



# The Washtenaw Gardener

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## Washtenaw County Master Gardener Newsletter

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### The Seduction of Spring

Nancy Quay, MG 2009



*"Spring is sprung, the grass is ris.  
I wonders where the birdies is.  
They say the birds is on the wing.  
Ain't that absurd?  
I always thought the wing was on the  
bird."*

This little poem, sometimes entitled "Spring in the Bronx" and attributed (not surprisingly) to Anonymous, has ushered in spring for me since I was old enough to chant it along with my mother. (For those who know me, this explains a lot, don't you think?)

I have since passed along the tradition to my own family, although we have added the safety measure of making sure the windows are closed before we shout it out. This has improved our standing in the neighborhood immeasurably.

For Michigan gardeners, spring is a dangerous, unruly season. It is too easy to get seduced by a few warm days, act impulsively and end up paying for it all summer long.

So before you charge out into your yard with that wild gleam in your eye, intent upon uncovering every green thing, here are some alternatives.

#### Remove Bush Covers? No, Go Clean a Closet Instead

As far as I can figure out, the main draw in removing those bush covers is a

kind of neatening-up of our yards. A Mrs. Tittlemouse kind of action for you Beatrix Potter fans. (Mrs. Tittlemouse was a "most terribly tidy particular little mouse".) This is all well and good once the weather has stabilized. But removing covers too early can expose tender new growth to cold temperatures and sometimes snow.

Instead of uncovering that beloved greenery, clean a closet! It's a similar kind of uncovering action and satisfaction ("Holy cow! I haven't seen those jeans in ten years!"), but much, much less dangerous.

Remember: The last frost date in southeastern Michigan is mid- to late May. Keep this date in mind before you expose bushes and other plants to the raw weather.

#### Clean Flower Beds? No, Organize Your Sock Drawer

Last fall it was most satisfying to cover the flower beds with shredded leaves and other mulch material. It felt sort of like tucking them into bed for the night/winter — warm, cozy, nurturing.

But something about those first warm days...whoosh! Off come the "covers," no holds barred! No more warmth for you, my tiny friends!

I believe the drive to clean up the flower beds is an organizing kind of action. This would be equally satisfied by re-arranging your sock drawer.

Or for those of you who already have an organized sock drawer (Really? You do?), alphabetizing your spices or DVDs is similarly effective.

Again, before the final frost date in May, uncovering the tender leaves and buds of spring plants risks having them

frostbitten and damaged.

### **Move Indoor Plants Outside? No, Move the Woodpile (Again)**

I have a few plants that live outside in the summer (we call it going to summer camp) and inside in the winter. In late October, it is always exciting to have the greenery inside. It's a kind of warm-and-fuzzy event, as we push them into their corner of the dining room.

By April, I just want them OUT OF THE WAY. I've ducked and twisted and bent to get around them for five months, and I'm sick of it! Time to go to camp now!

But no. The Norfolk Pine, Schefflera and palm really need the outside temperatures to stabilize above 65 degrees before they can survive on the deck. And given the adjustment they have to make each time they are moved, multiple in-and-outs are not recommended.

So when you're tempted to move the indoor babies outside, move the woodpile instead. (If you don't have a woodpile, move multiple small, heavy items across your yard, leave them there for a few hours, then move them back. It's the same thing.)

Seriously, if you've had a woodpile near your house for the winter — or near trees in your yard - spend time prior to the final frost moving the pile away from structures or trees to protect them from any chewing bugs that might be living in or around the wood.

### **Finally, Some Other Options**

If you need other ideas for things to do before it is really safe to work with outdoor plants, here are some options:

- Clean and organize your tools.
- Tighten the bolts on the wheelbarrow and inflate the tire(s).
- Indulge in flower or vegetable seed catalogs.
- Design new garden beds.
- Make labels for new plantings.
- Review last year's garden record and ponder what you'll do differently

Michigan Herb Associates 23rd Annual Conference  
Carol Figarra (MG 2007)

The 23rd Annual Conference of the Michigan Herb Associates was held in Wells Hall at Michigan State University on March 10 and 11. Herbalists and specialists spoke to members and guests on various topics, such as "Edible Herbal Umbels, A Faerie Garden-Small Plants for Tiny Gardens," "Pleasure & Prudence in the Kitchen Apothecary," "Nurturing Your Garden From the Soil Up," "How Bees Do It" and "Kitchen Garden Renaissance," to name a few.

Herb groups from around the state set up educational displays showing their special interests and projects done through the year. The 2011 conference will be held March 9 and 10 at MSU and the Herb of the Year 2011 is horseradish (*Amoracia rusticana*).



*Shelley Dale (left) and Barbara Donahue, from the Morning Thyme Herb Group in Milford, at the annual herb conference. They displayed replicas of drying racks, wooden mixing bowls, storage chests and books found in early American drying rooms.*



### TALES FROM THE HIVE

Richard Mendel (MG 2009)

This is a question and answer column dedicated to honey bees and, in some cases, bees in general. I will answer any questions of

general interest pertaining to bees and how they interact with agriculture, humans, animals and the environment. Please send your question to me at [brescue@att.net](mailto:brescue@att.net). Questions of interest to most people will be answered in the monthly newsletter. Some of the questions and answers may be short, so the maximum number published. If your question is of an urgent nature or is a safety issue concerning honey bees, please call me directly at 734-660-8621.

**Question:** I live on an organic farm in Brooklyn,

Mich., and we have a dead tree that we cut down this late fall that has a colony of bees living in it. We did not realize this until we started to cut into it. The log that is left is about 10 feet long and a little more than a foot in



diameter. The part that surprises me is that the bees are still alive after the winter. I see them going in and out of a knothole near the top. There are a couple of partial saw cuts in the center, and the top part of the log was removed, just exposing the cavity. It looks like their entrance is just below that, through a knothole created by a limb that had died and fallen off. I would like to keep these bees, even though I don't know the first thing about beekeeping. I have a neighbor friend down the road who is a beekeeper, and he said I could borrow his equipment to put the bees in. I was told you could help me. Angie M.

**Answer:** Let me first thank you for being concerned and willing to try to rescue the honeybees. And it's always exciting to talk with someone who comes upon a bee tree firsthand. Your intentions are admirable, but the execution may prove to be a daunting challenge. The honeybees you are describing could very well be a feral colony and are considered very special in the beekeeping community. They are special because they are "survivor bees." In my view, they are extremely special, because even after their home was partially damaged and upended, they have somehow managed to survive the winter. With the log on its side, the internal comb is completely disoriented from its normal position when the tree was upright. What I find fascinating is the tremendous adaptability of these

wonderful creatures, since comb positioning in a hive is a key part of their organizational behavior.

Given that you have no beekeeping experience, I would discourage you from removing the bees and putting them in a hive yourself. It is a great romantic idea, but in reality, entails a lot of work to be done properly. The degree to which you will need to open up the tree to expose the complete hive can also be discouraging - and challenging at best. One of the primary concerns would be capturing the queen. The worst case scenario would be if she was accidentally injured or killed in all the commotion. When I spoke with you, you did not know whether your beekeeping neighbor had the level of ability or comfort needed to remove bees from a tree.

Since you are seeking immediate help, this is my recommendation: Cover the partial saw cuts in the trunk of the tree with duct tape or any non-toxic material to protect the hive from being exposed. Also put a piece of metal or board over the exposed top of the trunk. You said that some friends could help you stand the existing trunk back in an upright position and that there is a solid tree that you can secure it to so it does not fall over. Try to position the trunk so the knothole or their natural entrance is facing south or southeast. What this immediate action will do is to buy you some time by at least getting everything back to the natural environment that existed before the tree came down. If the bees continue to show a lot of activity at this point, we can further discuss the next steps.

During the late spring, this tree hive will most likely produce a swarm because that is how bees assure their survival. We can discuss how to set up a swarm trap and see if Mother Nature will allow us to partner with her for awhile by giving these survivors a new home. It would almost be too much to hope that this bee tree would be the source of many survivor colonies that are cast as swarms in the years to come.

### 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.



Herb Study Group-MBG  
Carol Figarra (MG 2007)

Madolyn Kaminski (right) spoke on "Planning an Herb Garden" at the March 1 meeting of the Herb Study Group.

She discussed planning a garden for teas, for cooking and vinegars and for sachets and potpourri. The lecture included a brief history of herbs, as well as the best types of soil, proper lighting conditions, containers and locations for growing.

The group meets the first Monday of each month in room 125 at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Members share herb cuttings and seeds as well as their experiences with growing herbs. Annual membership is \$10, and the money helps to support the herb garden at Matthaei.



**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



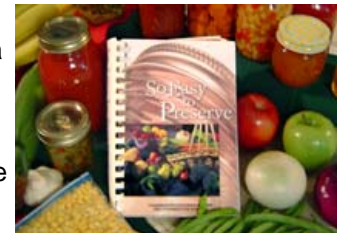
4-H Projects Galore 2010  
Carol Figarra  
MG 2007

Master Gardener Mike Janz (above) talks to 4-H members about growing plants at Projects Galore, which was held March 27 at the MSU Extension Office classrooms. Janz talked about the necessity and benefits of good soil, proper drainage and sufficient watering. The 4-H members made mini-greenhouses using recycled foam egg cartons and planted bush beans and dill. Janz told them about the proper care and location for the mini-greenhouses at home, as well as the best time and method for transplanting in the spring. The junior gardeners also discussed using other recycled material, like cardboard tubes and yogurt containers to start plants.

**"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

## Master Gardener's Recipes

### Veggie Pizza

(this recipe contains eggs, wheat and dairy)

2 Pillsbury crescent rolls (bake at 350 degrees for eight minutes)

Mix together

¼ cup mayo

¼ cup ranch dressing

8 oz cream cheese



Spread the mixture on top of cooked crescent rolls.

Top with diced veggies: 1 cup each of: cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, peppers, onions.

Top the veggies with 1 cup grated cheddar cheese



### Avocado Tomato Scallion Cheddar Quiche Lynda Norton (MG 2009)

1 cup sour cream

3 eggs, beaten

3 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese

Dash of salt

Dash of black pepper

6 scallions, chopped

2 medium tomatoes, chopped

1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced into strips

1 unbaked 10-inch pie shell

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Mix together sour cream, eggs and cheese. Stir in salt, pepper, scallions and tomatoes. Set aside.

Lay avocado slices on bottom of pie shell. Pour cheese mixture over avocado slices and spread out evenly. Bake 40-45 minutes, until golden and puffy. Let set 20 minutes or so before serving.



### Lemony Carrot Salad with Dill Anita Sanretto

2 tbsp. lemon juice

2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

1 small clove garlic, minced

¼ tsp. salt, or to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

2 cups grated carrots (about 4 medium-large)

3 tbsp. chopped fresh dill (or 1 1/2 tbsp. dry)

2 tbsp. chopped scallions

Whisk lemon juice, oil, garlic, salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Add carrots, dill and scallions. Toss

Makes 4 servings, ½ cup each

Per serving: 90 calories, 7 g fat (1 g saturated, 5 g monosaturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 6 g carbohydrate, 1 g protein, 2 g fiber, 184 mg sodium.

### Herbed Green Beans

¼ cup butter

¼ cup minced onion

Clove minced garlic

¼ cup minced celery



Sauté together, then soak, 1 lb. green beans. Drain.

Add to minced vegetables. Cook all for 20 minutes, add ¼ tsp rosemary and basil, ¾ tsp. salt



### Crunchy Salad Sally Janz

1 lb. bag shredded cabbage (with or without carrots)

1 package un-cooked beef ramen noodles (crumbled)

4 to 6 green onions (chopped)

1 cup toasted slivered almonds

1 cup salted or roasted sunflower seeds

Dressing: (mix separately and chill):

1/3 cup vinegar (wine or salad vinegar)

½ cup oil

½ cup sugar

Ramen broth packet

Preparation

Stir refrigerated dressing. Combine dressing with salad just before serving. Adding chicken makes it a meal.

**Soil Samples, Betsy and Me  
Jesse Raudenbush (MG 2010)**



If any of you out there are sheepish about volunteering for the soil testing sample collection program, rest your minds. Being a brand spankin' new MG, I had more than a little anxiety about ending up at some table in the middle of a store in Nowhere, Michigan, answering abstract questions without my trusty 10-pound manual in hand.

As is often the case, my fears were completely unfounded. I ended up spending the afternoon with a wonderful woman and fellow Master Gardener by the name of Betsy. As we waited for the soil samples to start rolling in, Betsy and I talked about everything under the sun (which wasn't out that day, and thanks to a busted door latch, we were up and down closing the door after store customers).

"We are not heating the outdoors," Betsy would whisper to me with a little wink and a smile. Betsy and I got a few questions - both related and unrelated to soil testing - and by golly, between the two of us there was no question left unanswered.

I'll admit there was a lot of down time, probably due to the weather, but this gave us more time to talk, sharing ideas and philosophies on life. The customers who came in for things other than soil sample were still my kind of people - friendly garden folk - and I felt extremely comfortable.

The icing on the cake was the store: a real find that will be a regular stop for my future gardening needs.

So in closing, just do it! It was fun and educational. I learned a lot from Betsy - and not just about gardening.

**Thank You Volunteers**

**Master Gardener Alumni Association of  
Washtenaw County News**

Meetings of the Master Gardener Alumni Association of Washtenaw County 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 18 for the last meeting of the 2009-2010 year. We are pleased to announce that Connie Crancer, long-time manager of Matthaei's bonsai collection, will speak to us about bonsai. In addition, our own Dennis Purcell will teach us how to raise and release Monarch butterflies.

MGAAWC needs your help again! Please take photos of your MG projects. We will use them to create a new slideshow to display at the Fall Awards Banquet. Send your photos or a link to a website containing the photos to [mgaami@yahoo.com](mailto:mgaami@yahoo.com). Also, please send any suggestions for future speakers or topics to the above email address. Thank you for your contributions.

# 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

## **Public Plant Sale**

Saturday, May 8

10 am - 2 pm

## **Living Wreath Workshop**

Tuesday, May 11

6 - 8 pm

## **Containers, Containers, Containers**

Tuesday, May 18

6 pm - 8 pm

## **Frogs & Salamanders**

Saturday, June 5

6 pm - 9 pm

## **Growing Shiitake Mushrooms**

Saturday, June 12

11:30 am - 1:30 pm

## **Washtenaw County Parks Nature Programs**

734- 971-6337

<http://parks.ewashtenaw.org>

## **Garlic Mustard Pulls in Washtenaw**

Saturdays in May - 2 to 4 pm

May 1 - Burns-Stokes Preserve

May 8 - Kosch Headwaters Preserve

May 15 - Scio Woods Preserve

May 22 - Goodrich Preserve

## **Woodland Wildflowers**

Draper-Houston Meadows Preserve

Sunday May 2

3 - 5 pm

## **Spring Woods Walk at County Farm**

Saturday, May 8

2 - 4 pm

## **Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arboretum**

1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor 734-647-7600

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

Call for classes & to register

## **Companion Planting**

Tuesday, May 4

7 - 9 pm

## **Walking to Wildflowers**

Wednesdays: May 5, 19 & June 9

4:30 - 6 pm

## **Composting for Better Gardens**

Wednesday, June 23

7 - 9 pm

## **MSU Extension in Washtenaw County**

734 997-1678

## **Diagnosing Landscape Problems**

\$10 fee/ no charge for Washtenaw MG 2010 students

Call to reserve spot in class

Monday, May 17

7 - 9 pm

## **MSUE Washtenaw County - FACEBOOK**

When on facebook visit the Washtenaw County MSUE page. We will be updating current problems in the landscape for our area with links to research and educational information. Updates will target insect and disease problems coming into the lab. Also we will be using the site to promote programs we are offering in the future.



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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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Cindy Fischer, Master Gardener Coordinator .....	734-222-3948
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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,  
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