



Master Gardener News

A monthly publication of the St. Louis Master Gardeners

February 2005

Calendar of Events

February 16th – 1-3 p.m. Landscape Design Class, Part 1

March 5th – 8-4 p.m. Spring 2005 St. Louis Garden Symposium

March 10-13th– Home & Garden Show

March 16th – 1-3 p.m. Landscape Design Class, Part 2

March 19th – Spring Dig Festival
9 – 1 p.m. Ridgway Center

April 20th – Bulb Garden Class

A Word from the Editor, by Stacy Rolfe

'twas a month before
springtime and all through
my head
Were visions of catalogs
sprouting up on my bed
My flowers still sleeping
through the cold winter's
night
While roots down below
couldn't wait to see light

No contest for me this
year will there be
I'll just be content with the
dirt on my knee

Yes springtime is coming it
soon will be here
Good gardening to all and
please, stay away deer!



What's Inside

Help Wanted!

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St. Louis Garden Symposium

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My yard how it looked so
tired and worn
Couldn't wait for the
warmth to make it reborn
The weeds how I'd pull and
vow to keep out
Would last til the heat
would tire me out

And yet as I dreamed of a
yard soon transformed
I remembered the hail how
its ruins when it stormed



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN



Missouri Master Gardener
University Outreach & Extension

To provide research-based horticultural information to the public for community service and gardening pleasure.



2005 MBG Garden Tour



The Missouri Botanical Garden Tour takes place only once every three years. June 2005 is the next time that nine spectacular private gardens will be showcased for the general public to view. Master Gardeners have been invited to participate with the tour and help answer questions to the expected 1,200 visitors to these gardens.

The public tour will be June 12th and shifts are from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. or 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. All volunteers will be treated to a private tour on June 9th. Please contact Sally Cohn, MG at 314.727.6327 for further information or to schedule your volunteer times.

St. Louis Home & Garden Show



Still looking for more volunteers! The St. Louis Home and Garden Show is March 10-13th and we are looking for Master Gardeners to staff the booth at various times throughout the 4-day show, Thursday – Sunday, March 10th – 13th, 2005. This is a good chance to share your knowledge with the general public and get some action! Call Phil at 314.577.9441 to discuss your time availability. We need 40 people to get the job done!

St. Louis University on the Look Out...



St. Louis University is looking for 2 volunteers to work with their "Gardens to Tables" project. This ambitious program aims to incorporate

the importance of diet and nutrition and the role gardening plays with that, in an effort to help overcome childhood obesity. Sigel Elementary has been designated as the elementary school to receive 16 raised beds for use with this project. Interested candidates will play a vital role in the education, planting and maintenance of this worthwhile effort. Interested candidates should contact Melissa Wade at 314.977.8523 or email at wademe@slu.edu

Hop on Board the Hugely Successful Pots to Planks Program...



The Kemper Center will once again collect horticultural plastic pots and trays, in 2005 at the Monsanto Center. This year, the collection will extend for six successive weekends starting May 21 & 22 through June 25 & 26. Our goal for this year is to collect and process *60,000 pounds* which is 33% over last year's goal. Lumber and raised bed sales were excellent in the fall of 2004 and we expect it



to continue through the spring of 2005. Nurseries and garden centers will be encouraged to participate spurred on by the projected acquisition of a shredder onsite to handle large containers and bundles.

Get on board the "Pots to Planks" program by volunteering for a work shift on one or more of the weekend days. Shifts are 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and 12:30 – 4 p.m. Saturday & Sunday. We need five people per shift and the hours can be applied to your Master Gardener annual obligation. Please call Phil Egart to sign up at 314.577.9441. This is a unique program in the US and has received substantial support from the Solid Waste Management District and the Departments of Natural Resources as well as the Missouri Environmental Improvement and Energy Resource Authority.



Arbor Day is April 1st - We Need Your Help...

The Kemper Center celebrates this state recognized day by giving away saplings to the first 300 people that come to the Kemper Center on April 1st. We purchase trees from the Department of Conservation that are raised in their nursery. This year we will be providing Sour gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), a medium-sized tree with wonderful red fall color: Red oak (*Quercus rubra*), also a medium sized, showing moderate to fast growth on well-drained, full sun sites and Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), one of our few needled evergreens that can withstand cold and heat; generally grows 40-60 feet tall with no serious insect or disease problems.

Steve Cline needs help bundling the saplings for distribution on Thursday morning, March 31st at 9:00 a.m. Please call Steve at 314.577.9561 to sign up.

The Flora Conservancy...one of the crowning "Jewels" of Forest Park...



Interested in volunteer work with the Flora Conservancy but, not quite sure what it is? Just ask any one of these Master Gardeners what it's like to volunteer in one of the largest parks in the United States.

Mary Jo Anderson
Jack Breier
Jim Hoefener
Barb Hilton
Linda Kalicak
Jennifer Loyett
Tom Prebil
Van Spurgeon
Ron Stevens
Jan Thomas
Karen Koehneman
Carol Wellman
Fred Rauch
Marlene Rush
Dan Llitsch
Dennis Stroup
Pam Seyer
Susan Uchitelle
Johan Jackson
Pamela Fournier
Dale Ewalt
Linda Stuckmeyer (2005)
Judy LaBarbera

Look for more information in the March newsletter about volunteer opportunities with the Flora Conservancy.





Q&A with John Stephens



Q: Can I save some time and money by using seed rather than transplants to plant a large, shaded area in English ivy?

A: The answer to this question is not straightforward since English ivy seed is not a commodity. English ivy has been classified as a noxious weed in several states, thus, its use is discouraged, a negative for potential seed producers. You could harvest seed, but its collection and processing are tedious and time consuming. Your best bet is probably to gather cuttings from beds grown by your gardening friends and start from there.



Q: Tell me again, "What is the function of winter mulch?"

A: Winter mulches conserve moisture and help to control the heaving of frozen soils when subjected to rapid increases in air temperatures. Repeated exposure to these conditions can cause severe damage to roots of displaced plants. Mulching is especially important in the St. Louis area because our winter temperature patterns are so volatile.



Q: Where can I find sources of dwarf cultivars of Amur privet?

A: These are not common. A cursory search of the Internet offered no leads, although alternatives were suggested. These proved, on further examination, to be less winter hardy than the species you asked about, *Ligustrum amurense*. Be sure to check this characteristic before purchasing any so-called dwarfs.



Q: What kinds of tree leaves are especially beneficial to the soil as they decay?

A: All tree leaves impart organic matter and small amounts of plant nutrients to the soil as they decay. There are lots of folk lore about the pros and cons of using some leaves and not others, but this has not been substantiated on serious study. Organic matter is a key in determining the tilth of soils in your garden.



Q: Is it true that deer do not eat chrysanthemums?

A: Not true! They ate the flowers off mine right in broad daylight.

Q: How would fireplace ashes work as a winter amendment for the soil around my blueberry bushes?



A: This is almost the worst thing that could be proposed for your bushes. Wood ashes are very strongly alkaline and will raise the soil pH dramatically, which will adversely affect the health and vigor of your plants. Blueberries grow best in sunny, well-draining soil with pH of 5.0 to 5.5. Put those wood ashes in your trash.





Bird Bath

By
Connie Alwood

If you feed birds, you might have seen a hawk in your garden and wondered what kind it was. Chances are it was a Cooper's or Sharp-shinned hawk. By feeding the small birds, you are inadvertently inviting a hawk to join the buffet. Only the hawk is more interested in eating a bird for dinner. Seed and suet are not to his taste. Birds are his primary food.

Usually the drama starts with the sparrows and the goldfinches becoming suddenly quiet. Then in one fell swoop, the birds rush for cover. Sometimes that's a mistake. If that woodpecker had frozen on the suet, it might have lived, for in one quick flash the hawk is on him. What once was a bucolic scene from Currier and Ives has now become a grisly reality complete with bloody talons and scattered feathers.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk, which only winters here, is a miniature version of the Cooper's Hawk, a year round resident. The problem of trying to identify the two species is complicated, perplexing even experienced birders. Nevertheless, these two accepters (Latin for birds of prey) are woodland birds with long tails

and short, broad wings. Watching one fly at full speed through a dense wooded area is like watching a skier maneuver a complicated slalom.

Birders love to see these fearless hawks who can both soar on thermals or dash through urban backyards. Of course, homeowners who provide a repast for songbirds might not be so happy to witness a murder at the dinner table.



Cooper's Hawk



Book Review

By
Holly Parks

Gardening with Clematis, Design & Cultivation, demonstrates the author's love affair with clematis. For Linda Beutler every aspect of the garden is a candidate for planting one or more, preferably

more, clematis: with other clematis, with roses, on or around woody shrubs and trees, interspersed with ground covers, over and under herbaceous perennials, combined with annuals or even in the vegetable garden! While the book discusses some general aspects of clematis such as whether they have vertical or horizontal growth habit, how they might be pruned as well as general care and feeding, most of the text is a long love poem to clematis in combination with other plants. In the author's opinion there is nothing that clematis cannot do.

In general Ms. Beutler suggests that you plant clematis with other plants in combinations where the clematis blooms at the same time to complement the companion plant, such as a rose. The alternative is to use the companion plant as a support system, with the clematis blooms filling in the blank spaces after the companion has finished bloom – for example planting clematis to climb on a rhododendron. She rhapsodizes at length on specific clematis species with specific companion plants, suggesting color combinations, bloom timing, and coordinating the clematis growth habit with the companion plant strength to function as a trellis.

The book also includes a chapter devoted to herbaceous clematis as well as a chapter on growing clematis in containers. Using containers can solve problems unique to certain clematis such as requiring a different pH level or special drainage.



However, most clematis develop large root systems which make them unsuitable to maintenance in a container.

Gardening with Clematis, Design & Cultivation by Linda Beutler is a 300 page hardcover published by Timber Press, Inc. It is available for \$34.95 at Walden Books in West County Shopping Center.



Advisory Board Minutes January 25, 2005

Click here

<http://outreach.missouri.edu/stlo/uismg/minutes/minutes.htm>



Pruning Hydrangeas

By

Jan Gowen, MG

Hydrangeas are classic garden shrubs prized for their beauty, durability and diversity of flower

color – from pink to purple and blue to white. These deciduous, medium to large shrubs provide color from midsummer to autumn when few other plants are in bloom. There are many different types of hydrangeas; many require different methods of pruning. It is important to know the identity of the hydrangea in the landscape so the proper pruning technique can be implemented.

***Hydrangea macrophylla* – Mophead or Lacecap Hydrangea**
Zone (5)6-9 and

Hydrangea serrata Zone (5)6-7

This is a commonly grown hydrangea with either large globe-shaped flowers (mophead) or flattened heads of tiny fertile flowers surrounded by a ring of larger, sterile, showy sepals (lacecap). It is frequently forced by florists and sold as an indoor pot plant during the spring season. Once moved outdoors, flower color is dependent upon the availability of aluminum in the soil and the pH of the soil in which it is grown: blue if acid; pink if alkaline. There are also several white flowered cultivars. Pruning can be accomplished at two different times: late summer or early spring. Late summer is more widely practiced since this type flowers only from the end buds of upright or lateral shoots produced during late summer and fall of the previous season.

Prune as soon as the flowers have faded and strong shoots are developing from the lower parts of the stems and crown.

Remove at the base some of the weaker shoots that are both old and new. Always try to keep several stems of old productive wood, with a sufficient number of stout new stems that will flower the following season. Early spring pruning (March), although acceptable, may result in the sacrificing of bloom for that growing season. This is a topic of debate among experts. Many suggest to perform only deadheading (removal just below the flower) or clean-up (removal of shoots damaged by winter or late spring frosts) pruning at this time, especially when growing this species in colder zones. Pruning this species too late in the fall (September) is harmful. New growth, both vegetative and reproductive, will not develop proper maturity which increases its vulnerability to winter dieback.

***Hydrangea arborescens* –**

Smooth Hydrangea Zone 4-7(8)
This hydrangea is grown for its huge white blooms which appear in profusion in spring and summer. Many gardeners grow this species in hedges. It can be pruned to the ground line each winter or early spring because it flowers abundantly on new growth, and is frequently killed back during winter. If a larger shrub is desired (3+feet) and/or it is not killed back over the winter, prune less severely. Create a woody framework by removing some branches to the ground; cut others back at varying heights from 1 to 3 feet.



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***Hydrangea paniculata* – Panicle Hydrangea** Zone 4-8

This is a commonly planted hydrangea because of its massive displays of large, white, panicle-shaped flowers in mid to late-summer. They gradually turn pink and remain on the plant in a semi-dried condition long after the leaves have fallen. Pruning involves the removal of dead flowers, if unattractive, and annual corrective pruning of vigorous shoots. This species responds very well to annual pruning by producing much larger flower heads. **Thin and/or cut back the previous season's growth in late winter or early spring, since flower clusters occur on newly developing branches.** Without regular pruning, this hydrangea can rapidly become overgrown and out of scale in the landscape. It can, however, be developed into a single or multi-stemmed tree form. It is best to promote a strong woody framework when these plants are young. Cut back all weak branches leaving 3 or 4 of the strongest measuring at about 10-24 inches. When established, prune out all lifeless stubs and prune back all the shoots to their lowest pair of healthy buds above the woody framework.

***Hydrangea quercifolia* – Oakleaf Hydrangea** Zone 5-9

This plant is grown primarily for its oak leaf shaped foliage, excellent fall color, attractive flowers, and interesting winter bark. It is ideally suited to a lightly shaded or protected

location, and if grown in an exposed site, it is subject to some winter dieback. Prune out any dead wood in early spring. Cut back just to the point of injury and periodically remove a few of the oldest stems to the base to stimulate new growth and create a more dense habit. **Flowers develop on old wood so any additional pruning (only minimal) should take place after the flowers are spent.**

***Hydrangea anomala subsp. petiolaris* – Climbing Hydrangea** Zone 4-7(8)

This is a desirable mid-summer flowering woody vine that attaches itself by aerial roots to brick, masonry, or wood. **Flowers appear on the previous year's lateral (side) shoots.** As young plants, tie shoots to their support structure until they form aerial roots. **Once established pruning should be kept to a minimum.** If certain shoots have grown out of bounds, reduce their length along with any outward growing laterals to allow more sunlight into the canopy. To promote good flowering, deadhead all shoots that have flowered to a healthy bud.

References:

Hydrangeas for American Gardens (2004), M. A. Dirr. Timber Press, Inc., Portland, OR.

Encyclopedia of Hydrangeas (2004), C. J. van Gelderen, D. M. van Gelderen. Timber Press, Inc., Portland, OR.

Pruning and Training (1996), C. Brickell, D. Joyce. DK

Publishing, Inc., New York, NY.

"Pruning Hydrangeas" – Horticulture Leaflets Online, Cornell Cooperative Extension. www.cce.cornell.edu/suffolk/grownet/tree-shrub-maintenance/hydrang.html





Tip of the Month...

Put your houseplants in the bathtub and treat them to a gentle shower.

St. Louis Master Gardeners Kemper Center for Home Gardening

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www.mobot.org

We would love to have Master Gardeners submit articles for Master Gardener News. Remember that articles are due no later than the 10th of the month. Please send copies to Steve Cline and Stacy Rolfe (drolfe01@earthlink.net). Letters may be edited for length or content.

Master Gardener News is published monthly for St. Louis Master Gardeners. Stacy Rolfe serves as Editor, assisted by Carol Huston (proofreader), and contributors whose bylines appear in each issue.



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