Once on the ground the larvae exits the petiole and goes into the soil where it lives through to the following spring to emerge as an adult to start the cycle over and infest next year's leaves. Though dropping leaves may be annoying the percent of lost leaves is not significant enough to warrant control.

For more info on petiole borers visit the MSUE Washtenaw County Facebook page.

Dial A Garden June Topics

Phone 734 971-1129 to listen to current topics

- ◆ Pruning needled evergreens
- ◆ Poison ivy control
- ◆ Putting houseplants out for summer
- ◆ Rose diseases and pests
- ◆ Grub control
- ◆ Mulching veggies and flowers
- ◆ Fertilizing veggies
- ◆ Don't prune oaks due to Oak Wilt
- ◆ Controlling mosquitoes & West Nile Virus

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**TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL ENCLOSED
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**



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

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County website:.....	www.eWashtenaw.org
State website:.....	web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener

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