



Master Gardener News

A monthly publication of the St. Louis Master Gardeners

January 2006

Calendar of Events

January 5th – MG Level One training begins

January 14th – Speaker's Bureau
Training...Kemper Center

February TBA – Continuing Ed. class with
Mary Ann Fink

March 8th – Continuing Ed. class Behind the
Scenes Tour of Struckmeyer Nurseries

March 4th – Honeysuckle Summit 10:00 a.m. –
3:00 p.m. UMSL



What's Inside

Continuing Education Schedule

Expanded Q&A with John Stephens

Volunteer Recognitions and Awards

The Winter Songster

Holly's 'Must Have' Book...

Picture Your Yard in the Gateway
Garden's Calendar...

A Word from the Editor, by Stacy Rolfe

I see good things happening for us in 2006...lots of good things. We have a tremendous new class of Master Gardeners underway. Students who could rival us any ol' day with their plant knowledge *before* they've even gotten their certification! And their enthusiasm during orientation about their volunteer work was nothing short of contagious. Yes, we have a fine group of students on their way to representing the Master Gardener name well. And, mark my word, the next area to take off, no, make that explode, for our organization is the Speakers Bureau. I predict that the goals set for number of presentations will not only be met this year but far exceeded. It's exciting to see the energy going into a project like this venue and seeing it grow and really find its place of success in our world. If you haven't already jumped on the band wagon with this one, now's your time while fresh, new training classes are being

offered. And finally, our trusted, well maybe not *completely*, old newsletter will be getting the facelift that will make our lives easier. Thanks to the support and approval of the Advisory Board, we will soon be delivering our information to you via our brand new, knock your socks off website! I don't want to spoil too many of the surprise features, but, make sure your hair looks nice and get ready to say "cheese".

Yes, lots of good things are coming our way in 2006...Happy New Year my friends.



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

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





Congratulations to our Milestone MG's!

Celebrating their 10 year anniversary as a Master Gardener is:

Jasmine Fazzari
Jim Horn
Judy Moskoff
Charlie Naeger

These Master Gardeners have received a new bronze name badge denoting their achievement. Congratulations!

And these Master Gardeners have recently celebrated their 20 year anniversary as a MG:

Abby Filippello
Gerry Bickel
Fred Clapper
Hazel Cox
Marion Dorffi
Ruth Jonas
John Stephens
Linda Traina
Joan Merz
Marcia Carpenter
Christine Kurtz Fuerhoff
Christy Jones

These Master Gardeners have received a new gold name badge denoting their achievement. Congratulations!



Holiday Party Success!

Chalk up another successful holiday party celebrated on December 7th at Ridgway Center. Lots of food, fun and prizes were the trademark for the day.



Gordon Gosh was named MG of the Year for his tireless efforts given to our organization. Congratulations Gordon!

Our new MG trainees had their orientation luncheon prior to the party getting all of their housekeeping items out of the way.



Is it just me, or our trainees getting younger and younger every year?



The Gateway Gardener Magazine needs your photos!

Our own Robert Weaver, MG and Editor of The Gateway Gardener Magazine needs your help for a 2007 Gateway Gardens calendar under consideration. He is looking for suggestions on outstanding local gardens to consider for this project. If you have any suggestions you can email your ideas to him at Robert@gatewaygardener.com or fax 314.968.4025

You can pick up your free copy of The Gateway Gardener Magazine at local nurseries or have it delivered to your home for a mere \$15 subscription fee (beats having to get out in the cold to run to a nursery!)



Master Gardener News



Q&A with John Stephens



Q: Should I still be fertilizing my fescue/bluegrass lawn?

A: Cool season grasses benefit from fall fertilization. A good rule of thumb is applying 1.0 to 1.25 lb. of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn during this season. Optimum results can be obtained by applying this amount in three equal divisions; one-third about Labor Day, one-third about the end of October, and the remaining third about Thanksgiving Day.



Q: How and when should I harvest my crop of parsnips?

A: Unless you have an old-fashioned root cellar, it's best to leave parsnips in the ground until you're ready to use them. Their starch becomes sweeter into the winter. After a hard frost, cover your plot with a 4- to 6-inch layer of mulch, and mark it for ease of locating when you are ready for some parsnips. Bales of straw

are said to serve this purpose admirably. Be sure to dig your crop before new growth starts in the spring.



Q: How can I determine the value of a tree, which a developer wants to remove from an area that is to be included in a new easement?

A: You need the services of a consulting arborist, a professional who is knowledgeable about the value of trees. See the Yellow Pages for listings that indicate membership in the St. Louis Arborist Association.



Q: Can I move my beautiful ornamental sweet potato vine indoors for the winter?

A: A potted sweet potato plant can be moved indoors for winter enjoyment. Place it in a sunny window and care for it in the normal manner. It will benefit from having a climbing trellis. An in-ground plant poses more of a problem since the tubers often become very large. In such a case, why not start a new plant for your wintertime pleasure.



Q: When should I prune my large burning bush?

A: Burning bush, *Euonymus alatus*, is best trimmed in late winter or early spring before new growth starts. Pruning in autumn often forces a flush of vigorous, new growth, which may not survive low winter temperatures.



Q: What sort of care is best for Queen of the Night during winter?

A: Queen of the Night, *Selenicereus grandiflorus*, a member of the family *Cactaceae*, requires bright light year-round but protection from direct sunlight. Winter temperatures in the range 50-60 °F are best; water sparingly during this time. Fertilizer should be applied only during periods of active growth, April-September. Be sure that all long shoots are securely tied. Your plant can return to the outdoors about mid-May.





Q: Is there any reason why I can't prune my overgrown saucer magnolia back by half during winter?

A: Saucer magnolia, *Magnolia x soulangeana*, by nature is a large shrub that flowers on old wood. Most flowers will be lost in the spring following such drastic pruning. Longer term, the naturally attractive shape of the plant will likely be lost to a more twiggy structure. It appears that your plant is not a fit for its allotted space. Perhaps replacement should be considered.



Q: To settle a discussion, could you give me a technical description of the common tomato plant?

A: The common garden tomato, *Solanum lycopersicum*, belongs to the family *Solanaceae*. Wild tomato originated in the Andes region of Peru. It apparently was first domesticated in Central America, and at present, there are over 1000 cultivated varieties. Tomatoes can be either annuals or short-lived perennials depending upon environmental

and cropping conditions. Their productivity is very sensitive to conditions of low light and adverse (low or high) temperatures. The cherry tomato and pear tomato are closely related species.



Q: What can I do to improve the soil in my vegetable garden without resorting to chemical fertilizers?

A: Cover the surface of the bed with a 6-inch layer of chopped leaves. Add 40 lb. of well-aged, composted manure per 100 square feet of surface area. Rough till this mixture into the soil to a depth of 8-10-inches taking care to leave the surface somewhat cloddy. Do nothing more with the bed until spring when it should be prepared for planting. This procedure, when repeated annually for 2-3 years, will greatly improve the condition of your garden soil.



Q: How much should climbing roses be cut back in preparation for winter?

A: Climbers should not be cut

back at this time. All canes should be secured in place to prevent breakage due to wind whip. Any necessary pruning should be done in spring after danger of frost has passed. At that time, laterals should be shortened to strong buds; major canes should not be cut back except to remove dead or winter-damaged tissue.



Q: What can I do to help my large Norway spruce to regreen some lower branches, which have lost most of their needles?

A: There is nothing that you should do at this time. Those branches that still have green needles at their tips will probably survive; those that have lost all their needles are likely dead. Many of our evergreens are showing similar signs of damage from last summer's drought. In late winter, dead branches should be removed. The tree will benefit from an application of fertilizer in February. During the next growing season, make sure that this tree receives supplemental irrigation during dry periods; rainfall plus irrigation should total 1- to 1 1/2-inches of water per week during summer.





Q: Will the Gerbera daisies, which I moved indoors, survive as houseplants?

A: Gerbera daisies will survive in a well-ventilated, sunny location. They do best when kept moderately moist at temperatures ranging from 55 to 65°F during winter. Improve the humidity with pebble trays. A light application of houseplant fertilizer on a weekly basis is helpful. Be alert for whiteflies and powdery mildew. These plants should go back outdoors in spring after danger of frost has passed.



Q: Why does my beautiful Boston fern look so awful now?

A: Boston ferns, which flourish when held in a suitable outdoor site, usually resent being brought indoors, especially if this event is delayed until after heating season has commenced. The sudden shift into the drier environment of a heated house coupled with the change of lighting often leads to extensive browning and leaflet drop. Overwatering can be a further complication at this critical time. Try to nurse your plant through the winter by giving it an eastern

exposure in a well ventilated room with temperatures ranging from 75°F (day) to 55°F (night). Frequent misting is often helpful. Allow moderate drying between waterings, but never allow the plant to dry out completely. Recovery will be slow.



Q: How should I care for my Thanksgiving chrysanthemum now that its flowers have faded?

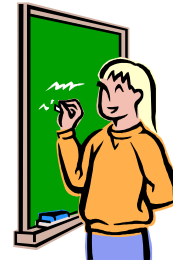
A: Florists' chrysanthemums are not winter hardy in our area, so the plants can be grown only as indoor foliage plants given adequate moisture and bright light. Such plants have usually been forced or manipulated to produce blooms at holiday times and are very difficult for the average householder to rebloom. Perhaps you should consider discarding your plant before investing more time and effort in its care.



Q: How often must I repot or root-prune my Ficus benjamina?

A: Your plant will grow well when somewhat potbound. This species should not be overpotted. Repot when the composition of pot content is estimated to be about 80% roots

and 20% soil. Root-prune lightly at this time as required to remove the fine network of roots, which may have developed. Usually a top-dressing in spring will be sufficient to keep your plant in good vigor.



Upcoming Classes

Speakers Bureau Training:
Saturday January 14, 2006
Kemper Center
Classroom
11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Lunch is Included

Whether you're a seasoned speaker or just *considering* this venue, don't miss this informative and hands on training class. Learn how to prepare a presentation, use power point software and make the most out of sharing your knowledge in a group setting. Level II credit hours are earned for *preparing* a presentation and *giving* the presentation! Any questions, contact Van Spurgeon at 314.862.9145 or email at vdssms@mindspring.com

The Herbal Gardener class offered at St. Louis Community College.

This informative 5 week course is taught by Master Gardener Michelle Ochonicky who also teaches at the culinary institute. Classes are held at LaSalle Springs Middle School and cost \$31. To register go to www.stlcc.edu



Master Gardener News

Honeysuckle Summit
Saturday, March 4, 2006
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
UMSL

This day long seminar will be presented through a variety of panel discussions offering to educated attendees on the issues of Bush Honeysuckle and other invasives. Topics will include control methods and replacement alternatives.

Panel representatives will be from the University of MO St Louis Tropical Center for Ecology, Missouri Botanical Garden, Litzinger Road Ecology Center, The Green Center, The Nature Conservancy, Shaw Nature Reserve, Forest Park Forever, Kennedy Woods, Missouri Dept. of Conservation and Ladue Garden Club.

\$12 Fee for the day and lunch is *included*. For more information or to register contact Maureen Helfers at 314.993.0004 or mo915@aol.com

Certified Master Gardeners can earn 3 credit hours towards Level II for attending this seminar.

Continuing Education Classes



February – Plants of Merit with Mary Ann Fink. Date TBA

March 8th – Behind the Scenes of Stuckmeyer Nurseries

April 19th – Orchids with Carol Graven's Kemper Center 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

May 4th – Gardening/Birding with Connie Alwood. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Bob Gaddy Bird Garden (NW corner of Kingshighway and Magnolia) and bring binoculars, park on Magnolia. Questions, call Connie at 314.524.8111 or calwood@sbcglobal.net

May 17th – Water Gardening with Cindy Gilberg

June 25th – MG private garden tour of Karen Koehneman's home garden (this is one day after her garden will be on display for the Chesterfield Garden Tour)

July 19th – Ornamental Grasses with Al Hirson. Kemper Center Classroom 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

August 9th – Tree Identification Program with Maggie Jackson from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Meet in Kemper Center Classroom for brief introduction, then walk the Garden.

September – State Conference in Springfield

October 19th – Insects Program with Ray Kirkman at Kemper Center Classroom.

November – TBA

December – No programs scheduled



Book Review with Holly Parks

Month by Month Gardening in Missouri, authored by our own Mike Miller, is the

definitive "when-to" guide for anyone who gardens locally. If you spend a few minutes browsing this book, you will definitely want to keep it. It is filled with advice on what to do each month in eleven plant categories: annuals, bulbs, edibles, ground covers and vines, houseplants, lawns, perennials, roses, shrubs, trees and water gardens. And the specific topics are geared to the problems and opportunities our local climate provides. "Our weather is very unpredictable from hour to hour, day to day and month to month." – how true, how true!

Each of the eleven plant categories begins with some general information on caring for the plants and a listing of common plants in the category. The next section covers planning, planting, care, watering, fertilizing, pruning, pests and helpful hints for each month. There is even a section to add your own notes. You would think that the volume of information would be overwhelming but the material is well written and interesting, although occasionally repetitious. For instance, there is a lot of emphasis on proper storage of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers in all November categories. And watering during November is directed at turning off irrigation systems as well as storing hoses and sprinklers.

I think the best way to use this book might be to read up on the next month for each category, making notes or lists on the specific activities for your particular garden. I know that I will not be able to part with this particular book – it definitely fills a void in my plant library.

Month by Month Gardening in Missouri by Mike Miller is a 368 page soft cover book published by Cool Springs Press. It is available for \$19.99 at Wild Birds Unlimited, 1739 Clarkson Road in Chesterfield.



Welcome to Cris Schmidt – our first MG trainee to submit an article for the *MGNews*!

I thought I'd share a personal gardening experience that I had recently. I'm sure for the seasoned gardeners this won't come as a surprise.

My dad has always used black plastic trash bags as a weed barrier in his gardens. At one time so did I. Now I use the weed preventative cloth they sell at home improvement stores.

Here's my reason why I think the cloth is better.

There is a flower garden in the front of my parent's house (I'll call this my mom's garden). In the back is one my dad started so he could grow grape vines. This past spring, my mom's garden was pretty sparse. A huge azalea that had been there for probably 15 years as well as some other perennials had died. Over the course of a couple of weekends I planted a variety of plants and flowers so that her garden would look more presentable. My dad was in charge of watering everything which he did at least twice a day until things got established.

When it was time for annuals, I took a bunch of plants over to their house. Pulling into the driveway, I noticed several of the perennials I planted earlier had died. I asked my dad if he watered them and he said he had. I dug up the dead plants and filled in with annuals.

The next time I went to their house I noticed several of the annuals had died. By this time, it was probably early summer. I asked my dad if he watered them and again he said he did. My mom said he had been watering

everything at least twice a day, plus they have an in-ground sprinkler system that waters parts of the garden. I asked my mom exactly how my dad was watering the plants. She said he would sit on the front porch with the hose and aim it at the flowers, which in some cases was 20 feet away.

I went around back to look at my dad's garden. It was just fine (he didn't use black plastic on this one). That's when the light bulb came on! I told them I didn't think enough water was getting to the roots because of the black plastic he used as a weed barrier. By the end of the summer, she didn't have any of the perennials left and only a few annuals.

Next year, we'll be doing things a little differently.



Don't Forget to Feed the Birds!

Now is the time when wild birds rely the most on back yard feeders to obtain their daily food. Keep feeders full and add a heater to your outdoor bird bath. Change the water every 2-3 days

For a large selection of backyard bird items or information on how to help care for your feathered friends visit any Wild Birds Unlimited for expert advice.

January Gardening Tip:

Use Christmas tree boughs to mulch garden perennials.





Bird Bath
By
Connie Alwood

On a January morning we can't expect much birdsong. Except for the occasional mockingbird and the partial song of the white-throated sparrow, plus a few chips from other birds coming to the feeder, it's usually a silent winter. However, one songster still bursts forth with much enthusiasm: *Tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle* is the mnemonic of the Carolina Wren. This year round resident of the woodpile brings such joy to a winter morning that upon hearing his lively song, most of us will believe that spring can't be far behind.

The Carolina Wren, for some unknown reason, sings year 'round – rain or shine, cloudy or sunny. Not only does he sing, he has numerous other notes, chips and buzzes. All of them are loud and clear. This denizen of many gardens will visit feeders, and is especially fond of suet. When he arrives at the feeder, it is usually with his tail cocked. Herky-jerky movements are the rule not the exception. He uses his rather long decurved bill to peck away. After getting his fill, he is likely to inspect every nook and cranny around your house, especially the drainpipes, as if he were a bosun's mate checking the rigging on a topsail.

You need not look high up in the treetops for wrens. They are seldom ten feet off the ground. In fact, they are often found on the ground or within a few feet of it. Carolina wrens are monogamous. In a breeding season they are likely to have as many as three broods. It is not uncommon for them to lay as many as five eggs to a brood. Therefore, they are common. Warm winters have allowed this southern species to expand its

range into the New England states. Although severe winters cause diebacks, the species recovers quickly.

Usually with first light the Carolina Wren arrives at the feeder just outside my dining room window. It's as if we are sharing breakfast. He will, of course, be indifferent to my presence, but, I can't be indifferent to any small bird with such a big voice – *tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle*.



St. Louis Master Gardeners
Kemper Center for Home Gardening
P.O. Box 299 • St. Louis, MO 63166
www.outreach.missouri.edu/stlouismg

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 Stacy Rolfe (srolfe@charter.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 contributors whose bylines appear in each issue.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
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 **MISSOURI
BOTANICAL
GARDEN**

Steven D. Cline

Steven Cline, Ph.D.
Manager, Kemper Center
Missouri Botanical Garden

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