



Master Gardener News

A monthly publication of the St. Louis Master Gardeners

February 2006

Calendar of Events

Continuing Education Class – Plants of Merit
with Mary Ann Fink
February 27th 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Kemper Classroom

Advisory Board Committee Meeting
February 28th 10:00 a.m. Kemper Classroom

Tree & Shrub Care Demonstration & Exhibit
March 4th 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Kiener Plaza

Gateway Honeysuckle Summit
March 16th 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Powder Valley Nature Center

Spring Dig – March 18th 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Ridgway Center MBG



What's Inside

Plant these berry-bearing shrubs in your yard for a surprise treat... Bird Bath

New Smoke Free Policy at the Garden...

John Stephen's Q&A

Brighten up your indoors with Bromeliads...

Increase your plant stock inexpensively... Book Review

A Word from the Editor, by Stacy Rolfe

I have this ongoing debate with myself as to whether or not life should be like our garden. In one sense, I think it would be nice to have the control that we have over our planted worlds. For instance, when weeds pop up we can simply pull them out and be rid of them. And in that sense I think our lives would be made easier if when bad influences enter our lives or those of our children that we could just pluck them out and discard them into the trash. Doesn't happen that way does it? And I also wonder at how our lives would be if they were as perfectly planned as we do the colors in our yards for the seasons. True, we do plan our lives to a certain degree – college, career, family and so on, but, how would it be if we planned the timing element of our lives as precisely as we do that of our gardens. Would that be a good thing? Would we like to know exactly when things in our lives are going to change? Some may, but, then what about the

element of surprise – that wouldn't exist. Or what if we could choose our daily companions as easily as we choose our plant companions? We place plants in our yard that look good together – how vain is that when you're talking about the real world! And, look at how fickle we can be when it comes to our gardens. We may like the look for years or we may be the kind of gardener who needs a new look every three-five years. Where's the longevity in that? Real life doesn't work that way. But, it would be nice if we could change the landscape of our children's friends as easily as we choose what goes next to our coneflowers year in and year out. Yes, the garden in our own backyards does have its own merit for flexibility, stability and even continuity. What do you think – would you like to mirror the paths in your own backyards, or live your life like the native plants growing amongst the rolling hills on the backyard of anywhere?



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

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





Volunteer Opportunities



Tilles Park Seeking Master Gardeners

Tilles Park is a 29 acre park located at Hampton and Fyler Avenues in southwest St. Louis City. Among its amenities are a playground, tennis courts, roller hockey rink, handball courts, ball fields and restroom/storage facilities. There is a network of paved paths throughout the park which are used regularly by walkers and joggers. Tilles Park is home to the spectacular Winter Wonderland lights display.

For the past decade the Park has been maintained by the Neighborhood Association in conjunction with the St. Louis Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry.

The Park is very hopeful that Master Gardener's will be interested in bringing their horticulture expertise and talent to further enhance the beauty of the park grounds.

For questions or to sign up to volunteer please contact Suzanne Hirth, Head Gardener at 314.781.0247.

Chesterfield Garden Tour

Join us for Chesterfield's second annual Garden Tour Saturday, June 24, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. rain or shine and visit six private gardens. Rose gardens, shady paths, dry creek beds, a rock retaining wall, waterfalls and an outdoor Tuscan style shower room await you. Outdoor tables will be set by Mary Tuttle's, F.O.B. Saint Louis, Inc., Floribunda, Inc., The Mulberry Tree, Ltd., Botanicals on the Park and The French Wench Antiques to give you great entertaining ideas. St. Louis Master Gardeners from the Missouri Botanical Garden will be available to answer plant and gardening questions. Members from the Rose Society, Hosta Federation, Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri and the St. Louis Herb Society will be available for Tour visitors. The Herb Society will have their books [How to Grow Herbs in the Midwest](#) and [The St. Louis Herb Society Cookbook](#) on hand as well as curry powders and flavored vinegars.

For more information or to volunteer call (636) 537-4000. Tickets will be available starting April 3, 2006 at Chesterfield City Hall or by internet at www.chesterfield.mo.us. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 the day of the tour at City Hall.



Hats off to MG Trainee Sage McKinley for submitting this article on plant diseases...

Abiotic Plant "Diseases"

All gardeners are concerned with insects and diseases harming their plants, but did you know that *humans* can cause more damage to plants than

both of those problems combined? People don't often think of the unintentional effects we have on our plants' environment, but they should. Some practices not only physically damage plants, but can make them more susceptible to the very pests we're trying to control. Here are three of the worst:

- 1) **"Lawnmower Disease"** – any time a tree's bark is injured, such as nicking with a lawnmower or weed eater, causes damage to the tree that may not be seen for months or even years. The bark on a tree is like our skin; it is the primary protection from invasion by pests and disease and is also an important part of a tree's vascular system.
- 2) **Road salt.** Salt runoff affects the chemical composition of the soil and will kill plants not only in the vicinity of the paved area, but also plants in the runoff channels. Turfgrass is particularly affected by salting.
- 3) **Soil compaction.** When soil is compacted by overuse or by heavy landscape maintenance equipment, the soil particles have less surface area for water, air and nutrients to be absorbed by the roots.





Q&A with John Stephens

Q: Why does my holly bush have no red berries?



A: Hollies, *Ilex sp.*, are dioecious, and most female plants require a nearby, timely male pollinator for berry production. The male forms, of course, produce no berries. Thus, it may be that your plant is male, or if it's female, that there are no suitable male pollinators nearby. To correct this situation, first, plant a female of the same species nearby, and, next if this doesn't work, plant a male pollinator, which flowers at the same time as your current specimen, in the general area.

Q: Are there any super-fast growing trees recommended for this area that are more-or-less immune to weather damage?



A: An overly simple answer to your question is "no"; however, it deserves more study since tree selection always involves

compromise. To avoid long term problems, you are urged to review the University of Missouri Extension Guides G6800, (Tree Selection), and G6900, (Placing Trees in the Home Landscape), to be found in webpages at <http://muextension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/hort/g06800.htm> and <http://muextension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/hort/g06900.htm> respectively.

Q: What should I do about the football-sized hornet's nest that I have discovered in my white pine tree?



A: Since by this time the nest, created by paper-wasps, has been vacated and will not be used again, it is unnecessary to do anything. If its presence is bothersome, it can be knocked down and disposed of. Otherwise, it will just weather away and likely fall from its support.

Q: Why do you think the worms in my outdoor compost pile have suddenly died?



A: The worms have probably died because they were cold-sensitive and succumbed as the pile cooled. Another possibility is that some sort of toxic substance was added to the pile. To help sort this out, it may be helpful to review additions made to the pile over the past couple of months. This is a good example of the

benefits of keeping a detailed log for your garden.

Q: My schefflera has dropped more than half its leaves since being returned indoors in mid-autumn; what could be wrong?



A: Schefflera, *Brassaia actinophylla*, often responds to a change in environment by dropping some leaves, but half the foliage seems excessive. It may have been chilled and/or overwatered. Your plant should now be located in a southeastern or southwestern exposure, held at people-temperatures, watered only when the top one-inch layer of soil is dry to the touch, and not fertilized until April. Be sure to discard promptly any drainage water that flows into the safety saucer under the pot.



Q: How might I propagate an especially attractive Japanese maple tree?



A: Japanese maples can be propagated via seeds, cuttings, grafting, or budding. Most experts suggest that seeds be tried first. Soak dry seeds for several hours in warm water. The wet seeds should then be mixed with moist sphagnum peat moss, the mixture placed in a plastic bag, which is closed by folding the top, and stratified at 39-41°F (refrigerator, not freezer), for about 120 days. The seeds can then be retrieved and planted in flats or in the ground nursery. Germination is usually slow. Comparable information on other methods of propagation is readily available in University of Missouri Extension Guide Sheets.

Q: What is meant by the term "rain garden"?



A: A rain garden is a miniature wetland created to control flooding and run-off problems of urban properties during periods of heavy rains. The concept is receiving increased attention as an opportunity to provide beauty and diversity using native wetland plants in the home garden.



A thought for gardeners:
Experience is a wonderful thing.
It enables you to recognize a
mistake when you make it again.
Anon.



Add Color to Winter – Bromeliads
By
Anne Ragland

Winter is a great time to add a bromeliad to your houseplant collection. They are an ideal low light, low maintenance plant. They come in a lot of bright colors and bloom up to four months.

Some people recommend using purified water, but I have always used tap water with no ill effects. Let the soil dry out between waterings. Soil should be damp on bottom and dry to touch on top. Too much moisture will rot the roots. There are two schools of thought on where to water. Some prefer to water in the soil directly and some prefer to water in the cup formed by the center leaves. Both ways work equally well in my experience. A weak fertilizer may be used every two weeks, but isn't necessary. During the summer, it will be happy outside in dappled shade.

After the bloom has faded, cut the flower stalk off to the base. You will be left with a lovely green houseplant. If you want to try to get it to re-bloom,

there is a trick to use. Place it into a re-sealable plastic bag with a slice of apple. Make sure there is no water standing in the leaf cups and seal the bag. About ten days with the apple slice will encourage the plant to produce a new flower stalk.

Bromeliads photo courtesy of Ahners Garden and Gifts



Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes for November 22, 2005
can be found at
<http://outreach.missouri.edu/stlouismg/minutes/minutes.htm>





Missouri Botanical Garden Tobacco-Free Policy

The Garden continues its move toward becoming tobacco free by **April 1, 2006**. Whether you currently or formerly smoke or use tobacco here at work or anywhere else, know that our decision to institute a tobacco-free environment does not indicate an "anti-smoker" bias. In fact, if we are biased, it is toward health!

Scientific evidence continues to mount citing the health hazards of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). It has been classified as a known human carcinogen, as have asbestos and benzene. In 1993, the Environmental Protection Agency concluded that ETS kills as many as 3,000 adult non-smokers each year from lung cancer and that the workplace is a significant source of ETS. Additional findings show levels of ETS exposure are lowest in smokefree workplaces.

The Garden's mission focuses on quality of life, so it's important that we take a leadership role in this major public health issue for the sake of our own employees and

visitors. Additionally, we are trying to do our part to manage rising national healthcare costs. It is especially important that each of us adopts a supportive demeanor toward others who are taking the necessary steps to comply with new policy.



Bird Bath
By
Connie Alwood

Berry-Eating Birds

Most birds, even the seedeaters such as the finches, even the insectivores, such as the warblers, will eat berries. American Robins and Northern Mockingbirds eat lots of berries, but the robin prefers worms and the mockingbird prefers insects. The true gourmands of the berry eating birds are the Cedar Waxwing and the Gray Catbird. They will eat insects also, but their preferred food is berries.

The Cedar Waxwing, in fact, is partially named for its penchant of eating cedar or juniper berries. The winter of 2004 was devoid of these berries and Missouri was, therefore, devoid of waxwings. This year the junipers have produced a bumper crop—Voila! Waxwings abound. Persimmons are also a favorite food of waxwings.

Usually these beautifully crested, sleek birds with yellow tipped tails and red in the tips of their wings will travel in flocks. In winter these flocks can contain as many as fifty to one hundred birds. I usually hear their soft, high-pitched whistle before I ever see them. Then all of a sudden they will all fly out of a tree

in a tight formation.

The Gray Catbird, like its cousins the Northern Mockingbird and the Brown Thrasher, is a mimic. Catbirds have a large repertoire of noises and calls—one being a meow, thus its name. He usually nests in my woods staying at eye level; seldom is he high off the ground. This summer resident (he winters in the south and the Caribbean) can't be lured to my feeders, but he will eat all of the spring and summer berries, including elderberry, mulberry, and honeysuckle.

Now is the time to start planning what berry-bearing shrubs you want to plant in order to invite these two species into your garden.





Book Review
By
Holly Parks

Plant Propagation should be in the library of every gardener who wants to increase their plant stock inexpensively, whether starting from seeds, grafting, budding, layering or dividing. Whether it is the challenge of using a new technique that intrigues you or the satisfaction you find in seeing new plant growth, you will find this book delightful. The instructions are explicit and detailed with the key techniques illustrated in step-by-step photographs and drawings. It is hard to imagine how you could make as mistake following the guidelines. Perhaps the only problem is the time it will take to raise a mature plant – you will certainly need patience to propagate orchids or trees!

The book has so much information that it is hard to summarize it. It covers all the basics of any propagation technique using photos to demonstrate the specifics. It then covers plant categories in detail: trees, shrubs, climbing plants, perennials, annuals and biennials, succulents, bulbs and vegetables. Within each plant category, it covers individual plant groups; e.g., orchids, bromeliads, ferns, ornamental grasses, and then includes an "A-Z" list of specific species and cultivars.

One example is the hosta, where the book covers division of large clumps but also includes a technique called "topping" to increase the number of

crown buds. [Although found many hostas easily start from seed; they self-sow, in spite of the deer, in my yard.] Or you can start coleus stem tip cuttings in soil cubes or in a moss roll for very large number of cuttings in a relatively small space. Orchid propagation covers eight pages alone, starting with commercial methods and detailing backbulbs, pseudobulbs, eyes, cuttings and adventitious growth.

Plant Propagation by The American Horticultural Society is a 320 page hardcover book published by DK Publishing. It is available for \$35.00 [or \$28 for Master Gardeners] at the Garden Gate Shop at the Botanical Gardens.



What: Tree & Shrub Care Demonstration & Exhibit – A Tribute to Quality Tree Care

When: Saturday, March 4th
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Where: Kiener Plaza

Cost: Free

Who: Sponsored by Gateway Greening and the St. Louis Arborists Assoc. in association with Gateway Professional Horticulturists Association, St. Louis Community College at Meramec Horticulture Program, Missouri Department of Conservation and Downtown St. Louis Partnership

Attendees will have an opportunity to learn from the professionals, featuring demonstrations by certified arborist

teams from over 10 professional tree care companies and professional horticulturists from the region's finest golf course and landscape care companies. In addition to the educational intent of the event, the services donated by the landscape professionals will result in the proper pruning of all trees and shrubs on the grounds and streetscape perimeter of Kiener Plaza, including the landscape median on Market Stree. This tree and shrub care activity marks the beginning of another season of horticultural enhancements in downtown St. Louis by Gateway Greening, St. Louis Master Gardeners and their team of volunteers.

For more information contact Mara Redmon at Gateway Greening 314.577.9484.

What: Gateway Honeysuckle Summit

When: Thursday, March 16th
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Where Powder Valley Nature Center

Cost: \$10 pre-registration marked by March 3rd Mail to The Green Center 8025 Blackberry Ave. University City MO 63130

Who: Sponsored by Gateway Honeysuckle Consortium in cooperation with representatives from St. Louis communities, botanical institutions, conservation organizations and the horticulture green industry.

A Honeysuckle Summit for sharing information about methods, practices, and strategies for controlling Bush Honeysuckle and other regional invasive plants.

For more information contact Maureen Helfers at mo4915@aol.com or visit www.thegreencenter.org

Please note that dates and times may have changed from the last announcement.



SpringDig Offers Green Thumb Basics and Expert Advice

Author and Humorist Felder Rushing and Dr. Dirt are Special Guests

What: "SpringDig" Gardening Help Symposium

When: Saturday, March 18, 2006
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Where: Ridgway Center MBG

Cost: \$40 or \$35 Member discount

Sponsors: Kemper Center & Flora Conservancy

Information: 314.577.9441 or

<http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/>

Press Release:

SpringDig, the Missouri Botanical Garden's third annual home gardening event on Saturday, March 18th will have a Southern accent this year.

Two nationally known Mississippi gardeners, author Felder Rushing and "Dr. Dirt" will share their passion for gardening with a down-home approach in a talk called "Left Brain, Right Brain: In Real Gardens, Horticultural Rules Stink!"

Rushing, a 10th generation Southern gardener, is a popular horticulturist, author, speaker and humorist known for his folksy style. He has written 14 books, including the award-winning *Passalong Plants*. Rushing and his garden have appeared in many national magazines, on the Discovery Channel and Home & Garden Television (HGTV). He writes several garden columns and co-hosts a weekly radio program on Mississippi Public Broadcasting with Dr. Dirt (a.k.a. Leon Goldsberry).

Dr. Dirt and his homestead cottage

garden full of heirloom flowers, passed down plants and found objects have been featured in *Southern Living* and on HGTV's "A Gardener's Diary."

The special guest speakers are co-sponsored by the Flora Conservancy of Forest Park, SpringDig offers a full day of expert home gardening advice, inspiration and resources for beginners from 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. in the Garden's Ridgway Center, 4344 Shaw Blvd.

Presenters are some of St. Louis's greenest thumbs – staff experts and horticulturists from the botanical garden's William T. Kemper Center for Home Gardening. Topics include soil basics, growing a perfect lawn, top performing perennials, Plants of Merit, attracting hummingbirds, and gardening resources on the Web.

More than 5,000 pages of useful gardening information can be found on the Garden's Web site at www.mobot.org Helpful online resources include the PlantFinder database, HortLine gardening topics, NurseryTracker business locator, and Integrated Pest Management strategies.

Bring a soil sample from your yard to the SpringDig for a free, do-it-yourself acid-to-alkaline test with volunteer assistance. Master Gardeners form the Horticulture Answer Service and the Plant Doctor desk will be on hand to answer questions and offer personalized gardening advice.

Check out displays by master Gardeners and the Flora Conservancy of Forest Park. Two-by-six foot lumber kits made of recycled plastic pots – durable and perfect for constructing raised beds – will be on display and available to purchase.

Cost to attend the program is \$40 (\$35

for Garden members). The fee does not include lunch. Auditorium seating is first come, first served. Advance registration is required. To register or for more information, call 314.577.9441.

The Buzz Books are Coming...the Buzz Books are Coming!



Our new 2006 MG Buzz Book will be arriving soon. Be sure to check out the new design Ann Robison has put together to make this book even more useful. Books will be arriving via postal service.



If you have an interest in helping the Boy Scouts then why not combine Scouting and Gardening....

The Speaker's Bureau is currently working on offering Merit Badge Resource Centers for several horticultural related badges. If you are interested in getting in on the ground floor of this dynamic new combination, please contact Van Spurgeon at 314.862.9145.



Master Gardener News



We also extend our sympathies to Dennis Chamber's family on the passing of his wife Mary K. (Shultes) Chambers.

Dennis is a longtime Master Gardener volunteering at the Plant Doctor desk on Saturdays.

Please visit the notice for Mary K. Chambers at <http://www.legacy.com/Link.asp?=-LS16410449X>

Our condolences are extended to the families of Ms. Katherine W. (Kitty) Hoblitzelle, Master Gardener, who passed away on January 19, 2006. Kitty, among a long list of accomplishments, was a founder and president of Gateway to Gardening, now Gateway Greening Inc. She was a certified Master Gardener and a Master Composter. She was a member of the Committee for Environmental Education, the Task Force to Save Weldon Spring and the Open Space Council. She was a member of the board and president from 1990 to 1998 of EarthWays, now EarthWays Center, a division of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Kitty's complete obituary can be found at <http://littleurl.com/?044c>

St. Louis Master Gardeners
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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
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