



Master Gardener News

A monthly publication of the St. Louis Master Gardeners

May 2005

Calendar of Events

May 5th – Level 1 Graduation
Luncheon 12:00 Kemper Center
Courtyard

May 8th – Mother's Day...thank your
mother for letting you play in the dirt

May 11th – Level 2 Training: Grow
Native! Class will be held at
Monsanto Center lecture room 1:00
p.m. – 3:00 p.m.



What's Inside

Need a Job? Check out these
volunteer opportunities...

Q&A with John Stephens

What to do in the Yard This Month

Get Ready for the Great Garden
Contest!

What's the Difference Between a
Chimney Swift and a Chimney
Sweep?

Those Darn Peonies that Just
Won't Bloom...

A Word from the Editor, by Stacy Rolfe

*You laughed, you scoffed,
you snickered and then
you confided didn't you?
You know who you are -
everyone who I struck a
chord with last spring
when I so shamelessly
announced my fear of
snakes. A gardener afraid
of snakes! Why the disgrace
of it all. That's akin to a
beautician being afraid of
aerosol. Well maybe not
exactly, but, the point is
that no matter what you
think about my fear of
these garden stalking,
slithering, slimy gargoyles
(I know, they're not really
slimy) I too know that
there's a whole bunch of
you out there, (whom shall
remain anonymous just
because I'm a nice person)
who are just as creeped out
by these things as I am.
And this spring is no
different from last. I'll go
about my business of
weeding with my normal
routine - rake through it
first, have my dog nearby
(for what I don't know),
give myself a pep talk then
hope for the best as I dig
in. I still have so much
ground to cover in my*

*yard because I believe that
one of these days, as has
happened in the past,
something without fur on
it's going to come out from
under a plant, or out of
one of the holes I have
(what are these anyway?)
and I don't care if it's
whistling "Puff the Magic
Dragon", then that's it for
me. Like an injured
baseball player, that's the
end of my season.*



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN



Missouri Master Gardener
University Outreach & Extension

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



Kemper Center looking for Assistance...

The Kemper Center for Home Gardening is looking for a volunteer to help keep the individual native gardens looking natural and appealing. Gardening with native plants is becoming popular and this is an opportunity to learn from the best! A basic knowledge of the visual and cultivation habits of Missouri's native plants is helpful. You will work side-by-side with a horticulturist who is willing to teach someone seriously interested in learning about native plants.

Please contact Martha Hill at 314.577.9417.



Calling all Planters!...

Do you dig the dirt? Love instant gratification? Want to help see downtown St. Louis flourish? Then hold May 14th aside to help

out with planting thousands of annuals inside the medians on Market and Tucker Streets. We need 10 crew chiefs to help oversee a myriad of public volunteers in this major undertaking between a partnership with the city of St. Louis, Gateway Greening and St. Louis Master Gardeners. Plants will be installed from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. on May 14th.

Call Leon Zickrick at 636.523.7212 to sign up.

Plastic Pot Recycling Help!



Want to get involved in an environmental project that directly affects gardeners? This is it! Since 1998, we have collected over 350,000 of pots and trays and more lately turned them into lumber and raised bed kits that folks buy to help support the growth of this program and of course, their gardening interest. Each weekend starting May 21st-22nd through the end of June (6 weekend's total) we will be collecting pots and trays at the Monsanto Center from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and giving away Garden passes. This horticultural plastic will be ground on-site using the new shredder and granulator – funds provided by the Solid Waste Management District and the Department of

Natural Resources. Monrovia, the largest plant container producer in the U.S. has also gifted \$5,000 to turn this plastic into lumber. We need you to help this unique environmental effort.

Call Phil at 314.577.9441 to sign up for a morning or afternoon time slot on Saturday or Sunday. We need 96 volunteers total to make a difference. Lunch is provided each time. Guaranteed to change your gardening life!



Get Those Creative Juices Flowing... Announcing the Master Gardener Logo Contest!

If you have a creative flair and would like to try your hand at designing a new MG logo- we need you! The St Louis Master Gardeners logo will go on items such as clothing, satchels, drink holders etc.

All ideas are welcome. Please send your entry to Linda Kalicak at 160 Hunters Pointe Dr. St. Charles, MO 63304 or email your artwork to lkalicak@aol.com

Deadline for submissions is May 30th. Winner will be notified in an upcoming issue of *MGNews*



A bonus category -- "Best Spring Garden" -- will be featured in a surprising way when the garden contest turns 10 years old next spring.

The contest deadline is a postmark of Friday, June 17. For more information, call or e-mail Becky Homan (314-340-8238 or bhoman@post-dispatch.com). And to see winning entries from the previous two years of contests, click on www.stltoday.com/lifestyle/garden.



Let's hear it for the Home Show Volunteers...

Nicole Blume, Sue Chaires, Dennis Chambers, Alberta Chulick, Susan Goldstein, Bob Irwin, Anita Joggerst, Linda Kalicak, Jean Kelly, Peggy Knippel, Dan Litsch, Mohit Maheshwari, Maxine Mirowitz, Christina Morris, Charlie Naeger, Alison O'Brien, Cheryl Rafert, Susan Rentfrow, Stacy Rolfe, Linda Stuckmeyer, Anthony Tainter, Leon Zickrick, Van Spurgeon, Margaret Silver, Cindy Crapsey, Ann Ragland



On-Going and Upcoming Events

Master Gardener tour of Forest Park is scheduled for Wednesday, July 13 and the volunteers of Flora Conservancy would love to show you around. The bus and walking tour begins at 10:00 AM and ends with lunch at Probstein Golf Course Club House. The tour guides boast the history and the on going renovations of the Park. Please park at the Dennis and Judith Jones Visitor Center, (just north of the Muny and east of the History Museum). The cost of lunch is \$7.00 and is payable the day of the tour. This tour is limited to 46 so please RSVP to Phil Egart at (314) 577 9441 or phillip.egart@mobot.org. Any questions, contact Karen Koehneman at (636) 532-6630 or kkoehneman@earthlink.net. This class is Level II training and qualifies for credit.



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

St. Louis Post-Dispatch Great Garden Contest

Sponsors of the 2005 St. Louis Post-Dispatch Great Garden Contest say that it's bigger and better than ever. Some two dozen nurseries and garden centers are pledging \$350 each in gift certificates, says Post-Dispatch Garden Editor Becky Homan, while other major sponsors include the newspaper, STLtoday.com, the Missouri Botanical Garden, KTVI-Channel 2 (FOX 2) and The Bug Store. Besides gift certificates, prizes include specially made plaques by Kirkwood artist Diane Sauer and a year's free membership at the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Categories, as explained in an April 30 Lifestyle cover story, are:

- "Best Home Garden by an Amateur"
- "Best Home Garden by an Amateur with Professional Help"
- "Best Water Garden"
- "Best Garden of Whimsy"
- "Best Native Plant Garden"
- "Best Group Garden"



Master Gardener News

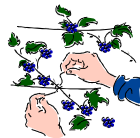


Q&A with John Stephens



Q: How can I tell whether my new red cedar tree will have those blue berries?

A: Like most junipers, eastern red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*, is usually dioecious, that is, it has male, (staminate), and female, (pistillate), flowers on separate trees. Only female trees bear the familiar blue berries, (cones). When first formed, staminate flowers are yellow, and pistillate flowers are green. The many, better cultivars of this species are produced asexually, thus they can be labeled male or female; e.g., 'Burkii' is male, 'Canaertii' is female.



Q: What plants would you recommend for espalier treatment?

A: Espalier, the training of woody plants to grow in a flat plane on a support such as a wall, trellis, or wire network, can be used with many fruit-producing and ornamental trees and shrubs. In addition to many varieties of apple and pear, Japanese maple, eastern redbud, several dogwood species, crabapple, climbing rose, and firethorn are amenable to this sort of training. Defining interests, objectives, and available resources prior to starting any program, involving espalier, is critical to the success of such a long-term training exercise.



Q: Do you think that my Norfolk Island pine will recover after spending the winter in my unheated garage?

A: Survival is unlikely. Norfolk Island pine, *Araucaria excelsa*, is a tropical that demands constant attention and care. It is among the most unforgiving of our common houseplants. If your plant, with normal good care, shows no evidence of new growth by June 1, discard it.

Q: My orchid pot has no holes in the bottom. What should be done?

A: You can try to drill two or three holes in the bottom of your decorative pot, or—better, repot your orchid using either a standard plastic or ceramic pot with suitable holes for drainage. Do it now.

Q: Are those newly advertised "Encore azaleas" good for our area?



A: Several mail order nurseries have been promoting this class of plants that are said to be reliable rebloomers during the growing season. Please address your question to these suppliers. Inquiries concerning their guarantees concerning reflowering would be in order.

Q: Is Ironite suitable as a nutrient for use on lawns?

A: Several studies by state agencies have shown Ironite to be contaminated with heavy metals. For details see <http://www.envirolaw.org/cases/poisonbg.html>

Q: My new winterberry, 'Jim Dandy' had no berries last winter; why not?

A: Your new plant, *Ilex verticillata* cv 'Jim Dandy', is a male pollinator, thus no berries.





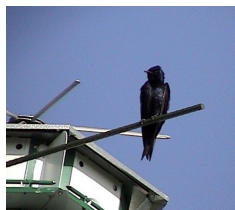
Bird Bath

By
Connie Alwood

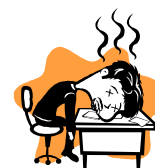
By erecting miniature house and apartment complexes on elevated poles in our gardens and by opening our chimneys, we have invited two species of birds to share our homes. Although they look alike and have common qualities, the Purple Martin and the Chimney Swift are unrelated. They are both wonderful aerialists who forage for flying insects. Both birds are migratory, nesting in North America and wintering as far south as South America. Some human communities have erected scores of "martin houses", thinking that these large swallows will control mosquito populations. However, no evidence exists to support this hope. In fact, Purple Martins are high fliers, whereas mosquitos are, regrettably, low fliers. Martins, like all swallows, are highly communal and have readily adapted to human presence. Few songbirds have so endeared themselves to humans.

A quick Google search shows many Purple Martin Clubs, even a national society dedicated to this one species. In other words Purple Martins are the equivalent of the rock band, the Grateful Dead. They have a cult following who even track the

birds' migratory routes from South America, knowing the date when they will appear in a given home town. In mid-April I will be working in the garden when I hear the unmistakable clicking noise overhead: the Chimney Swifts are back. These "flying cigars" with their stiff wing beats are a joy to any neighborhood for they fly in pairs like skaters on a celestial pond. They build their nests in chimneys with salivary glue. They have tiny but strong feet which allow them to cling upright on the nicks of a chimney wall. Because of their inability to perch on a tree limb, some people believe that they are "prisoners of the air." In our area in late September, swifts will gather by the thousands, roosting in large industrial chimneys as they make their way south. Visit a local high school at dusk and watch as they circle in a large kettle over the chimney, pairing off and seemingly toppling into it.



Spring Wildflower Sale at Shaw Nature Reserve offers the widest selection of showy and hardy native wildflowers, ferns, trees and shrubs for home landscaping in sun or shade. Also available, a wide variety of native plants to attract birds and butterflies. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Shaw Nature Reserve of the Missouri Botanical Garden, Gray Summit, Mo., 25 miles west of St. Louis on I-44, exit #253. Proceeds benefit the Shaw Nature Reserve. For information, call (636) 451-3512.



Let's Hear it for the
Graduating MG Class of
2005

The end of a long semester of hard work is finally over! Congratulations to the Graduates of Class 2005. Mentors, don't forget to join the luncheon for your candidate on Thursday, May 5th 12:00 p.m. at Kemper Center.



Master Gardener News



Why Peonies Fail to Bloom

Reproduced with permission from the Hortline

Among the most beautiful and most reliable of all perennial flowers are peonies. They provide large fragrant flowers in the spring and attractive foliage all season long. If left undisturbed, plantings of peonies may continue blooming for many decades.

For success with peonies, choose a sunny site with well-draining soil. Dig a hole that is 1 to 1½ feet deep with equal width. Incorporate organic matter into the soil that you have dug. Choose peony divisions that have three to five eyes. Plant so that the uppermost eye is 1 to 2 inches below the soil surface--this is critical. Replace the soil, tamp it and water thoroughly.

Sometimes peonies fail to bloom. The most common reasons for this are the following: The plants are too small and have fewer than three eyes. The plants are planted too deep. The plants have too much competition from surrounding trees and shrubs. The plants have too much shade which encourages tall leafy peonies with no blooms. Too much

nitrogen fertilizer was applied which encourages foliage but not flowers. Plants are undernourished, weak and small.

If your peonies fail to bloom, check to see if one or more of these factors may be the cause of the failure.

A common disease of garden peonies is botrytis blight or gray mold. Leafy shoots may wilt suddenly and fall over. Black or brown rot may be noticed at the base of the affected shoots. Flowers may begin to open, only to turn brown or develop a covering of gray mold. Control botrytis blight by sanitation, removing all foliage and stems from the bed every fall, following a hard frost. If the problem persists, it may be necessary to treat the plant with an appropriate fungicide, according to label directions.

Do not confuse botrytis blight with bud blast. Bud blast refers to a condition where the flower buds develop to the size of a small pea but then dry up and fail to open. The causes for this condition may be several, including infertile soil, too-deep planting, excessive shade, dry spells, and cold weather injury frequently associated with late spring frosts.

You often have to be a good detective to be a good gardener. Analyze problems carefully before trying to cure them.

What to do in the Yard...

Ornamentals – Pinch azaleas and rhododendron blossoms as they fade. Double flowered azaleas need no pinching.

Vegetables – Slugs will hide during the daytime beneath a board placed over damp ground. Check each morning and destroy any slugs that have gathered on the underside of the board.

Fruits – All Month Mulch blueberries with pine needles or sawdust.

Turfgrass – All Month Keep bluegrass cut at 1.5 to 2.5 inch height. Mow tall fescues at 2 to 3.5 inch height.

General Gardening – All Month Birds eat many insect pest. Attract them to your garden by providing good nesting habitats.





Minutes for Advisory
Committee Meeting March 29, 2005 and
April 26 2005 can be found by going to this
link

<http://outreach.missouri.edu/stlouismg/minutes/minutes.htm>

**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.



Steve Cline
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Missouri Botanical Garden

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