



Master Gardener News

A monthly publication of the St. Louis Master Gardeners

March 2005

Calendar of Events

March 10th – 13th Home & Garden Show

March 16th – Landscape Design Part 2 Kemper Classroom 1 p.m.-3 p.m.

March 19th – Spring Dig Festival 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Ridgway Center

March 29th – Advisory Committee Meeting 1-3p.m. EECC Conference Room



What's Inside

Help Wanted!

Q&A

Get the dirt on the Spring Dig

That was a bird?

A book of beautiful photos

Get to Know Flora Conservancy

A little back yard poetry

A Word from the Editor, by Stacy Rolfe

For those of us familiar with the late night television routines, I'd like to 'steal' if I may, from one particular talk show host, David Letterman, and propose my own top 10 countdowns. So, here goes...

Top 10 Reasons why I Love the Spring...

10. My brain is on HGTV overload

9. I love the feeling of the sun on my back

8. My hair is so dry from being indoors it's beginning to age me

7. New growth means a

fresh start

6. My toes need a little grass time

5. Color makes my yard look so much better

4. Sidewalk chalk is always better without gloves on

3. Everyone just seems happier

2. My fingernails have been looking far too clean

And the number 1 reason why I love the spring is...

1. If I eat one more ding dong I'm going to explode!



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN



Missouri Master Gardener
University Outreach & Extension

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



It's not too late to jump on the band wagon to beautify downtown St. Louis!

If you took part with the Washington Avenue project last spring potting planters then, you may be interested in volunteering this spring with an even more ambitious project – creating beautiful beds in the medians on Tucker Avenue and Market Street. The city of St. Louis, with the blessings of Mayor Slay, have joined forces with Gateway Greening, Bill Ruppert and several downtown area developers to make a significant and beautiful impact on the way our city looks.

Initial plans are underway and volunteers are needed to coordinate the efforts to prepare the soil, installation and design elements. This is a unique opportunity to get involved in what is truly the first step in

making downtown St. Louis reclaim its beauty that has dimmed over the past years. Interested volunteers should contact Gwenne Hayes-Stewart at 314. 577.9484

Shriners Hospital for Children Needs You!

Order your
Shriners Missouri
Vehicle License Plate



Shriners Hospital is looking to area Master Gardeners to help get their flower beds in shape! A new program, headed by Van Spurgeon and Jim Hoefener, is being designed to clean up, clear out and beautify the grounds of the Hospital. *Lots* of new plants will be needed to fill in the beds – however, *Shriners has no budget to devote to buying plants.* So...here's an easy way to help out. When you're dividing your plants this spring, let Jim or Van know what you have – they just might be able to use it! A comprehensive plan has been drawn up on how to fill the beds. Here's a "wish list" of plants their hoping to receive from you:
Hosta – all varieties
Wood Ferns – or other hardy

fern species
Hakonechloa –Japanese Forest Grass
Salvia – blue
Coreopsis - Tickseed
Gaura – 'Scarlet' or 'Pink Fountain'
Day Lily – 'Stella d'Oro'
Pennisetum, Fountain Grass
Miscanthus – Japanese silver grass and compact varieties
Artemisia – Russian Sage and other lower varieties and species
Hyssop – 'Salmon Pink'
Echinacea – Conflower, pink, rose
Dicentra – Bleeding Heart
Any perennials – not to exceed 4' height, drought tolerant.
If you have any of the plants in need, please contact Jim at 314.838.0464 or Van at 314.726.5435 or email Van at vdssms@sbcglobal.net

Dig in the Woodland



If you like woodland gardens, here's an opportunity to support Gateway Greening's Great Perennial Divide (GPD) while enjoying a Saturday morning in the woodland wildflower garden at Shaw Nature Reserve.

Master Gardeners are invited to join members of Wild Ones – Natural Landscapers as we dig woodland plants for the divide and Gateway Greening's fund-raising sale.



We will meet at SNR on Saturday morning, April 16 – starting time will be based on when volunteers would like to begin. After digging, we'll pot the plants at the "head house" at SNR. Betty Struckhoff will then take them to her GPD collection site and tend them until the plant sale and the divide.

To volunteer, or for more information, contact Betty – 314-966-8404 or bettystruckhoff@charter.net. For more information about the GPD, go to <http://stlouis.missouri.org/gatewaysgreening/>. You can learn more about Wild Ones at www.for-wild.org. Follow the links to "Wild Chapters" for the calendar of St. Louis Chapter activities.



This is a first in St. Louis! Shaw Nature Reserve, University City's Green Center and Wild Ones Natural Landscapers have joined forces to offer a garden tour featuring natural, native home landscapes. Volunteers are needed to act as garden hosts at home gardens throughout the area, and to help staff activities at the Green Center. The date is

Sunday, June 26.

To volunteer, or for more information, contact Betty Struckhoff – 314-966-8404 or bettystruckhoff@charter.net. You can learn more about Wild Ones at www.for-wild.org. Follow the links to "Wild Chapters" for the calendar of St. Louis Chapter activities.

Don't Miss This...



EXPERTS GIVE HOMEGROWN LAWN AND GARDEN ADVICE AT 'SPRINGDIG'

WHAT: Gardening Help
"Springdig"

WHEN: Saturday, March 19,
2005, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHERE: Ridgway Center,
Missouri Botanical Garden, 4344
Shaw Blvd. in St. Louis

COST: \$40 per person (\$35 for
Garden members)

SPONSOR: William T. Kemper
Center for Home Gardening

INFO: (314) 577-9441 or
<http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/>

(ST. LOUIS): Get a jump start on greener grass and bigger blooms this year with a full day of expert gardening advice at the Missouri Botanical Garden's "Springdig" on Saturday, March 19. The event will take place from 9:30 a.m. to

3:30 p.m. in the Garden's Ridgway Center, 4344 Shaw Blvd. Horticulturists and Master Gardeners who know how to make lawns and gardens thrive in St. Louis's heat and humidity will share secrets of their success.

Formerly called the Dirt Festival, the expanded "Springdig" includes a wider variety of gardening topics. Participants will learn how to improve their soil, prepare their lawns and choose the plants best suited to local growing conditions.

"Whether you're new to gardening or a seasoned gardener, the 'Springdig' is the perfect kick off to spring gardening," said Glenn Kopp, instructional coordinator for adult education programs. "Participants will be amazed by all of the expertise and information the Garden has to offer."

Staff horticulturists, instructors and master gardeners from the Kemper Center for Home Gardening, the nation's most comprehensive gardening information center, will discuss:

- **Landscaping with Plants of Merit.** Master Gardener and instructor Mary Ann Fink will discuss an ever-expanding collection of plants, trees and shrubs ideally suited to the lower Midwest.



· **What Every Gardener Should Know About Soil.** Dr. Steven Cline, manager of the Kemper Center for Home Gardening, will explain the importance of soil testing, pH balance, composting and good drainage.

· **The Perfect Lawn.** Glennon Kraemer, owner and operator of Robinson Seed & Service Company, will share practical advice and proper techniques for mowing, watering and disease control.

· **20 Best Perennials for St. Louis.** Professional landscape consultant and designer Dianne O'Connell will recommend showy yet reliable plants that perform well year after year.

· **Best Native Plants for Attracting Butterflies and Hummingbirds.** Gardening "Answer Man" Chip Tynan will recommend plants to create a vibrant natural habitat. Tynan manages more than 40 Horticulture Answer Service volunteers who field some 28,000 questions annually from area gardeners. He writes a weekly question-and-answer

column for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and often appears on radio and TV.

· **An Introduction to Plant Diseases.** Glenn Kopp, manager of adult education and nearly 50 volunteer Plant Doctors, will identify and offer solutions to common local gardening problems, from improper planting and watering to insects and diseases.

Bring a soil sample from home to test its acid-alkaline ratio for free at a do-it-yourself testing table, with staff assistance. Volunteer master gardeners from the Horticulture Answer Service and the Plant Doctor desk will be on hand to answer questions and offer personalized gardening advice.

Learn how to search and access more than 5,000 pages of useful gardening information on the Garden's Web site, www.mobot.org. Helpful online resources include the PlantFinder database, HortLine gardening topics, NurseryTracker plant locator, and Integrated Pest Management strategies.

Two-by-six foot lumber kits made of recycled plastic pots - durable and perfect for constructing raised beds - will be on display and both lumber kits can be ordered.

Cost of the program is \$40 (\$35 for Garden members). Auditorium seating is first come, first served. Advance registration is required. Lunch will be on your own. To register or for more information, call (314) 577-9441.

Tip of the Month...



Start seeds indoors for tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and flowers to plant outdoors by mid-May.





Q&A
With
John Stephens

Q: Should I plant my indoor hyacinths when they have finished blooming?



A: These bulbs can be planted out in your garden when the daffodils are blooming. However, the bulbs have been exhausted, and several years may be required for their recovery. This is especially true if you grew your bulbs on water-filled hyacinth jars. Blooms in subsequent years never seem to attain the beauty of those produced in that first forced-flowering.

Q: Can I cut off the spent flower stem from my Phalaenopsis orchid.



A: Of course you can, but don't be in a hurry. Wait a month or two to see whether your plant will produce another flower branch or a baby plant from that

old stem. Meanwhile, continue to care for your Phalaenopsis in the usual manner. If nothing further develops within a reasonable time, the old stem can be cut back to about one-half inch above the mother plant.



Q: How can I get rid of the many, many mealybugs on a large gardenia plant?

A: If the mealybugs are too numerous to use the rubbing alcohol/Q-tip method, take your plant outdoors on a warm afternoon and spray it with Sunspray Dormant Oil as directed on the label. Bring it back indoors as soon as the spray has at least partially dried (one hour or less).



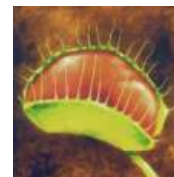
Q: My cranberry viburnum shrub has some ugly growths low on a couple of major stems; what can I do about them?

A: These are crown galls caused by a bacterium, *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*. You can prune out affected parts using disinfected tools, (1 part bleach in 9 parts of water), and hope for the best. Or better, pull the plant out and destroy all parts. Do not plant another viburnum nor any other susceptible species in that spot.



Q: Please tell me something about a plant called Queen of the Night.

A: Queen of the Night, *Selenicereus grandiflorus*, is a large forest cactus, native to the West Indies, which can be trained to grow on an indoor trellis. It grows best in well-draining soil in bright, indirect light with warm temperatures in summer (70-85°F days, 65°F nights) and cooler temperatures in winter (55-65°F). Its spectacular, fragrant flowers open in summer in early evening and fold at dawn for a one night show. It is easily propagated from joint cuttings.



Q: Why do we have trouble keeping my son's Venus flytraps alive?

A: Playing with the traps often leads to decline of this plant. Stimulating the trap to close about three times usually leads to death of that trap. Keeping these plants too wet, or too dry, will be detrimental to their health. They should be watered with distilled water, given plenty of light, kept at "people" temperatures during the growing season, and then allowed to rest in a cool place (32-50°F) during the winter.



Don't know much about
the Flora Conservancy?
Read on...

By
Karen Koehneman



At the time of its opening, Forest Park was a 40-minute carriage or 20-minute train ride from downtown St. Louis. In 1904, as part of a centennial celebration of Lewis and Clark, this majestic Park was on display for the world to enjoy. Fast-forward to the depression of the 1930's, when WPA projects helped build the present day Muny Opera and the Jewel Box. The Park has stood the test of time and is now finishing a \$1 million renovation that will secure the future of the Park for future generations of visitors.

Designed by Maximillian Kern and opened on June 24, 1876, Forest Park is one of St. Louis' most visited destinations. Forest Park is the seventh largest urban park measuring 1,293 acres complete with waterways, museums, golf courses and so much more.

The success of Forest Park is dependent on the generosity of the St. Louis population and visitors from afar. The present day rehab was made possible through public, private and corporate donations. However, monetary donations alone are

not the whole picture; the Park depends on the generosity of hundreds of volunteers in the form of work hours. One such volunteer group is **Flora Conservancy of Forest Park** whose mission it is to return flowers back to the Park.

The Flora Conservancy of Forest Park works year-round to ensure that Forest Park has floral displays every month of the year. Winter months are spent in the greenhouse planting annual seeds that will be planted throughout the Park. In the warming days of spring, Flora volunteers clean and prepare flowerbeds around the Jewel Box and Pagoda Circle. In April visitors flock to the Jewel Box to see the tulips at their peak and after the petals have faded, summer planting begins. All summer long, volunteers work in every corner of the Park weeding, trimming, planting and laughing with friends.

As the days shorten and a chill can be felt, it is time to plant thousands of tulip bulbs, lay the flowerbeds to rest and bring cuttings back to the greenhouse for use next spring. Don't forget about inside the Jewel Box; poinsettias, lilies, hydrangeas and summer annuals are grown in the greenhouse for year-round shows.

The volunteers of Flora Conservancy work closely with the St. Louis City Parks Department whose job it is to plan, schedule and implement plantings in the Park.

Volunteers with all levels of horticultural knowledge from all over the city and county drive, walk or bike to the Park to help for many different reasons. Some enjoy the camaraderie of other gardeners, a few live near the Park and want to help take care of it, and others enjoy the greenhouse because they are able to garden in the winter, but everyone agrees, Forest Park is worth their time and toil.

Flora Conservancy volunteers are proudly hosting a tour for the Master Gardeners on July 13, 2005. Hope to see you there! For more information about the tour or on becoming a volunteer, call Karen Koehneman at (636) 532-6630.





Book Review by Holly Parks

Seasons, 25 Years of Photography at the Missouri Botanical Garden, is just the sort of book you want in this gloomy period preceding real spring. It contains sixty-two photographs, each 9 inches by 6 inches, which Jennings has taken in the Missouri Botanical Garden. The book is divided into sections for each of the four seasons and includes photographs of flowers, statuary, trees, fountains and many views of the Japanese garden. This is a picture book to curl up with in a cozy spot and get lost in the images that reflect the beauty of the botanical garden

You are surely familiar with Jennings work as we see it in many forums concerning the botanical garden. His pictures of the garden have been on many of the garden calendars, National Geographic and many garden and nature magazines. He has won numerous awards in regional and world-wide competitions.

Seasons by Jack Jennings is 125

page softcover book printed by Columbine Printing Company. It is available for \$29.95 at Walden Books in West County Shopping Center.



Bird Bath By Connie Alwood

Toward dusk this summer our four year old granddaughter came running to the patio to tell us that we had a "horsy in our woods." When I chuckled, she exclaimed: "but I heard it Gramps." What she had heard was an Eastern Screech Owl which does sound like the whinny of a horse. My amusement was more an appreciation of her description than it was a questioning of her identification.

If you live in a wooded area, the Eastern Screech Owl (it doesn't screech) can be a fairly common garden bird. Yet many gardeners have never seen one.

This diminutive owl is completely nocturnal. It will never leave its roosting place until dusk and is back at its roost by dawn. In winter it usually roosts in tree cavities. On warmer days it roosts close to the trunks of trees, especially evergreens. It eats mostly insects, but it will take small rodents. In late July it will start

to call just toward dusk.

Every gardener who lives close to a woods and has established trees in his garden can attract this owl by placing a Screech Owl box in a tree. I did so when we moved into our present house almost twenty years ago. Every year I have seen an owl use the box, mostly for roosting on cold winter days. One year the birds stayed until spring setting up a nest in the box--one owlet! I have the box facing toward my house so that I can see the owl when it awakens. This is usually an hour or more before sunset. On sunny days, its head will peer out of the hole and I can watch him/her slowly awaken. Toward dusk its head is swiveling (owls have fixed eyes) and his eyes have widened, ready for the night hunt.

Screech owl boxes are sold at specialty stores such as Wild Birds Unlimited. Or gardeners who like to saw and hammer can make their own. The dimensions for such a box can be found on the web; just type in: "screech owl box." At most sites you can also find even more information about these amazing nighttime creatures.





Seasons in My Garden

By

Jim Massey

(Sung to the tune of "My Favorite Things")

Black spot on roses
And blight on my peaches
Slugs on my hostas
Have chewed off big pieces
Japanese beetles are still on the wing
These are a few of my un-favorite things
When the rain quits
When the sun bakes
Then I feel so sad
Then I remember how things were in Spring
And then I don't feel so bad.

Now Autumn is coming
The daylight is waning
Trees getting color
I'm glad that it's raining
The mums will be blooming
The leaves start to fall
These are some things that I like most of all.
Then the geese fly
Then the plants die
And I feel so sad
Then I remember 'twill soon start again
And I don't feel so bad.

The weather is frigid
The wind is still blowing
Plants have gone dormant
And nothing is growing
Birds have gone south
So there's none on the wing

These things are making me
wish it were spring
When the snow falls
When the ponds freeze
I get so depressed and sad
Then I remember that Spring's on the way
And I don't feel so bad.

The soil's getting warmer
The grasses start growing
Soon I'll be weeding
And cussing and mowing
Jonquils and tulips are starting to bloom
These are all signs that Spring's coming soon
Soon the rains come
Soon the trees bloom
Soon the birds will sing
It's gardening time and I'm happy to say
It's time once again for Spring



Master Gardener News

One of the greatest things about this newsletter is that it is a product of many contributors. And since we have been receiving so many articles for inclusion recently in addition to the fact that we have a new MG class underway, we're probably due for a reminder of guidelines for submissions.

All articles must be submitted electronically in a word document format. Articles should be no longer than 200-250 words in length. Any photographs must be sent in a jpg file or similar. No artwork or photographs may be scanned into the newsletter. Submissions are subject to editing in length, format and date of input into the newsletter. All contributions should be emailed to rolfe@charter.net Deadline for submissions are the 10th of each month.

And don't forget to email pictures of your yards...that's a favorite feature of readers!



Still Searching for Volunteers for Plastic Pots Recycling!

Additional volunteers are needed for the plastic pot recycling program. Weekend hours are available in May and June beginning May 21st. Morning and afternoon shifts are available. Please call Phil Egart at 314.577.9441 or email Phil at phillip.egart@mobot.org

St. Louis Master Gardeners Kemper Center for Home Gardening

P.O. Box 299 • St. Louis, MO 63166
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.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read 'Steve Cline'.

Steve Cline
Manager, Kemper Center
Missouri Botanical Garden

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