



# The Washtenaw Gardener

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<http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/extension/>

## Washtenaw County Master Gardener Newsletter

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### HOW TO BUILD A RAIN GARDEN!

Sarah Allin (MG 2005)

Learn to build a rain garden with our enthusiastic team of experienced instructors. This will be an in-depth discussion and provide hands on experience, building a rain garden. You will learn how to evaluate an appropriate site, create a design for the specific environment, how to select suitable plants, construction methods, planting and maintenance techniques.



Discussion will also include environmental benefits of rain gardens for reducing erosion and enhancing water quality. Hands on construction of a rain garden will be the second half of this seminar.



Educational materials will be provided, suggested reading

<<http://dnr.wi.gov/runoff/rg/rgmanual.pdf>>

Please wear work clothes appropriate for weather conditions including work or gardening gloves, work boots, rain gear, sun screen, insect repellent, drinking water, and some excitement!

**Materials required:** Bring your favorite gardening tools: shovel, rake, garden fork, trowel, etc.

**Date and Time:** Saturday, May 30th, 2009 from 9:00am to 1:00pm

**Location:** Geddes Lake Condominium Complex, 3000 Lakehaven, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

We will hold the class in the clubhouse and move outside to the garden for hands on experience.

**Fees:** This is a free seminar offered by MSU Extension Service and Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner.

Overview of topics covered:

Environmental benefits, site selection, garden design, plant selection, soil properties, construction techniques, size and depth ratio, water collection, grading, planting and mulching. Visit Google Maps at: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type in 3000 Lakehaven, Ann Arbor



Attendance is FREE, but we need you to please register since space is limited. Please call or email Sarah Allin 734-222-3814, [allins@ewashtenaw.org](mailto:allins@ewashtenaw.org)

**Farming in Paradise**

Janet Kavanagh  
MG 2004

For me, one of the highlights of travel is to check out the novel native vegetation we don't find in our backyards. This spring I had the good fortune of a first time visit to Hawaii for business, and expected to admire the abundant flowers I've heard so much about. Instead, it was agriculture that caught my eye. On landing in Maui, my first sight was of countless acres of sugarcane fields.



When most people think about agriculture in Hawaii the crops that come to mind are sugarcane, pineapple, macadamia nuts and coffee. The sugar and pineapple

industries have long been dominant factors in the Hawaiian economy, and are its' two most valuable crops. They are both grown on large highly mechanized plantations with cultivated acreage totals of about 131,000 and 69,000 acres respectively.

Monoculture commercial farming is a strong part of Hawaiian history, but local residents describe a movement to diversify. Thanks to Hawaii's mild, year-round climate, it is a fertile place that sustains many different types of agriculture. Approximately 40 percent of land on Hawaii is farmland, and it is home to more than 3,600 crop farms and 1,100 livestock farms. Most are family farms of less than 10 acres in size, with just a few very large scale commercial holdings.



Because of geographic isolation, at any time, Hawaii has less than a seven day supply of many foods, especially perishables. It is estimated that 50-90% percent of their food is imported, contributing to their cost-of-living status as the 4<sup>th</sup> most expensive state. This was clear from the \$3 (Each or per pound?) Fuji apples available in grocery stores. Not surprisingly, their goal is to produce food for the local market efficiently enough to replace most imports. Unfortunately, there are many barriers.

Urbanization is reducing available farmland on Oahu, the home of the capitol city Honolulu, and the largest

market for crops. Up to 100,000 acres of agricultural land are available across all the state's islands, but much is fallow. A significant barrier to building the agriculture industry is that many farmers operate on relatively short-term land leases, with little incentive to invest in equipment, supplies or other infrastructure. Other key factors in utilization are the high cost of land, tax laws & leasing difficulties, water availability, labor & transportation costs. Practicality is an issue – as one website quotes “You just can't grow cucumbers on \$95,000-an-acre land”.

A natural marriage of agricultural need and Hawaii's attraction to visitors is Agri-tourism. A variety of offerings are being developed, and we had the opportunity to visit one at O'o Farm in Kula, Upcountry Maui. This biodynamic and organic farm is owned and



operated by the Pacific'O and I'O restaurants in Lahaina, to provide fresh local produce for its customers. Their long term goal is for the 2 restaurants to be produce self-sufficient. Already

almost 100% of salad greens and herbs are provided by the farm. Their farm tour and description of techniques ends with an organic lunch prepared in their outdoor kitchen, to illustrate the farm-to-table journey.

The 8.5 acres of O'o farm was purchased in 2000, a piece of almost virgin land formerly used as a commune. It is located at 3400 ft elevation on the west face of the Haleakala crater. The owners cleared the site of invasive eucalyptus trees, but left a perimeter of Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) for microclimate sheltering and nitrogen fixation in the soil. Hawaiian soils vary widely in content and quality – this was rich with organic matter and as dark as the volcanic “fieldstones” that resembled huge charcoal briquettes.

Over the course of the year, O'o produces more than 60 different crops of fruit, vegetables, herbs and coffee. Fruit trees and coffee are planted on the sloping hillsides, with vegetables companion planted with herbs and flowers in the terraced beds of more level areas.

Like every garden, it does have its challenges. Physical isolation and altitude result in few animal and insect pests, but because of high moisture levels, fungus and viral diseases can be a common problem. I was surprised that the elevation had such a great effect on the typically tropical climate. The day we visited was a clear mid-70s by the coast, but was constant drizzle and

Continued on next page

10+ degrees cooler on the mountain. Last summer their growing season for tender warm weather crops (night time low of 50 degrees or higher) was only 34 days, greatly limiting their production of tomatoes and peppers. During our visit, tomatoes were being grown in greenhouses. Availability of plant material can also be a challenge as Hawaii has strict agricultural import and export regulations. When the owners had a desire to try fingerling potatoes, the only option was to sprout the eyes of grocery store varieties.

So although our notion of Hawaii may be one of tropical paradise, like everywhere farmers have their own challenges. But In early March, it was tempting to trade ours for theirs. My husband and I have long had a “win the lottery” fantasy of owning a small self-sustaining farm – now we know where!

**Early Blooming Perennials, Full Sun Loving**

**Mid-Spring/April**

Mary Lou Stone  
(MG 2009)

***Groundhuggers***



Alpine Draba/Alpine Whitlow-grass (Draba aizoides)  
Evergreen Candytuft (Iberis  
Snow Cushion)

***Small***

Leopard’s Bane (Doronicum)  
Chameleon Spurge (Euphorbia)  
Blue Moor Grass (Pulsatilla)

***Medium***

Golden Groundsel/Squaw-Weed (Packera)

**Late-Spring/May**

***Groundhuggers***

Persian Stonecress (Aethionema)  
Alyssum  
Mound Atlas Daisy (Anacyclus)  
Dwarf Pussy-toes (Antennaria)  
Wall Cress (Arabis)  
Black-leaved Thrift (Armeria maritime ‘Vesuvius’)  
Rock Cress (Aubrieta)



Ice Plant (Delosperma)  
Maiden Pinks (Dianthus)  
Iris Miniature Dwarf  
Moss Phlox (Phlox subulata)  
Alpine Cinquefoil (Potentilla neumanniana ‘Nana’)  
Bressingham Thyme (Thymus doerfleri ‘Bressingham’)  
Georgia Blue Speedwell (Veronica peduncularis ‘Georgia Blue’)  
Creeping Speedwell (Veronica repens)

***Small***



Alyssum (Aurinia)  
Aster (Aster alpinus)  
Mouse-ear Coreopsis (Coreopsis auriculata ‘Zamphir’)  
Sweet William (Dianthus)  
Shooting Star (Dodecatheon)  
Donkey-tail Spurge

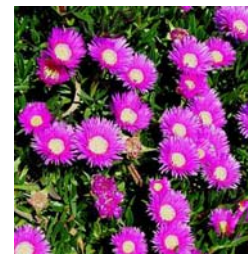
(Euphorbia myrsinites)  
Cushion Spurge (Euphorbia polychroma)  
Dwarf Cranesbill (Geranium “Bertie Crug”)  
Standard Dwarf Bearded Iris (Iris)  
Double Fernleaf Peony (Paeonia tenuifolia ‘Plena’)  
Alpine Soapwort (Saponaria ‘Bressingham’)  
Cushion Soapwort (Saponaria x olivana)  
Tufted Soapwort (Saponaria caespitosa)  
Rock Soapwort (Saponaria ocymoides)  
Dwarf Pincushion (Scabiosa)  
Blue-eyed Grass (Sisyrinchium)  
Gentian Speedwell (Veronica gentianoides)

***Medium***

Leopard’s Bane (Doronicum orientale ‘Goldcut’)  
Purple Wood Spurge (Euphorbia amygdaloides ‘Purpurea’)  
Iris  
Yarrow (Achillea milleforium ‘Colorado’ mixture)  
Columbine (Aquilegia)  
Naples Flowering Onion (Allium neapolitanum)

***Tall***

Arkansas Blue Star (Amsonia hubrichtii)  
Leopard’s Bane (Doronicum austracum)  
Oriental Poppy (Papaver orientale)  
Showy Mullein (Verbascum ‘Southern Charm’)



### Tips on Peonies

Ron Carpinella MG 2007

Notes from MSU Spring into Gardening Forum -March 2009

As a cut flower, peonies have no equal. Peony buds can be cut before the flowers open and stored in the refrigerator for months. Formerly a part of the Buttercup family, peonies have been reclassified into their own family---*Paeoniaceae*. The family consists of more than 30 herbaceous perennials and deciduous shrubs (tree peonies). Herbaceous peonies die down to the ground in the fall with new growth emerging in the spring. Tree peonies are shrubs producing woody shoots that remain above ground year round. Herbaceous peonies grow to 2-3 feet tall with a 3-4 foot spread. Tree peonies grow to about 4-5 feet under normal conditions. Peonies are long lived but initially slow growing plants, blooming within three years of planting. Both types of peonies can live for over 100 years.

Conditions for success include 6-8 hours of sun and fertile, humus-rich, moist but well drained soil with a pH of 6.5 to 7.0. They require around 500-1000 hours of temperature below 32-40 degrees F. to flower successfully. This is an important consideration only in southern zones. The best time to plant, move or divide herbaceous peonies is from September 1 to October 15. This insures that the plants have had time to establish roots before winter.

Dead heading the spent blossom is not required. Removing the dead blossom with a pair of leaves below the flower enhances the aesthetic appearance of the plant. Peonies typically produce pod-like fruits, each with 2-5 lobes and large, sometimes showy red or black seeds. The seeds can be sown in containers outdoor in autumn or early winter, but they take 2-3 years to germinate.

The plant is prone to *Verticillium* wilt, ringspot virus, tip blight, stem rot, *Botrytis* blight, leaf blotch, Japanese beetle and nematodes. To control diseases remove and destroy all old foliage in the fall. The good news is that herbaceous peonies are toxic to deer and rabbits and are generally immune to damage. Tree peonies, however, are eaten by deer and rabbits. For humans, if ingested, all parts can cause mild stomach upset.

Peonies should not be over fertilized. Once every 2-3 years, after the blooms have been spent, an application of a slow-release, well-balanced fertilize is adequate. Watering should occur early in the day. Never allow the foliage to remain wet overnight. Early in the growing season, plants can be staked with peony rings, to support the large blooms that typically occur.

Planning for the Peony garden can be based on

blooming period, bloom type, bloom color and fragrance. With proper planning, one could easily have flowers for 5-6 weeks starting late May through June. Guidance for this planning can be found at the following web sites: <http://bloomdate.paeonia.com> and [www.bordine.com](http://www.bordine.com). With your plan in hand you can check with the following local nurseries for the desired varieties: Specialty Growers of Howell Michigan and Telly's Greenhouse of Troy Michigan. If you seek more information on peonies, recommended books are: *Peonies* by Pamela McGeorge, and *The Genus Paeonia* by Joseph Halda with James Waddick.

### Making Your Own Herbal Teas

Carol Figarra MG 2007

Teatime is always a pleasant brew, a time to socialize, relax alone, or a time for soothing and healing. Herbal tea has been used medicinally for over 5,000 years. It has been used to help the wounded and seriously ill – in ancient times most likely with incantations, dancing, and ceremonial drums – and, as an Asiatic holistic approach to harmony and balance.



Herbs for tea can be grown and harvested in your existing garden. Fennel grown in the vegetable garden will brew just as flavorful as fennel grown in a pot on the front steps. Even if you only have a balcony or sunny windowsill, you can grow your own herbs to use for tea.

Herbal teas are made from the leaves, flowers, seeds or the roots of herbs. Herbs may be freshly picked or dried and stored for the off-season. Whatever herbs you choose the process is simply to pour boiling water over crushed herbs and allow steeping. Proportions of herbs vary for fresh or dry. When brewing fresh leaves, use three teaspoons per cup of water; and for dried leaves, use one teaspoon per cup of water. To brew herbs use a tea ball, a tea mug, a perforated spoon, a teapot with infuser, or a simple kitchen strainer. As a personal preference, add a squirt of fruit juice to the tea for a unique flavor.

#### **Harvesting Tips:**

- ◆ Harvest early in the day after the dew has dried but still in the cool of the morning.
- ◆ Herbs are at their peak just before they bloom.
- ◆ Do not tear or crush the herbs until you are ready to use them saving the aromatic oils for release into the boiling water.
- ◆ Pluck off only a few leaves throughout the growing season. Removing too many leaves may kill your plant.
- ◆ Harvest all your herbs at the end of the season, dry them whole and store for winter teas or seasonings.

**Mint**

Mint tea is a favorite and one of the easiest herbs to grow. It is a hardy plant but may even get out of control in the garden unless contained. Mint prefers well-drained soil and should get a least a partial day of good sun. Make sure to water well during the peak of summer heat. There are many varieties to choose from, each with it's own unique taste: spearmint, peppermint, apple mint or even chocolate mint. Mint will grow readily indoors.

**Chamomile**

The tea is made using the small white and yellow flowers of the chamomile plant, rather than the leaves. There are two kinds of chamomile (German and Roman) and it's the German variety that makes the best tea. Chamomile likes sandy soils and full sun. Make sure to water well during the peak of summer heat. Although an annual, chamomile goes to seed readily and likely to reappear every year in your garden. Chamomile grows well in containers on a balcony but does not do well indoors.

**Lemon Balm**

The lemon balm plant is related to mint but has a distinct lemon aroma. It prefers dry soil and partial shade during the day. Besides making a nice herbal tea, lemon balm is a favorite in fish dishes. Lemon balm grows well indoors.

**Lavender**

Lavender makes a lovely addition to any garden even if not used for tea. Lavender likes plenty of direct sun and well-drained soil. Some lavender varieties are more suited to northern climates. Lavender makes a good blend of tea with chamomile. The plant will grow 2-3" tall making it unsuitable for windowsill or indoors, but it can easily be grown on the balcony in containers.

**Fennel**

Sweet fennel is the type of fennel typically grown for tea. When dried, the seeds have a very strong licorice flavor. Fennel likes lots of sun and lots of water. Unlike the other herbs, do not harvest fennel throughout the summer. At the end of summer, the plant will go to seed. Let the seed dry on the plant and then collect for tea. Fennel plants grow up to 6" tall and not conducive for indoors. Caution is planting fennel – do not plant next to dill. They are related plants and can cross-pollinate.

**Lemon Basil**

Lemon basil grows best in a rich, well-drained soil in full sun. The plant is bushy and grows 26 " high and 10-14" wide. Pinch out growing tips to encourage bushier plants and to delay flowering. It can also be used in the garden as a companion plant to repel aphids, mites, and tomato hornworms.

**Lemon Verbena**

This plant prefers dry, not overly fertilized, well-drained soil, and full sun. Having its origins in South America, the plant does not survive northern winter temperatures. It can be brought inside and placed in a sunny windowsill over the winter. They are valued in the garden to attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and honeybees.

**Rosemary**

Rosemary is a member of the mint family. It is a hardy perennial plant, considered an easy plant to grow for beginners, and it is pest-resistant. The plant prefers plenty of sun, well-drained soil, and protection from harsh winds. When grown in pots, it is best kept trimmed to prevent it from becoming straggly and unsightly. Rosemary is extremely high in iron, calcium, and Vitamin B6.

**Sage**

The sage plant needs well-drained soil and a partially sunny location. Sage is a hardy plant that reaches 1' tall and 1 ½' wide making it best for garden or balcony gardening. In addition to tea, the herb is a delicious addition to white meat and vegetable dishes.



Chamomile



Lavender



Mint

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MASTER GARDENERS' FAVORITE RECIPES

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**Victorian Spring Posy Cake**

8 ounces butter, softened  
 8 ounces caster sugar  
 4 eggs, beaten  
 8 ounces self raising flour, sifted  
 2 large oranges, zest and juice  
 8 ounces mascarpone cheese  
 8 tablespoons lemon curd or orange curd  
 lemon curd, to spread  
 crystallised violets or sugar, flowers to decorate  
 orange, curls

Directions  
 Pre-heat oven to 150C or 300°F.  
 Grease and line two 8" sandwich tins/sponge cake tins.  
 Beat the sugar and butter together until light, fluffy, and almost white in colour; this can take up to 5 minutes, and is crucial for a light sponge cake.  
 Gently add the grated zest of two oranges.  
 Add the beaten eggs and then GENTLY fold the flour in with a metal spoon.  
 Divide the mixture between the two cake tins and bake for 25 to 35 minutes, until light golden brown and risen. To check whether the cakes are cooked - insert a skewer in the middle of the cake, it should come away clean if it is cooked.  
 Pour a little of orange juice over the cakes slowly, allowing them to absorb the juice. (Save the rest of the juice for other cooking or to add to drinks!) Allow to cool in the tins for 5 minutes before turning out onto a rack to cool; allow to cool completely before decorating and icing.  
 Meanwhile, fold the lemon or orange curd into the mascarpone cream and mix well. (Add more to taste, I sometimes add at least half a big jar!).  
 When the cakes are cool, spread some lemon or orange curd on to one side of both cakes, this stops the mascarpone cream from making the cakes too soggy. Place one cake on to a cake plate, curd side up and swirl some of the mascarpone cream over the cake, place the other cake, curd side down on top of the other cake, making a sandwich!  
 Finish decorating the top of the cake with the remaining mascarpone cream, swirling it over the top of the cake. Just before serving, decorate with crystallised violets or other preserved/sugar flowers. Grate some orange curls, sprinkle them over the top, and serve.  
 Keeps for up to one week in a tin, in a cool place.  
 Sponges can be frozen for up to 2 months - allow to defrost for 4 to 6 hours on a cooling rack, before icing and decorating.

**Oriental Cole Slaw**

Mark Roby (MG 2005)

Dressing:  
 2 Ramen noodle flavor packets  
 1/4 c rice wine vinegar  
 2 tbs sugar  
 1 c canola oil  
 2-3 dashes sesame oil  
 Mix dressing and allow it to sit for at least 1/2 hour so the sugar and flavor packets dissolve. Sometimes, I warm it a bit to encourage them to dissolve.  
 Brown 2 packs Ramen noodles in 350 degree oven.  
 brown 1/2 cup slivered or sliced almonds in 350 degree oven  
 brown 3 tbs sesame seeds in saucepan  
 3 packs coleslaw mix

toss all ingredients together

**Sausage Broccoli Bake**

Mary Lou Stone MG 2009

Serves 6  
 8X8X2 greased baking dish  
 Bake uncovered at 350° for 35 minutes

1# Bulk pork sausage  
 2 Eggs beaten  
 2 C. Soft bread crumbs  
 1 8oz. Can sliced water chestnuts (or sliced almonds)  
 1 10oz. Pkg. chopped broccoli, cooked and drained

**Topping**

¾ C. Sour Cream  
 ¼ C. Mayonnaise, not salad dressing  
 2 t. Yellow mustard  
 Parsley, chopped

Brown sausage, drain off fat. Mix together sausage, eggs, breadcrumbs, water chestnuts, and broccoli. Turn into baking dish, bake 35 minutes. Combine sour cream, mayonnaise and mustard; spread over sausage mixture. Bake 5-7 minutes more or until hot. Sprinkle parsley on top.

This is a basic recipe. Instead of bread crumbs, I cube hamburger or hotdog buns or bread crests. Also, I use fresh broccoli, steamed and not thoroughly cooked through. I find that the topping is too thin so I make more than called for. Paprika or sliced almonds can be sprinkled on top and I find that 35 minutes isn't quite long enough to thoroughly bake.

Good luck,  
 Mary Lu Stone

### 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, September through May, starting at 7 p.m. in the basement conference room of the County building at 705 N. Zeeb Rd.

Join us at 7 p.m. on May 19 to hear Steve Courtney talk about "Colorful Container Gardens." This will be a nice kick off to our Michigan summer! Courtney, Manager of MSU's Hidden Lake Gardens, holds a degree from Canada's Niagara Parks School of Horticulture. He came to Hidden Lake Gardens via Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden in Illinois. Note also that Hidden Lake Gardens' Public Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 9, from 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.

This is the last MGAAWC meeting of the 2008-2009 year. The 2009-2010 year will kick off on September 15 at 7p.m. Please save the date on your calendar.

## May Calendar

### Hidden Lake Gardens

Arboretum and Gardens

M-50, Tipton 517-431-2060

<http://hiddenlakegardens.msu.edu/>

Call for class fees and to register

#### **Plant Sale (Public)**

Saturday, May 9

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

#### **Let's Garbage-Can Garden for Preschoolers**

Tuesday, May 12

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

#### **Wildflower Walk**

Wednesday, May 13

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

#### **Frogs & Salamanders**

Saturday, May 30

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

### Master Gardener Alumni Association of Washtenaw County

The following program will be held in the basement conference room of the County building at 705 N. Zeeb Rd.

"Colorful Container Gardens" with Steve Courtney  
Manager of Hidden Lake Gardens  
Tuesday, May 19 at 7 p.m.

### 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

#### **Beekeeping (class series)**

Sundays, May 3, 31 & June 14

11:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.

\* additional dates in July, August and September

#### **Perennial Combinations**

with Janet Macunovich

Sunday, Mar 10

12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

#### **Wildflowers and Morels in Mid-Michigan**

\*weekend trip with Ellen Weatherbee

Friday (after 4 p.m.), May 15 through

Sunday (after lunch), May 17

### Other Classes and Volunteer Opportunities:

#### **Growing Hope**

[www.growinghope.net/](http://www.growinghope.net/)

#### **Project Grow**

[www.projectgrowgardens.org/](http://www.projectgrowgardens.org/)



6960

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**TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL ENCLOSED  
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**



**Office Hours:** 8:30—5:00, Monday—Friday

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Cindy Fischer, Master Gardener Coordinator .....	734-222-3948
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County website:.....	www.eWashtenaw.org
State website:.....	web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener

*Robert J. Bricault, Jr.*

Robert J. Bricault, Jr.  
Extension Educator,  
Horticulture & Natural Resources

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program.**

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