



**MASTER  
GARDENER**  
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## Washtenaw County Master Gardener Newsletter

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### Interview with a Local Grower: John and Suzanne Smucker's Lamb Farm

By M.A. Engle (MG 2005)

“A good farmer is nothing more nor less than a handy man with a sense of humor,” wrote E. B. White. If it’s true, then John Smucker is on his way to becoming a very good farmer indeed. It has been something of an evolution, as all farm and garden adventures are. In 1987, John and Suzanne Smucker bought 250 acres of rolling pastures and woodlands in Sharon Township, outside of Manchester. At that time, John Smucker owned a company that built microwave communication components and the family lived in Grosse Pointe. Over time, they shifted gradually from city life to country life, creating along the way the rural haven they call Lamb Farm. They made the move to living in the country full time in 1998.

Both of the Smuckers are dedicated, hands-on farmers. In particular, they are serious about the organic aspect of their operation as I learned on an early February visit with John Smucker at Lamb Farm. He’s modest about their farming and says, “We’re neophytes,” but the carefully tended acres and ambitious projects tell a different story.

The Smuckers raise both produce and animals. “We sell organic beef, lamb, and chicken, and have laying hens,” says Smucker. The produce comes in summer from their 100 by 100-foot garden. Their roughly one-and-a-half-acre orchard is planted with apple, cherry, and peach trees, as well as grapes, blueberries, and raspberries.

“We’re very much into organic food,” says Smucker, and it was this interest in organic eating that was the impetus for many of their farm projects. Against a winter backdrop of snow-covered fields, the most visible undertaking is a greenhouse that measures 26 by 100 feet—certainly a measure of a good handy man. “I built it all myself,” says Smucker, “and it nearly killed me,” he adds, laughing.

The greenhouse uses a hoop-house design pioneered by Eliot Coleman, author of several gardening books including *The New Organic Farm* and *Four Season Harvest*. Coleman grows greens throughout the Maine winter. Now, in the greenhouse Smucker built last fall, he has succeeded in growing fresh greens throughout the Michigan winter following the principles set forth in Coleman’s *Winter Harvest Manual*. Smucker also recommends the work of Dr. John Biernbaum of Michigan State University.

I visited the greenhouse on one of the coldest days this winter, when two inches of fresh snow lay on the ground and the outdoor temperature hovered around 25 degrees with strong winds. Inside the greenhouse it was a different world. Without any additional heating unit, the hoop-house was a cozy 74 degrees at two o'clock in the afternoon. (Smucker did say that there had been light frost on some of the veggies early that morning, but the ground never freezes.) Condensation dripped from the ceiling. An array of greens poked out from neat mounded rows: spinach, endive, mache, mizuna, mustard greens, pak choi, cress, kale, and various types of chard. Their culinary herbs included sage, parsley, and cilantro. Some rows held Napoli carrots, others fat turnips. Various lettuces, red leaf, romaine, and arugula, looked as if they were about to take off again.

Even outdoors the Smuckers continue to harvest carrots and beets through the winter. The roots vegetables are bedded in under a foot of compost and thick straw mulch with an additional floating cover as frost protection. As I watched, Smucker turned the various layers over with a pitch fork and after a couple of turns came upon carrots, their bright orange color contrasting against the snow. It took a few more turns to come upon the beets. "The only trouble is remembering exactly where you planted them," he said.

Not far from the greenhouse, is evidence of the Smuckers' good sense of humus: mound after long, black mound of compost. Lamb Farm compost is produced to comply with the standards of the Organic Crop Improvement Association. The Smuckers are very careful in where they get their manure base, excluding any materials that could contain pesticide residue. A farm-scale windrow composter is used to turn the piles. The compost takes about six months to process. Lamb Farm sells the compost wholesale (25 yards or more) and can arrange delivery. Smaller quantities of their organic compost can be purchased through McLennan Landscape in Manchester (734-428-7005).

Off in the distance, I see a small herd of a dozen or so Hereford cattle. Lamb Farm also has about 60 ewes and they expect about 100 lambs in the spring; in addition they have several hundred free-range broilers and laying hens. The sheep and cattle are fed on a pasture system. Lamb Farm sells organically certified lamb and all natural beef, chicken, and eggs.

Although they are not set up for retail sales, they will do special orders for larger volumes. As they put it on their web site ([www.lambfarm.com](http://www.lambfarm.com)), "Lamb Farm is dedicated to preserving the land and raising animals as nature intended so that we can provide a small community of friends with the most nutritious food possible. We treat our animals with great care for they nurture and sustain us."

In generous country fashion, John Smucker sent me away from my visit with bags of just-picked produce from the greenhouse and a dozen fresh eggs.



## Etymology of Edibles

By Dorothea Coleman (MG1990)

This month I thought I'd enlighten you about some of the edibles that Joan Wysocki mentioned in January's presentation. (Email is wonderful; I got the list from her even though I'd been unable to attend.) The number of names that are just the Greek or Latin for the plant surprised me. Not a lot of mythology or anecdotes about early scientists this time.

*Amelanchier canadensis* – serviceberry – comes from the French *amelancier*, the name of a particular species in Provençal. *Canadensis* is for that country to our north, namely Canada.

*Arctium minus* – burdock – comes from the Greek for bear and smaller.

*Betula* – Birch – is simply the Latin name for this tree.

*Carya glabra*, *C. ovata* – Hickory – is the Greek for walnut tree. The original *Carya* was the daughter of the king of Laconia. Dionysus, the god of wine, fell in love with her but her sisters tried to keep them apart. He struck them with madness, spirited *Carya* off and, upon her death, turned her into a walnut tree. At that point, Artemis took the news to the king and commanded that he build a temple with wooden columns sculpted in the form of young women in her memory. *Glabra* means smooth-skinned and *ovata* means egg-shaped. I'm sure you're wondering why walnuts are not *Carya*. It's because Linnaeus gave walnuts their Latin name, *Juglans*, first. Hickories and walnuts resemble each other so he assigned the Greek name to the hickories.

*Diospyros virginiana* – Persimmon – derives its name from the Greek *dios*, divine, and *pyros*, wheat. The specific name refers to Virginia.

*Hemerocallis* – daylilies – comes from the Greek *hemera* meaning day and *kallos* meaning beauty. The flowers are beautiful for only one day.

*Monarda didyma* – bee balm – was named for Nicholas Monardes, a surgeon (not barber) of Seville. Dr. Monardes wrote a book on the plants of the New World in 1571, and bee balm is one of the plants he described (along with nasturtiums, coca and tobacco). *Didyma* means twins or in pairs which is how the leaves are arranged on the stem.

*Quercus* ssp. – acorns – is the Latin for oak tree.

*Rhus* ssp. – sumac – is the Greek name for one species within the genus, *Rhus typhina*, or staghorn sumac. *Typhina* means resembling cattails, *Typha*.

*Rubus idaeus* var. *strigosus* – red raspberry – is the Latin name for raspberries and other brambles. *Idaeus* means of Mount Ida in Greece and *strigosus* means stiff bristles.

*Rumex crispus* – yellow dock – is the Latin name for the plant. *Crispus* means curly.

*Sambucus* ssp. – elderflower – is the Latin name for the tree, which itself was named for a particular kind of harp, a sambuca, that was made from its wood.

*Taraxacum officinale* – dandelion – traces its roots from Latin to Arabic and, finally, Persian. *Officinale* means that it was sold in shops – **it is** edible, medicinal and has a variety of other uses. As an aside, dandelion comes from the French *dent de lion* meaning lion's tooth – for its leaves.

*Tilia americana* – linden – is the Latin name for the tree. You can figure out *Americana* easily enough.

*Typha latifolia* – cattails – is the Greek name for the plant. *Latifolia* means wide-leaved.

*Urtica dioica* - stinging nettles – is the Latin name for the plant. *Dioica* means that the female and male flowers are born on separate plants.



## THE AQUA THUMB

By Marilyn Eggers (MG 2001)

### SPRING POND MAINTENANCE

Seasonal changes bring different sets of challenges to ponds and water gardens. In Michigan, water gardeners are blessed (or is it cursed?) with the demands of four distinctly different seasons that affect their ponds and the fish that inhabit them. With proper maintenance techniques, pond owners can lessen the potentially negative impact that these seasonal changes have on the health of their goldfish and koi.

#### ***Spring Cleaning***

Emerging from winter hibernation to a more energetic life in the spring can be quite stressful on most pond fish. Bacteria and other pathogens that cause fish disease become active long before the fish's immune system wakes up in the spring. Water temperatures must be above 50 degrees Fahrenheit in order to trigger an immune response in koi and goldfish. Lower water temperatures result in pond fish becoming vulnerable to disease carrying bacteria and parasites.

Maintaining proper water quality helps to avoid problems with fish disease in the early spring. Leaves or other debris that have settled on the bottom of the pond during the winter months create conditions that can start an outbreak of infection and disease. In mid March remove all large debris from the bottom of the pond with a pond net. Attack any leftovers using my favorite pond cleaning device – the *No-Spill-Clean-and-Fill* by Python Products. Make sure to change about 20% of the pond water as you siphon this excess sludge from the bottom.

Purchase a water test kit and check the pH, ammonia, nitrite and nitrate levels in the pond. Note the expiration date on the reagents in the test kit and do not use them if they are out of date. You want accurate readings in all categories. Ammonia, nitrite and nitrate are by products of the nitrogen cycle. (The nitrogen cycle would be a great topic for another column - so stay tuned.) Excess fish waste and decaying organic matter cause these levels to rise and is often a major problem in ponds containing elevated fish stocking levels, i.e., too many fish for the size of the pond.

Even minute levels of ammonia and nitrite can cause gill damage in koi and goldfish. Levels of ammonia, nitrite and nitrate should be kept as low as possible.

In a healthy, well balanced pond, these levels are virtually non-existent. Remember that the toxicity levels of ammonia and nitrite are increased tenfold by a one integer rise in the water's pH level, so check that pH level frequently. Ideal pH levels should be between 6.8 and 7.8. Zeolite chips (trademark: *Ammo-Chips*) can be placed directly in the pond's filter box to reduce ammonia levels in an emergency.

Fluctuating springtime weather conditions are fairly common in our state. What does that mean? Michigan's weather is very often as dazed and confused as the weathercasters who try to predict it. Sudden changes in air temperature can cause significant changes in the water temperature of your pond or water garden. Water temperature has an impact on everything related to your pond, including the number of 'good bacteria' which colonize there. Water that suddenly becomes colder will reduce the efficiency of these good guys. As the good guys become a little lazy in the cooler water, nitrite levels will rise. This will put more stress on fish trying to cope with the rigors of coming out of hibernation.

Regular partial water changes, appropriate stocking levels, good aquatic husbandry practices and high water quality levels are essential to the continued good health of your fish during this time of seasonal transition.

#### ***Spring Feeding***

In early spring, when the pond water begins to warm to about 50 degrees Fahrenheit, fish will naturally start 'browsing and grazing' on plants and small aquatic insects. In this way they slowly reactivate their intestinal tracts. Remember, koi have no stomachs to hold food. All food passes through a very long digestive tract.

A fish's metabolic rate increases with the rise in water temperature. During this process, it is important to offer food that is easily digestible and which passes as quickly as possible out of the fish. Over feeding or feeding the wrong type of food at the wrong temperature can result in the food decomposing in the fish's gut. This can lead to severe illness or death.

Pond owners should take into consideration Michigan's fluctuating spring air temperatures and the influence that these temperatures have on their pond's water temperatures before beginning a spring feeding regimen.

Small ponds (under 24 inches deep) are much more vulnerable to seasonal temperature changes than larger and deeper ponds (over 36 inches deep). Water temperature variations of more than three to five degrees a day can be stabilized by adding a pond heater or placing a plastic tent over the pond in the evening to retain heat during the night.

The pond keeper should monitor daily changes in water temperature and adjust the feeding schedule accordingly. Small amounts of a high fiber/low protein based food may be offered when the water temperature consistently stays between 55 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit. A high fiber/ low protein diet does not necessarily mean a diet based on large amounts of carbohydrates. Human beings use carbohydrates for energy. Koi and goldfish do not digest carbohydrates like we do and they don't metabolize them into major sources of energy.

Many commercial fish food labels recommend that spring feeding begin at water temperatures around 45 degrees Fahrenheit. I've even seen one company recommend that feedings should start at 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid this 'advice' since fish do not need supplemental feedings at such low water temperatures.

High protein diets (summer food) can be given once the water temperature is consistently above 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep in mind that diets high in protein also contain nitrogen. When broken down by the fish's digestive system and released into the water, nitrogenous waste converts to ammonia. Excess ammonia levels cause an increase of algae growth in the pond. Water changes of 20 to 25 percent should be done once a week to help keep ammonia levels down. This is especially important in ponds that tend to exceed proper stocking levels...like a certain over-bred pond belonging to the AQUA THUMB. (Anybody building a pond this summer need a few good fish? I'll make you an offer you can't refuse!)

#### ***Other tips for a healthy pond...***

In late winter thoroughly clean all pond equipment. Take your pump apart and remove any dead leaves or debris that could cause the filter intake to clog when the pump is started in the spring. Flush all tubing with a garden hose to remove the build-up of excess dirt or sludge.

Purchase new filter media and consider recycling, rather than discarding, used media. Old filter pads can be cut up and used to line the bottom of large planting containers.

This reduces the amount of potting soil needed to fill the container and makes the container lighter and easier to move. The media also retains moisture, wicking excess water up toward drier soil. Plants easily root into the nutrient rich and porous structure of the media.

Move all hardy water lilies, marginal and oxygenating plants up to shelves near the water's edge. The added sunlight will encourage new spring growth at a time when your pond needs cover to reduce algae blooms. Forming a protective barrier around your pond, the potted plants can help discourage predatory animals like raccoons, or your neighbor's cat, from indulging in an all-you-can-eat fish buffet.

Consider buying new beneficial bacteria to jump-start your pond's biological filter system. Beneficial bacteria come in either dry or liquid forms. The liquid form is usually pre-mixed by your local pond supply store. It smells pretty awful and, unless you like annoying your neighbors, should be added to the pond as soon as you get it home. The dry, powdered form (*Aqua-Zyme*, Tetra Pond Products) can be used throughout the season. Both types will activate at water temperatures between 45 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. However, the optimum bacterial growth will only occur at water temperatures above 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The powdered form is generally a bit more convenient to use. Be sure to check the expiration date on the container since dry bacteria have a shelf life of only about a year and a half.

Place some of the new bacteria in a five gallon bucket, add some of your new filter media, fill the bucket with water and add an air stone to circulate the water. New bacteria need to be fed to become active. Just add a small amount of fish food to the mix or place a small goldfish in the bucket. This establishes the bacteria throughout the filter media and starts an active colony that can then be placed into your pond's filter system when the water temperature is right. The starter mix quickly colonizes throughout the pond and aids in reducing spring algae blooms. Additional dry bacteria can be added around the edge of the pond once the complete filter system has been up and running for a few days.

#### ***Closing thoughts***

I hope I haven't clogged up the free space on your spring to-do list with too many pond chores. When May arrives you will be able to sit back and enjoy the fruits of your water gardening labor - just in time to start thinking about double digging that new flower bed! And so we go ...

## Cobblestone Farm Fountain Garden Gets an 1860's Update

By Monica Milla (MG 2004)



Last June, the Cobblestone Farm fountain garden got a fresh, new look—for 1860, that is. Fellow Master Gardener Carole Buttrum and I planted the garden at the front of the house with flowers that would likely have been common in Michigan at that time.

To figure out what plants to include for a typical home flower garden of the 1860s, I spent a lot of time researching plant histories. I was surprised how little data exists on when plants were introduced to the U.S., and the information dwindles further for a specific state or county. Out of the 30 or so sources I tracked down, only about five provided dates at all, and they didn't always agree with one another. Plus, even when introduction dates were available, one can't assume the date of introduction coincides with when a certain plant might have been popular or in common use in a region.

Furthermore, most dates of introduction were from the East Coast, so I had to make approximations (for example, if a plant was popular in Massachusetts in, say, 1830, I assumed that by the 1860s it would have come west with the settlers to Michigan). The books I found most useful were *Restoring American Gardens: An Encyclopedia of Heirloom Ornamental Plants, 1640-1940* by Denise Wiles Adams; *For Every House a Garden: A Guide for Reproducing Period Gardens* by Rudy J. and Joy P. Favretti; and *The New Traditional Garden* by Michael Weishan. Adams' book includes plant introduction dates specific to the Great Lakes region.

The good thing is, gardeners love to "punt," and structural garden details were clearer. The original shape of the garden was a circle, and a circle was indeed a popular shape for gardens in Victorian times, especially if a fountain was at the center. If a fountain was not present, the common method of planting was to put the tallest flowers in the middle, medium flowers in the center, and the shortest flowers on the outside, all planted in a circular arrangement.

See <http://www.oldhousegardens.com/victorian.asp> for an example. Gardens of the time were symmetrically planted, and shapes were exact. The fountain garden was no longer perfectly round, but that was easy to remedy.

We simply tied one end of a piece of string around the fountain and the other to the handle of a trowel, and then walked around the circle, marking the soil with the trowel. Voila! A true circle.

A popular planting technique for circular gardens, especially herb gardens, was further dividing the circle into quadrants, generally by planting two rows of plants criss-crossing the center of the circle. At Cobblestone, blue salvia, which had been planted by other volunteers a few years prior, were already positioned in this fashion and divided the garden into four segments. I liked this look and the plants were mature and hardy, so we left them largely as is (though they did require slight repositioning to make the pattern more symmetrical).

The only other existing perennial was lavender, which was planted around half of the outer circle. We divided the lavender and placed the plants symmetrically in a ring near the middle of the circle. Based on the research, we then bought other plants to add to each quadrant, in arc shapes. When viewed as a whole, the arcs in each section form five concentric circles around the fountain. However, because we wanted to include many different kinds of plants and because half of the garden is sun and half is shade, each quadrant contains different plants, though the overall shape is symmetrical.

I selected varieties as close to the heirloom plants as possible, though many cultivars are no longer available. Some of the plants were ordered as seeds from Seed Savers Exchange, while others were bought at local nurseries. (Other mail order companies for heirloom seeds are Monticello and Old Sturbridge Village.) This fall, Old House Gardens generously donated 110 bulbs including some hyacinths, apricot-colored and fragrant, from 1927. While these are a bit too modern for the rest of the garden, we couldn't resist planting them anyway.

Common/Botanical Names	Intro to U.S.
Bee balm, <i>Monarda didyma</i>	1800
Bible leaf/Costmary, <i>Balsamita major</i>	1750
Canterbury bells, <i>Campanula medium</i>	Pre-1812
Cockscomb, <i>Celosia cristata</i>	Pre-1800
Columbine, <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	Pre-1750
Daffodil, <i>Narcissus</i> “Mrs. Langtry” §	Late 1800s
Foxglove, <i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	1797
German chamomile, <i>Matricaria recutita</i>	Pre-1850
Hyacinth, <i>Hyacinthus orientalis</i> “Gipsy Queen” §	1927*
Hyssop, <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>	1750
Lady’s mantle, <i>Alchemilla mollis</i>	1800
Lamb’s ears, <i>Stachys byzantina</i>	1850
Lavender, <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Pre-1800
Leopard lily, <i>Lilium paradalinum</i> §	1848{
Moon flower vine, <i>Ipomoea leptophylla</i>	Pre 1700{
Pot marigold, <i>Calendula officinalis</i>	1750
Sage, <i>Salvia officinalis</i> **	Pre-1776
Tansy, <i>Tancerum vulgare</i>	Pre-1700
Yarrow, <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Pre-1700

§ Donated by Old House Gardens

{ Native plant. pre-dates settlers. Date is common garden use.

◆ A bit too recent, but we couldn’t resist planting them.

\*\* Existing; no tags. May be recent cultivar *Salvia nemorosa* “May Night.”

A flower garden of this time generally also had a shrub border, usually boxwood. I decided not to add one because it would have obscured the flowers from passers-by and created unwanted shade.

After some hemming and hawing, we decided to use hay as mulch—I knew hay could be weedy, but I wanted to use something authentic to the time. Unfortunately, the hay did in fact turn out to be weedy. Very, very weedy. So in the fall, we added wood chips, provided free by the city, instead. While settlers did not have chipper/shredders and would not

have wasted their time chopping wood into such small pieces, I decided to trade off accuracy for ease of maintenance.

My favorite plant in the garden is bible leaf (sometimes also called costmary). It has small yellow flowers and large, sturdy leaves with a balsam-like fragrance. They were used in sachets and added to teas for a minty flavor. The leaves also served as bookmarks for Bible verses, and their scent is said to have revived sleepy churchgoers.

There were many other plants of the period that I chose not to include for various reasons: space restrictions, sun/shade/water requirements, and weediness. Some of my favorite plants of the time that are not in the garden include hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*, 1750; too tall in comparison to the other plants), love lies bleeding (*Amaranthus caudatus*, 1800; their drooping form is gorgeous but there is no platform on which to set them), and wild tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica*, 1800; too weedy).

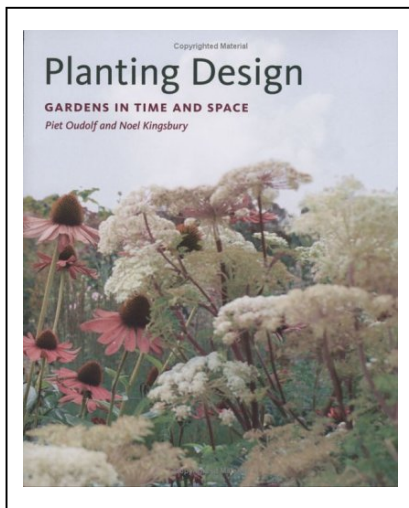
This year, we plan to add the following annuals, most of which I’ll grow from seed: Bells of Ireland, *Moluccella laevis*; Heliotrope, *Heliotropium arborescens peruvianum*, 1800; Johnny jump ups, *Viola tricolor*, 1767; Love in a mist, *Nigella damascene*, 1800; Nasturtium, *Tropaeolum majus*, 1800; [Clarkia](#), [Clarkia pulchella](#), Mid-1850s; Job’s Tears, *Coix lacryma-jobi*, 1806; Zinnia, *Zinnia peruviana*, 1804; Winter savory, *Satureja Montana*, 1650.

I’m continuing my research on Michigan garden flowers of the late 1800s through historic seed catalogs. The most promising are old catalogs from the seed company Ferry-Morse, which started in Detroit in 1856 as Gardner, Ferry & Church.

Its earliest catalog is from 1877, but it’s located at the Elizabeth Gedney Christensen Gardening Collection at Washington State University. Indeed, most of the early seed catalogs are not easy to obtain; some are available on eBay and sell for around \$150, while others are available only in archives or specialty libraries. For example, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. has a good seed catalog collection (selections of front and back covers are online at <http://www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/SeedNurseryCatalogs/>), as does the National Agricultural Library (NAL) in Beltsville, Maryland (<http://www.nal.usda.gov/speccoll/seedcatalogimagegallery.shtml>) and the University of Delaware Library (<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/hort/seeds.htm>).

## Book Review

by *Kathy Kamm* (MG 2002)



**Planting Design**  
**Gardening in Time and Space**  
**Piet Oudolf and Noel Kingsbury**  
**Timber Press 2005**  
**Hardcover \$34.95**  
**160 pages, 200 color photos**  
**ISBN 0-88192-740-6**

This book asserts that planting is at the core of gardening and is central to the art of landscape design. Oudolf and Kingsbury feel that garden design has become too much like interior design applied out of doors, with the focus on overnight transformation rather than the craft of growing and nurturing plants. They show the reader that the principles of plant design and management are the same, whatever the size of the plot, because the laws of nature and ecology apply to both large and small plots. Plants, whether native species or cultivars, should fit the specific environment in which they will be planted. They point out that humans are part of ecology and our needs, as gardeners, must be taken into account as well.

Time and space define all existence and planting a garden is only the beginning of an ongoing process. The authors are largely concerned with herbaceous perennials and consider them as nature's chief ornament for the garden. They also concentrate on perennials because they develop quickly in comparison to shrubs and trees and so are ideal for creative gardeners who like to experiment and make changes for better artistic effects.

However, most of these plants need a context for which woody plants are essential and in which annuals and bulbs fill in the gaps. The author's look at how woody and herbaceous plants relate to each other over time and maintain that the real test of a garden is how it looks in winter.

Chapters cover such topics as nature and gardens, ecology and habitats, planting in space, putting plants on show, the mechanics of planting design, planting in time, and practicalities and maintenance.

Planting in space can range from complete seclusion to a garden that is totally part of the landscape. Putting plants on show gives the reader examples of plants to look up at, look through, look over, or look down upon. There are several diagrams of plantings and there are lists of plants with a long season of interest, bold foliage plants, biennials for self-sowing, small trees and shrubs to combine with perennials as well as bulbs that are long lived and reliably repeat flower.

Piet Oudolf and Noel Kingsbury are considered part of the "New Wave" planting movement. Oudolf has the ability to translate his artistic vision into a dynamic combination of plants that create a composition that is constantly changing throughout the season. Kingsbury is the principal writer of the book and addresses the concerns of maintenance and durability. He has done extensive research in new approaches in planting with minimum maintenance. Their plantings are remarkable for their resilience and longevity and their designs may be seen in public parks around the world, including Chicago's Millennium Park.

## Gardening Books at the Ann Arbor District Library

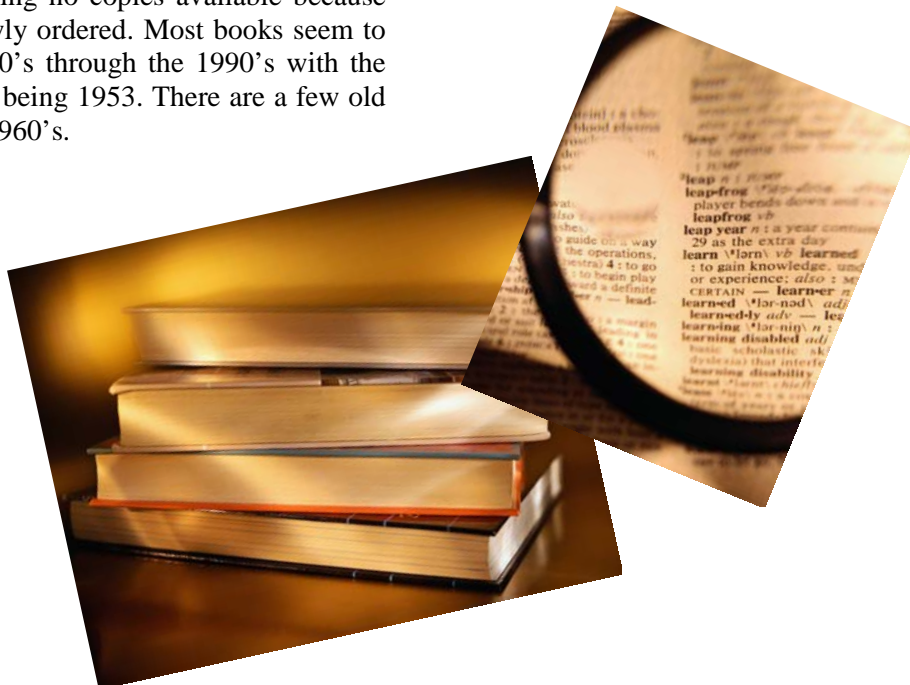
Reviewed by *Kathy Kamm* (MG 2002)

The AADL recently added an online catalog to its services and I have found browsing through that almost as interesting as visiting the main library downtown. The catalog lists a total of 1145 results under the general keyword “gardening”, with 1027 considered adult titles and the rest in the youth or teen category. The listing online tells you how many copies are available and whether they are to be found on the second floor of the main library and/or at one of the branches. There are several ways to search for books online and using narrower terms you find thirty more specific topics to refine your search. You can find listings for gardening dictionaries and encyclopedias (including software) as well as such topics as gardening in fiction, folklore and poetry; Bible plants for the garden; patio or roof gardening; vegetables; organic gardening and books on gardening for the older people and the disabled. This extensive selection of books makes using the library an inexpensive reference source.

On February 7<sup>th</sup> I found eight new books with 2006 dates of publication including *Armitage's Native Plants for North American Gardens* and *Month to Month Gardening in Michigan*. These eight books were listed as having no copies available because they had been newly ordered. Most books seem to date from the 1970's through the 1990's with the earliest date I saw being 1953. There are a few old classics from the 1960's.

Books may be checked out at the downtown library or at any branch. Books in circulation or on order (with a few exceptions) may be placed on hold in person at any branch, by phone or on the library web site. You can request holds on as many as five books per call or online. These generally check out for four weeks and can be renewed only if there are no holds waiting. Returns may be made to any branch. The phone number for the main library is (734) 662-8937. The web site for the library is [www.aadl.org](http://www.aadl.org).

Don't forget that there is a library at the Extension offices on Zeeb Road that is open to all Master Gardeners to stop in and read. These books cover many topics and are used by Master Gardeners working on the hotline. Two recent additions to the library are *Waterlilies and Lotuses* and *The Encyclopedia of Water Garden Plants* donated by Kathie Mahn in memory of her parents.



### DON'T GUESS...SOIL TEST



The MSU Extension sponsored event to encourage soil testing to determine fertilizer needs will again be hosted in Washtenaw County at local garden centers. Master Gardener

volunteers will be in six stores during Saturdays in April to promote the program, answer questions and help to package up soil for shipment to the MSU soils lab. This year the program will be held on April 1, April 8 and April 15 (all Saturdays) from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Stores include: Dexter Mill, Downtown Home and Garden, Farmer's Supply of Chelsea, Fresh Season's Market, Saline Town & Country, and the Willis Feed Mill. Volunteers are needed each Saturday in two time slots 9 to noon and noon to 3. If you can help with the program please call Bob Bricault at 734 222-3826. How important is this program? Over 75 percent of participants answering survey questions stated that their fertilizer practices changed due to the information obtained in the soil test report.

### Funds Available for Community Gardening Projects



The Washtenaw County Master Gardener Alumni Association is soliciting applications from non-profit community organizations for funds to be used to support horticultural education and/or horticultural therapy. Grants up to

\$250 are available for gardening projects in Washtenaw County.

Complete information and application forms are at <http://extension.ewashtenaw.org>, or by contacting Cindy Fischer, Master Gardener Coordinator at 734-222-3948. Applications must be completed and returned to the Washtenaw County MSU Extension office by March 24.

### Honeybee Swarms

*Howard Russell & Jackie Smith, Diagnostic Services*

Many calls to the diagnostic labs at the MSU Extension in Lansing as the weather becomes warmer concern honeybee swarms. These swarms are a good thing since this is the way wild honeybees reproduce to form new colonies. They usually occur late spring and early summer; often a few weeks after nectar and pollen sources become abundant.

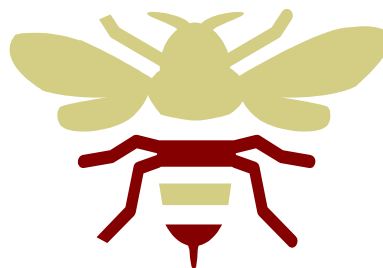
Swarming occurs within an established colony after a great increase in egg laying, resulting in a population explosion of young bees. The crowded condition, a result of all these new bees, triggers the swarming behavior. Swarming bees mass at the entrance to a colony and scout or searcher bees are dispatched to look for new nesting sites. Meanwhile the swarms gorge themselves with honey to prepare for the trip.

Searchers initiate the swarm on a warm, calm and sunny day. They perform a special dance to incite 20 to 30 thousand bees to swarm and leave. A few minutes after leaving the colony, the old queen and the swarm cluster on a nearby tree, bush or shrub where there is diminished light. The searcher bees return and perform another special dance to provide the direction and distance to potential nesting sites. The better the nesting place, the more lively the dance. After several trips to and from potential nesting sites they agree on the best site and start a "whir" dance. The swarming bees get in a real frenzy and follow the searchers to their new home.

The swarm is a temporary phenomenon and will go away in two or three days. Don't panic. Swarming bees are fairly docile with no home to defend and are not likely to sting the casual observer.

Please don't spray with insecticide. We need honeybees.

*This is an excerpt from an article appearing in the June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005 Crop Advisory Team newsletter.*



### Alumni Association News

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

The Alumni Association meetings are on the third Tuesday of the month starting at 7 p.m. in the basement classroom of the County building at 705 N. Zeeb Rd. Please note the earlier starting time of 6:30 p.m. for the April meeting. Educational programs in the March and May meetings count as educational credit toward recertification.

March 21 - Gardening for Your Feline Friends, Monica Milla - Instructor

April 18, 6:30 p.m., Annual pot luck dinner, business meeting and officer elections.

May 16 - Walk the West Side of Town Tour, Scott Kunst - Instructor & Guide

The election of President and Secretary for two-year terms of office will occur at the April Annual Business Meeting. If you would like to run for office or would like to nominate someone, please contact Bob Bricault at 222-3826 or notify the nominating committee: Doug Dick, David Read or Bob Bricault at the association meetings. If you are not part of the Alumni Association, you can join by filling out the form included in this newsletter.



### *Bob's Corner*

I always hesitate to write about guidelines for the Master Gardener program concerning volunteer and educational hours, because it ends up creating more questions than it does answering questions. I do so anyways since any dialogue that is created will hopefully lead to a better understanding of these requirements.

Actually, I am writing specifically about hours for recertification. Remember these are hours necessary to stay active as a Master Gardener after you have achieved the original certification as a Michigan Master Gardener. The recertification process starts a year after taking the course. To recertify and remain an "Active Master Gardener" you will need a minimum of 15 volunteer hours each year in MSU approved activities. You also need five hours of additional horticulture education (where you are trained through an educational program). The State Office for the Master Gardener program has set this standard to keep Master Gardeners current with their knowledge as they provide information back to the community. The State MG Office offers educational programs such as the Summer Conference to "Active" Master Gardeners.

When volunteering to recertify you can get your hours by working in activities that help to educate others in the area of horticulture or in very closely related fields, such as natural resources. You can also choose to pursue hours that are more community service oriented. Of course we are always glad to have your help with the hotline. Try to keep your hours focused on group functions as opposed to helping your next door neighbor. The whole idea is to reach out to the community. There is no shortage of activities available. Contact our MG Coordinator, Cindy Fischer at 222-3948 to check on opportunities.

The five educational hours needed for recertification are hours where you are receiving training. MSU sponsored events are given full credit, meaning that for every hour of horticulture education received, one hour is allowed. Here in Washtenaw County, we are blessed with many great opportunities for horticultural training.

Locally, programs that are allowed full credit for horticulture and natural resource education are classes offered through U of M – Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum, Hidden Lake Gardens, Community College programs and programs through MSU Extension and the Washtenaw County Master Gardener Association. All other programs are given half credit, where each hour of education is given ½ hour in the volunteer system. This has been the state policy since the start of a state wide Master Gardener program in 1985. Credit is not given for watching the gardening channel, reading books or magazines and walking through gardens. Docent guided tours through a conservatory or arboretum provides educational experience and ½ credit is allowed for this. When entering your hours on-line you no longer have to check full or half credit. Credit designation will be decided as hours are reviewed based the above criteria.

When entering your hours please provide information on who is sponsoring the class. This will keep us from sending e-mails or making phone calls to try and determine which group is hosting the program. All your hours are important and we are proud of the work that all of you provide for the community. Your efforts are making a difference in the community and this is evidenced through surveys that we send out. If you are uncertain about an activity or educational experience or have questions on entering hours please be sure to contact Cindy Fischer, Washtenaw County MG Coordinator at 222-3948. Thanks for all you efforts!

## March - April Calendar

### MATTHAEI BOTANICAL GARDENS AND NICHOLS ARBORETUM

1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor 734-998-7061

Call for cost information and to register for classes:

<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/mbgna/mbgna.education>

#### CLASSES

##### Draw It! Don't Squish It!

March 8, 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12  
Wednesdays, 6:30 – 9:30 pm

##### Bonsai and Penjing

March 8, 15, 22, 29, Wednesdays, 6 – 9 pm  
and March 25, Saturday, 9 am – noon

##### Composting: Turn Your Waste into Watermelons

March 21 and 28, Tuesdays at Nichols  
Arboretum, 6:30 – 8 pm

##### Plant Identification

March 22, 29 and April 5, Wednesdays,

9 – 11 am **Ornamental Grasses**

March 23, Section I: Thursday,  
6:30 – 8:30 pm

March 25, Section II: Saturday,  
10 am – noon

##### Gardening with Small Perennials: Rock Gardens, Raised Beds and other Micro-Habitats

April 6, 13, 20, Thursdays, 7 – 9 pm and  
April 22, Saturday, 9 am - noon

#### MEETINGS

##### Ann Arbor Bonsai Society Meeting

March 22, April 26, Wednesday, 7 – 10 pm

##### Ann Arbor Garden Club

March 8, Wednesday, 7:00 – 9:30 pm  
Green Fingers – Hampton Court Palace  
Flower and Garden Show

April 8, Saturday, 12 – 2:30 pm (luncheon  
and program

The Art of Bonsai

##### Ann Arbor Orchid Society Meeting

April 23, Sunday, 2 – 4 pm

##### Audubon Society Meeting

March 15, April 19, Wednesday, 7:30 – 9 pm

To be announced - [http://  
www.washtenawaudubon.org/](http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/)

##### Friends Evening Herb Study Group Meeting

March 6, April 3, Monday, 7 – 9 pm

##### Friends Herb Study Group Meeting

March 20, Monday, Potluck at 12 pm;

Program at 1 pm

Report on Michigan Herb Association State

Meeting Friends Herb Study Group Meeting

April 17, Monday, 11:30 am, Field Trip and

Brown Bag Lunch

Penzey's Spice Store in Beverly Hills

**Huron Valley Rose Society Meeting**

March 12, April 9, Sunday, 2 – 4 pm

**Great Lakes Judging Meeting**

March 18, Saturday, 12 – 4:30 pm  
March 19, Sunday, 10 am – 4:30 pm  
Meets in conjunction with Ann Arbor Orchid Society Festival  
April 15, Saturday, Lecture at 11 am;  
Judging 1 – 4 pm

**Michigan Botanical Club Meeting**

March 20, Monday, 7:45 – 9:30 pm  
Asa Gray and the University of Michigan  
April 17, Monday, 7:45 – 9:30 pm  
The New Humbug Preserve: Plans for the Future

**Wild Ones Meeting**

March 8, April 12, Wednesday, 7 – 9 pm

**Sierra Club Meeting**

March 21, Tuesday, 7:30 – 9:30 pm  
Aliens Among Us: Invasive Species and the Future of the Great Lakes

**Sierra Club Meeting**

April 18, Tuesday, 7:30 – 9:30 pm  
To be announced

**Events**

**Ann Arbor Orchid Society Festival**

March 18, Saturday, 12 – 4:30 pm  
March 19, Sunday, 10 am – 4:30 pm  
Special Photographer's Hour from 9 – 10 am

**Michigan State African Violet Society Show and Sale**

April 15, Saturday, 10:00 am – 4:30 pm  
April 16, Sunday, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

**Earth Day Festival**

April 22, Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm

**26<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Plant Sale**

May 5, Friday, 3 – 7 pm, Members Only – you can join at the door  
May 6 and 7, Saturday and Sunday, 9 am – 4:30 pm

**Volunteer Opportunities**

**Arboretum Restoration Workday**

March 11, April 8, Saturday, 9 am – 12 pm

**Ecosystem Restoration Workday at the Gardens**

March 25, April 22, Saturday, 9 am – 12 pm  
Join staff and other volunteers in restoration projects at each location. Call 734-647-7600 for details or check the website <http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/mbgna/events>

**HIDDEN LAKE GARDENS**

M-50, Tipton 517-431-2060  
Call for costs and to register for classes.

**Designing a Spiritual Landscape**

February 18, 10 am - 12 pm

**Heirloom Bulbs: Unique Endangered, Amazing**

February 25, 10 am - 11:30 pm

**The Sweet History of Chocolate**

February 25, 2 - 4 pm

**Pruning Fundamentals**

March 18, 1:30 - 4:30 pm

**Mosaic Stepping Stones**

March 25, 9 am - 12 pm

**Living on the Edge: Stewardship Practices for Shoreline Property Owners**

April 10, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

**Water Features & Water Garden Container Workshop**

April 22, 10 am - 12 pm

**Botanical Soaps**

April 22, 1 pm - 3 pm

**Arbor Day Celebration**

April 29, 10 am - 12 pm

**Hidden Lake Gardens Plant Sale**

May 13, 10 am – 2 pm

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## PROJECT GROW

### Heirloom Vegetables

March 11

Saturday, 10 -11:30 am

Instructor: Royer Held

Location: Pioneer High School, Eplex 1

Register through Ann Arbor Schools' Rec and Ed department, by calling

994-2300 x53203

### Project Grow's Heirloom Seed Swap

March 18

Saturday, 10 am – 12 pm at the Leslie Science Center

Bring heirloom vegetable seeds to swap or pick up a few of ours at the first Heirloom Seed Swap! Call 734-996-3169 with any questions about this event.

### Potato Seeds, seed potatoes and sweet potato slips: growing sweet potatoes and Bolivian Potatoes in Michigan

March 25

Saturday, 10 -11:30am

Instructor: Royer Held

Location: Leslie Science Center Nature House, 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor. Register by calling the People's Food Coop office, 994-4589

### From Seed to Shining Seed

April 8

Saturday, 10 -11:30 am

Basic seed saving and storing techniques will be covered.

Instructor: Royer Held & Tom Scheper

Location: Pioneer High School, Eplex 1.

Register through Ann Arbor Schools' Rec and Ed department, by calling

994-2300 x52302

### Project Grow Garden Plot Applications

Project Grow is now accepting plot applications for 2006 community garden plots. Project Grow has 10 community garden plots around the Ann Arbor area and a Discovery Garden for children and seniors at the Leslie Science Center and County Farm Park. Applications are on line at [projectgrowgardens.org](http://projectgrowgardens.org) or you can pick up the Project Grow winter newsletter which contains the application, around town at the county extension office, Downtown Home and Garden, Whole Foods, city hall, People's Food Co-op, Ann Arbor Library and at the Leslie Science Center. Call 734-996-3169 with any questions about the registration process.



**Master Gardener Alumni Association of Washtenaw County  
Membership Enrollment 2005—2006**

**(Please Print Clearly)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MG Year completion \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: MI Zip \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**New items:**

**Gardening interests:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please Circle: Yes / No** to include personal information in Alumni Membership Directory

**Mail enrollment with a check for \$20 dues, payable to:**

**Master Gardener Alumni Association or MGAA  
c/o David Read, Treasurer  
769 Merlin Way  
Dexter, MI 48130**

6960

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

**TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL ENCLOSED  
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**



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

Washtenaw County MSU Extension.....	734-997-1678
Fax.....	734-222-3990
Bob Bricault, Horticulture Agent.....	734-222-3826
Cindy Fischer, Master Gardener Coordinator .....	734-222-3948
Garden Hotline.....	734-997-1819
E-mail:.....	washtena@msue.msu.edu
County website:.....	www.eWashtenaw.org
State website:.....	web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener

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

*Robert J. Bricault, Jr.*

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

**AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

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