

Roots & Shoots



Master Gardener
Society of
Oakland County, Inc.



December 2015 – January 2016



December 8, 2016 @ 6:30pm
MGSOC General Society Meeting & Location
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Holiday Potluck



January 12, 2016 @ 6:30pm
MGSOC General Society Meeting & Location
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Speaker : Sue Grubba
Education: "Pruning: Learn It Before You Get Snippy"

A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational Program.



February 9, 2015 @ 6:30pm
MGSOC General Society Meeting & Location
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Speaker : Laura Zigmanth
Education: "Identification and Control of Invasive Plants"

A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational Program.



Notes from Carol

The fall MG Training class just ended and we have 49 eager Trainees ready to go when the volunteer season heats up again. Margy Truza spoke to the class about MGSOC welcoming them to the wonderful world of Master Gardeners and the benefits of joining the Society. If you see any new faces at the winter MGSOC meetings, please make sure to greet them warmly and make them feel at home.

We are now registering people for the winter training class. This class will be held in the Conference Center at the Oakland County Service Center from January 21-April 28. We are trying something new this time around with the class time being from 5:30pm-9:30pm. Those of you who took the night class know that 6pm-10pm is a challenge. So far registration has been brisk, so the earlier time slot doesn't seem to be impacting it. For your future planning, 2016 fall class will be at Tollgate 9am-1pm; winter 2017 will be at the County Conference Center from 5pm-9pm). If you know anyone who wants to take the class, please let them know that the deadline to register is Friday January 8. The class is very popular so it often fills before the deadline date. The application is submitted online and can be found at: http://mg.msue.msu.edu/become_a_master_gardener_volunteer/upcoming_training_classes (scroll down to the Waterford location) or https://www.oakgov.com/msu/Pages/classes_activities/gardening_classes.aspx (scroll down to January 21).

One of my winter projects is to describe/clarify some of the project names in the VMS because I see there's confusion as to where to put your hours. Once done we'll email the document to all Oakland MG's and if there's room, we'll put it on our VMS Homepage.

You may have seen some people using the term "Extension Master Gardeners" or EMG's. This is the term used in many other states and as we strive to make our Michigan program meet national standards we will start using this name for you.

Thanks to all of you for your volunteer service this year! You make the lives of so many so much better through your community service! Hopefully you can rest up this winter so you can move into spring rested, relaxed, and raring to go! Wishing you some peace (and quiet) this holiday season and health and wealth in this New Year.

Reminder

Hours Submission Deadline

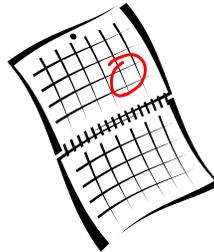
If you haven't started submitting your educational and volunteer hours for the year, it's time to start! Judging how fast summer went, **the deadline of December 31st** will be here before we know it! If you wait until December 31st and have problems, there will be no one to help you as it is a holiday. You will be getting email reminders of the hours submission deadline as well as the 2016 Re-certification Timeline through the VMS.

December 31st, 2015: All 2015 (and prior year lapsed) education and volunteer hours must be entered into the VMS.

January 11, 2016: 2016 Re-certification Period Opens.

January 29, 2016: 2016 Re-certification Period Closes (5:00 p.m. close of business day).

If you have questions or need help, please contact Lynne Shull at 248-858-0887 or shulll@oakgov.com.



The Year at a Glance—MGSOC Meetings/Events for 2016

December 8	Holiday Potluck	
January 12	Sue Grubba	Pruning: Learn It Before You Get Snippy
February 9	Laura Zigmanth	Identification and Control of Invasive Plants

...from the cabbage patch



Please remember to notify our Corresponding Secretary, Nancy Schmid, with member news so she can forward the appropriate correspondence to our fellow Master Gardeners. As corresponding secretary, Nancy sends cards of cheer, congratulations and condolences to our members as the situation warrants and Nancy would welcome being alerted to any such opportunities. She would also appreciate knowing whether or not the member wishes to share their news with everyone.

Nancy has been a Master Gardener since 2010 as well as a member of the Project Support Team since then. Nancy is also the keeper of the Master Gardener cookbooks so please keep her in mind if you have news to share or need a gift for gardener.

Contact Nancy at 248.651.7639 or 586.662.9394 (cell) or via email at nancy.c.s@comcast.net.

Call for Articles



This newsletter depends on you to submit articles for its bi-monthly editions. If you have visited an interesting garden while on vacation, have attended a noteworthy class, or are knowledgeable in a gardening-related topic, please feel free to write an article to share and submit it for publication in a future edition. You may report your writing time as Volunteer Hours.

The deadline for the February—March Edition is January 15, 2016.

E-mail your articles to Roots & Shoots editor Dick Wanat at rwanat155056mi@comcast.net

Dehydrating Vegetables

Karen Burke from Macomb County MSUE discussed her use of dehydrators to preserve vegetables and fruits for our October membership meeting. She brought a dehydrator which was about \$300. She emphasized that it is important to have a temperature control. Besides dehydrating, she uses her machine for making yogurt and raising bread dough. She can set the dehydrator at 120 degrees so enzymes remain intact. It is important to slice the vegetables thin and maintain the same size pieces so that the dehydration is even so you don't get crusty exteriors and mushy insides that might go moldy. It is important to use gloves after dehydrating so no foreign matter is introduced.

Tools she uses are a mandolin, peeler, knife, garlic slicer, cutters and food mill. After dehydration she packs the food in glass jars or Mylar bags and uses a vacuum sealer to suck all air out before sealing. She uses an oxygen absorber inside the package. The food needs to be protected from light, moisture and varmints. And it can last as long as 30 years!

The food doesn't lose nutritional value as it does when canned. Cherry tomatoes can be sliced in half. Garlic and onions can be dehydrated, but some people put the dehydrator in the garage because they can be pretty odoriferous. She has tried to dehydrate celery, but it just doesn't work. Zucchini can be sliced and eaten like potato chips or grated and used in zucchini bread and other recipes. Kale is sweeter after hard frost. Strip the leaves off the stem, dehydrate and crumble into a jar. Many vegetables need to be steamed before they are dried. Some turn black in the process but when cooked again, they turn back to green. Squash and pumpkin can be roasted first, then pureed and dehydrated and used in quick breads.

One of the amazing things about dehydrating is that the vegetables take up very little room; for example, a bushel of dried tomatoes can fit into a pint jar. Tomato powder can be mixed with water (1:4-6) to make tomato paste. Dried apples can be mixed 1:1 with hot water for pies.

The practical uses of dehydrating are many: preserve your harvest (with no preservatives!), make ahead meals. Gift baskets, camping and for designing your own "cup-o-soup."

Karen recommended several books: [So Easy to Preserve](#), [Preserve It Naturally](#), and [The Ultimate Dehydrator Cookbook](#).

Submitted by Jean Gramlich

New Annuals For 2016

John Gaydos, who works in product development for Proven Winners (PW) gave our November talk about what's new for 2016 and how plants are developed by PW. Most of their plants are produced through tissue culture and do not set seed so they will bloom continuously without deadheading. The company tries to market plants which will do well from Florida to California to Michigan and New Hampshire. They have subsidiaries in Europe, Japan, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia.

The process of bringing a plant to market is quite long. Breeders work on plants for one to ten years; after that PW trialing takes 2-3 years. They start with 4000 plants each year and winnow them down to about 35 at the end of the trialing period. Trials are global but regionalized. Laboratory work and production trials take another 3 to 5 years. Sensitivity to pathogens is an important criterion for deciding whether or not to bring a plant to market. After going through that process, the marketing department works out strategies, and then they train retailers and growers.

They have huge greenhouses in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Israel where they grow the plants starting in November so that they can be grown from cuttings for the U.S. and Canadian markets. Evaluations from retailers and public feedback are an important part of the process.

There are several gardens within a day-trip distance where interested Michigan gardeners can visit PW trial areas: Walters Gardens in Zeeland, Four Star in Carleton and Focus One Trials in Simcoe, Ontario.

This talk was another example of why you should attend the meetings to enjoy the pictorial presentation. John showed pictures of gardens and containers full of lush PW cultivars: Superbells (*Callibrachos*) and Supertunias were especially impressive. Superbells should not be planted in the ground because they rot if it rains a lot. Eye-popping new colors of Superbells are Evening Star, purple with a pinwheel look, and Holy Moly, yellow with pink stripes, and Garden Rose. Supertunia new colors are Raspberry Blast and Black Cherry as well as Picasso in Burgundy and Picasso in Pink. Pansiola, a cross between violas and pansies, blooms all summer. Sweetheart Lime sweet potato vine is controlled and won't hog the whole container. The new *Dahlia* Dahlightful Sultry Scarlet has very dark foliage with short-stemmed flowers. ColorBlaze Velveteen *Coleus* was so lush it jumped off the screen. *Lobularia* Dark Knight is a very rich color with prolific blooms. John particularly likes Bidens Campfire which grows quite tall and fills in nicely. The Hello series of gerberas produce long-lasting flowers. *Nemesia* Sunsatia blooms throughout the summer.

The secret to keeping the blooms going all summer is fertilization and water. He waters his own plants daily and uses water soluble fertilizer every time he waters. He recommends fertilizing at least every 3 irrigations.

John invited us to ask him questions at john@provenwinners.com.

Submitted by Jean Gramlich

Notes from Nutcase Nursery

At this time of year I should be curling up with my umpteen catalogs, sipping hot chocolate by a snap-crackly, lovely fire but I am not yet done with my usual late season garden crime scene investigation whining, and I don't actually have a fireplace, unless you count my little fire pit outdoors.

We are pretty much out of good garden weather days, but there are still things to address. I hyperventilate in terror annually anticipating the first frost/freeze, desperate to save the last of my precious photosynthesizers. But intellectually, after so many years of beating my head against the winter sky, I understand completely that it's all over when the Frost Lady sings.

My first brilliant plan for winter preparation was to let that "horrible wind," which was predicted the second week in November, blow all the leaves off the trees and ship them to the North Pole. However, the last time that happened, they came back as record breaking snow, so for a short time I was grateful that the winds weren't as bad as we were told to expect. Now, before you question my sanity, think about this for a minute. Look at the record-breaking snow we had just before Thanksgiving. Could it have been caused by leaves blown to Santa's workshop for later transformation into holiday snow? In proofing this theory, I have decided **not** because there were way too many leaves left around here to account for 12 inches of white stuff coming back. I was very blessed to have others help in clearing the "stuff" and since the ground hadn't frozen, it was most welcome pre-winter moisture for Mother Earth. Going into winter dry spells certain death for some plants and especially trees and we are very dry overall heading into winter this year. It will be interesting to see what El Niño brings us because a snow blanket will come in very useful as winter protection and predictions aren't indicating much snow for us. More on that later.

True confession: I don't like winter. I can't find my car in a public parking lot when it's below 45 degrees. I am the first to admit that I really don't work well when the temperature falls; my optimum temp range is 68 to 72 degrees with preferably low humidity. Mentally, I would really like to be out there trimming shrubs and trees but that's not going to happen. I wear longjohns from October to May. I know that I may/will eventually come to cherish the time away from the daily nursery chores, in a mini-retirement that might last until Bordine's seed sale in February. My calluses might soften by next season. My farmer's tan will fade eventually. The seeds from the gaillardia, penstemon, lupines and others needing stratification will get their time in the deep freeze and spring will bring wonderful surprises. This is how I try to get through the winter. Delusionally.

It didn't help my Seasonal Affective Disorder to witness the first holiday decoration in the 'hood in early November. The record for the earliest decorating was set a few years ago when inflatables went up the week after Halloween. The same family set another record by not taking them down until Easter. But as usual, I digress.

There are still plenty of maintenance jobs with which to entertain and possibly endanger yourself at this time of year. Clean, oil and sharpen the tools of course. Put your garden art away properly. If you can't store your pots in a frost free environment, at least cover them and give them blocks to sit on. I used to have a couple of glass globes until I lost one to a freak wind. Now I have stainless steel globes and "decorative" bowling balls that even the Dingo mostly leaves alone unless a critter is involved.

At this time of year I pray that we get the rain needed to boost survival chances because putting the hoses away and shutting down the pump has to be done before the pump freezes and the hoses become so stiff I can't roll them up to store. I also play a guessing game with the rain barrels. It takes quite a lot of effort to bring over 100 gallons of rainwater into the house for storage and one slip of the temperature can cause a lot of trouble. Every gallon requires vetting so there has to be sufficient time and weather to make sure there are no leakers so they have to spend at least one night on the driveway before being allowed inside. I have a deep regard for electricity and water I can't stop and if you think that I learned this by accident, you are correct. If I need more excitement I will put a small piece of tinfoil in the microwave.

There is still time as long as the weather allows for keeping up the gardening activity, which at this point is pretty much about cleanup. This is about the right time to prep roses for winter, when the soil is not quite frozen. Cleanup of old leaves is essential for rose health and there should rarely be a reason to prune. Mound soil up around the base using your judgment as to how high the mound should be and do not use the soil adjacent to said rose, or any other rose for that matter. Take soil from elsewhere on your estate because disturbing the soil around the plant is diametrically opposed to all that is proper in rose care. You could even indulge them and get them each a gift bag of premium potting soil for whatever solstice-related winter event you may joyously celebrate.

Having spent a great deal of penance for undone cleanup last year, I have worked really hard the past season to make up for that lack. Now that dormancy is on its way and the yard waste pick up ended December first, the cleanup plan that makes sense at the moment is to reuse, repurpose and recycle what happens to be left the best you can. Mums for instance have very shallow roots and they can be easily heaved out of the earth in the freeze/thaw cycles we commonly experience. They also fare better with a little protection. If I have clippers in my hand I cut them and leave the stems to cover or if I happen to not have tools I just bend the stems over until they snap and blanket effect works so beautifully I haven't lost a mum in years. Pretty much all of the dead plant material from the trees and gardens will break down as fascinating creatures from bacteria to worms recycle, reuse and repurpose that which was into that which will benefit what is to be. You know --- *compost happens*.

Repurposing yard waste doesn't sound too romantic but some yard waste like dried ornamental grasses, hydrangea flowers, holly berry branches, shiny redbud dogwood branches and evergreen cuttings make great centerpieces or a new wardrobe for redressing those pots on the porch that used to hold annuals. Water the soil, stick the stems in as far as you can (hydrangea flower heads have a tendency to become airborne and escape when it's breezy), and enjoy.

Another enjoyable winter gardening activity is bird watching which is really easy when you feed them. I know that winter is almost here when the juncos arrive and with El Niño in charge of the weather this year I saw them in their tieless tuxedos fairly early. Curious, considering the forecast. Something else that causes me to wonder about the weather was what we found in the shed. The plan was merely to open the doors, pull out the snowblower, insert one of the little greenhouses and possibly the lawnmower and be done. Three hours later we finished filling five garbage cans, two big and 3 normal size, with spruce cones. Possibly millions. I am sure that this is the work of some highly sophisticated squirrels, I just don't know if this was a team effort between the red squirrels and the fox squirrels, possibly even chipmunks, but one of those critters filled two milk cartons with 6-7 inch cones and loaded the place with food for the winter.

Five garbage cans and now I can't sleep at night because I'm afraid they will all starve to death because I destroyed their stash.

A bit more on recycling, etc. Don't forget to use your Christmas trees to serve and protect your landscape. If the neighbors freak, tell them gently that it's just part of winter gardening. Beyond interesting to look at through the snow, these materials provide food and habitat for birds in winter. It also provides me with an answer for why something didn't get done. "Oh, that pile. That's for the birds to shelter in. It's just a part of winter gardening." Smile beatifically.

As far as I can tell, the crops that can stay out for a longer time have all been covered or mulched. Shredded leaves are usually enough to protect the carrots and the kale has been fending for itself being interplanted within the loving arms of raspberry bushes and blown in leafage. But, sadly, the whining is again primarily about the cole crop failures: no cauliflower, no Brussels sprouts, broccoli flowers instead of heads and 2 rather dainty cabbages. For protecting your winter wonders, the most recommended winter protections are low tunnels made of plastic pipe bent over beds and covered with plastic sheeting; mulching and covering heavily with leaf mulch or straw; using a greenhouse (many of the respondents to Mother Earth's survey said that a greenhouse was their best investment); draping blankets, sheets and/or row cover over stakes and finally surrounding the planting bed with hay bales and cover the area with old windows. You never want plastic or any material that conducts cold to be any near the plants themselves. I avoid the plastic and use Remay row covers and hoops. Plastic is so bad I often wind up at this time of year stopping people who are buying poinsettias and other live plants at the grocery store to tell them that it would be safer to put their purchase in a paper bag rather than plastic. No one has called security on me yet.

If you have never tried winter gardening, you might want to think about it. I was hooked and declared it totally worthwhile when I picked my first spinach salad in March years ago. To maintain some sanity you need to remember that gardening is an experiment and expectations are not always met, especially at this time of year in Michigan.

One of my sources considers winter gardening "surprisingly easy." But it all depends on where you live and how clever you are at pairing particular plants with particular locations. Most properties have a nook or a cranny that would make a safe place to harbor - - - a southern exposure that retains heat or an area protected from wind and temperature fluctuation. Something to keep in mind is the fact that heat winds up being more deadly than cold at times and on sunny days paraphernalia like cold frames, hoops and greenhouses can heat up and cook your crop, so you need to remember to vent. Venting is not a fun activity, especially when you have a schedule that requires you to leave in the morning and come home at night in complete darkness.

Another fact of life in winter gardening is that you won't be growing anything that flowers and fruits like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant. You will want greens - - - nice leafy, sturdy fresh greens like spinach, kale, parsley, arugula, some Asian greens, and chard. Roots veggies like carrots, turnips, leeks and sometimes radishes are good to grow as well. I have found that radish doesn't like it here in the winter, likely a hydration issue. But, as usual it's all dependent upon the weather and the timing. For instance if your intent would be to pick carrots all winter, know that after the ground freezes beyond the capabilities of its mulch, you will probably need a bucket of warm water to get them out of the ground. And - they could be

mush. When it's so cold that the garlic by the back door is frozen in soil that rarely ever freezes, I start to freak out and think I'm going to die.

I could also whine about the shortage of beets, cucumbers and blueberries but I could really go off about genetically modified organisms (GMOs). There is virtually no GMO-untainted corn or soy and I really think if someone is going to experiment with genetics they should work on crossing a butternut squash with a banana so I could peel it gently rather than having it end up masquerading as a hacked-up, slightly sunburned, naked penguin. But I love it just the same. (I just realized that there **is** something I love associated with winter – it just happens to be its squash.)

Now, a little on El Niño – Could Mean a Strange Winter Ahead

The ominous sound of one of the notifications I receive set me back a little but the actual bulletin didn't offer a lot of definitive info because it clearly stated at the beginning of the article that El Niño is a climate-affecting, semi-regular event which is cyclical "in an irregular but somewhat predictable way." I believe that phrase can be found on page 112 in the "Weather Prognosticator's Handbook of Terms." The phrase is used by the media to describe any nebulous weather situation, which just about covers all of them. The same phrase can be used to describe how a three-year-old accomplishes dressing itself.

Yes, it appears likely that a): An El Niño is coming – or – b) the child is going to put on clothing
Yes, El Niños are associated with a): mild winters in the North and cooler temps in the South - or
b) the closet contains many things but the child understands that we're going for locating shirts and slacks; and finally, we really don't know a): everything the "Little Boy" has planned for the next several months – or – b) the child will be dressed but I have no idea what he'll look like.

El Niño is the name given to the weather entity known for spreading warm water and thunderstorms across the equatorial Pacific Ocean. The changes in the wind and weather caused by a warmer Pacific can last for one or two years. The jet-stream is involved of course but in winter there's more energy to be tossed around.

For us in Michigan, a Niño can make for a milder winter, with less snow, fewer extremes and drier conditions. That snow is what is needed for winter gardening protection. But the weather is supposed to be milder in the North and cooler in the South so maybe there won't be a problem with less snow if the temps perform as predicted. The dryness may be a problem because water is life.

In general, El Niño doesn't treat the United States as poorly as it does on the other side of the world. While we are inclined to have fewer major hurricanes in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico and well-needed winter rain in California (with possible mudslides of course), on the opposite side of the globe, places like Indonesia and Australia can suffer devastating drought. Beware, because El has a sister, La Niña, who can be big or little. She could be the next visitor in one or two years and she plays a different tune. Since we can't control either, the best we can do is pay attention, be prepared and never give up.

Hopefully in the next issue I'll remember to put in the spring weather info and tips for predicting frost. I am sure I have forgotten some of what I wanted to share with you but that's probably because I'm cold. Until then, I wish you all a wonderful, safe, warm and beautiful Holiday season from Nutcase Nursery!

P.S. 12-31 Happy Birthday to Sylvia Schult!!!!

Some Information You Should Know

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2nd Vice President: vacant
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Mission Statement

It is the Master Gardener Society of Oakland County's Mission to assist, enable, and encourage its members to use their horticultural knowledge and experience to help the people of their communities, enrich their lives through gardening and good gardening practices.

Michigan State University Extension- Oakland County
“Bringing Knowledge to Life”

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