

Roots & Shoots



Master Gardener
Society of
Oakland County, Inc.



February - March 2016



February 9, 2016 @ 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.



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

Speaker : Gary Eichen
Education: "How to Have a Healthy Lawn"

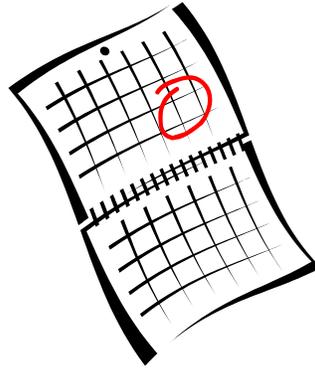
A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational Program.



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

Speaker : Drew Lathin
Education: "The Beauty of Native Plants: Their Function in Supporting Wildlife in Urban and Suburban Landscapes"

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



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

February 9	Laura Zigmanth	Identification and Control of Invasive Plants	
February 16		Conference Committee Meeting	6:00 pm, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
March 8	Gary Eichen	How to Have a Healthy Lawn	
March 15		Conference Committee Meeting	6:00 pm, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
March 21		Board Meeting	7:00 pm, Extension Office
April 12	Drew Lathin	The Beauty of Native Plants: Their Function in Supporting Wildlife in Urban and Suburban Landscapes	
April 19		Conference Committee Meeting	6:00 pm, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
April 23		MGSOC Educational Conference All Day--Gardening and All That Jazz	Oakland Schools Conference Center
May 3	George Papadelis	New Annuals and Perennials for 2016	Telly's Greenhouse, 3301 John R, Troy
May 16		Board Meeting	7:00 pm, Extension Office
June 14	Rebecca Tonietto	Bees of the Detroit Region: Attracting and Recognizing Native Pollinators	
July 5	Janet Macunovich	Improving the Older Garden	
August 9		tbd	
August 15		Board Meeting	7:00 pm, Extension Office
September 13	Ed Blondin	Witches: From Wonderful to Wicked to Wonderful	
October 11	Karen Burke	The Buzz about Bees	
October 17		Board Meeting	7:00 pm, Extension Office
November 8	Juliana Cerra	The Palmer House Landscape: History and Restoration	
November 21		Board Meeting	7:00 pm, Extension Office
December 13		Holiday Potluck	

...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 April—May Edition is March 15, 2016.

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

Pruning: Learn It Before You Get Snippy

Sue Grubba from Creative Scapes gave our January talk on pruning. First of all, you have to identify the plant so that you can best maintain its health. In general, plants need sunlight, air circulation and water to the roots, and you have to open up the plant's structure to maximize those elements. Air movement decreases the humidity and susceptibility to fungus and diseases. Plants need sunlight on the inside as well as the outside to promote needle and leaf development. Think of a yew or boxwood which has always been trimmed from the outside and flat-topped. If you look inside, you will see lots of branches with no leaves or needles because old wood has not been pruned out of the center.

Maintaining the integrity of the plant is a primary goal of pruning. A central leader should be established with the crown supported by main scaffolds which are proportionately spaced like a circular staircase. Wide angles of branches are the strongest and should be at least 45 degrees. Narrow Vs break in storms. When pruning branches, you need to identify the branch collar and cut there so the plant heals over well. Crossed branches should be removed as should weaker stems, sprouts and suckers. Thinning can promote natural shape and reduce the size of the plant if desired. Shrubs flower best on young wood, so it is best to take out the oldest wood.

The best time to prune most plants is in later winter when they are still dormant and bugs and diseases will not attack the new cuts. Summer flowering plants that bloom on new wood like *Hydrangea paniculata* and panicle *Hydrangeas* are included in this group. For renewal pruning, the oldest and thickest branches can be taken right down to the ground; rejuvenation can be achieved by cutting the whole shrub right down to the ground. Oak trees should be pruned from November to March to avoid transmitting oak wilt. Bradford pears are susceptible to fire blight and should be pruned in winter before new stems start to grow.

Spring-blooming shrubs should be pruned after blooming. Included in this group are *Magnolias*, lilacs, serviceberry, honeysuckle and *Forsythia*.

Plants that bloom on old wood like *Hydrangea quercifolia* and mopheads should be pruned after blooming. Annabelles can be pruned by cutting half of the stems to the ground and leaving half at 8-12" tall.

Spring bleeders like maple, yellowwood, birch, dogwood and walnut should be pruned in mid-summer. In general storm damaged or dead wood can be removed at any time. DO NOT prune after transplanting because removing branches and leaves decreases the plant's ability to produce food.

Pines should be pruned at the candle stage when they are pliable. Spruce and fir should be trimmed during the dormant stage. Yew and hemlock should be pruned to make openings for air and light "windows." Arborvitae, *Chamaecyparis* and juniper do not grow back, so that deer damage is forever! Winter-damaged boxwood should be trimmed out. Take off the old flowers on *Rhododendrons*.

Clematis should be trimmed back to get rid of old brittle wood leaving all fresh young stems.

With exceptions for renewal and rejuvenation, be careful not to trim too much of the plant in any one year. Removing more than 1/3 of the plant will not leave enough leaves or needles to produce the food it needs to thrive.

Submitted by Jean Gramlich

Notes from Nutcase Nursery

By now you might be knee-deep in seed catalogs, especially if you've been a Master Gardener for a while. I've written about the seductive nature of catalogs in the past but this is the time of year to reiterate some of the key points when buying by mail, sale or Braille. I once gave a class on plant shopping via the catalogs intending to educate the hopeful gardeners on the sorcery behind those amazingly coveted, rare and mystical blue flowers enhanced through the use of filters or using catalogs as resources for assisting those we meet at our 'Ask a Master Gardener' tables in picking out which tomato varieties have the best disease resistance.

We'll see how things are sprouting in February when local garden centers have their seed sales. And even though I have a bit of a problem with a certain company's lack of what I consider very necessary information when choosing tomato varieties, I will be tickled stupid if Burpee's comes through with seed donations this year so that the wonderful gang of MGs who transform mere dirt into soil and food for the community can get a break. I was told last year that the company was in the process of updating the info on its website but I just checked and the disease resistance info I was looking for still isn't there. Or maybe I just couldn't find it.



Although I am highly acrophobic, it never stops me from getting on a soapbox about almost anything related to being a Master Gardener. And you don't even have to pay me. I juggled a lot of things to take the course and get the hours for advanced certification in the same year and I take the title very seriously. I had wanted to take the class for several years before the stars aligned allowing me to pull it off and to me the experience has been probably the closest I'll ever get to being on a divine mission. I had only a general idea regarding the course content

but I knew that it was something I very much wanted to be a part of. I had met a few people through the years who identified themselves as Master Gardeners and who came across a bit uppity and I wondered if that went with the title, until I met Janet Macunovich and learned about exceptions and the need for a wider sample from which to draw a conclusion. I also learned a really slick trick to cut through the compost when meeting a "master gardener." Now I just ask where they do their volunteer hours and I know pretty much whether they are certified Master Gardeners or just riding the title from taking the class.

Gross ignorance is 144 times worse than regular ignorance, which is why MGs should be diligently reading the bulletins from MSU. Master Gardeners have a responsibility to educate themselves so they can responsibly educate others. That is also why the very first news item in each of Carol's Oakland Gardeners suggests reading those bulletins. Much has changed throughout the years, from the use of DDT to invasives and you might find it very worthwhile to purchase a new MG manual. With today's research, time-honored practices such as mulch volcanoes, tree wrapping and the like have gone by the wayside, while we also are realizing that "honored" practices such as ridding the world of milkweed is seriously jeopardizing the monarch butterfly and, quite likely, us. Without out pollinators we cannot survive.

The intro in the current Master Gardener Trainee manual (page 4) iterates the qualifications expected of an MG. See also the Participant Code of Conduct. The very reason we exist is to distribute useful, practical, research-based horticultural information to our communities. The very first item to focus on when volunteering is environmental stewardship, followed by improving community, growing food and youth gardening. As a member of the MGSOC, one should also be familiar with that group'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."

The neat thing is that you can accomplish all of those goals at once with a well-executed volunteer program plan like simply teaching families how to start a backyard garden.



The bottom line is you have to study to keep up, and there are plenty of resources available with which to educate yourself. We need to know the science and we need to get our information from scientific sources. And if someone asks you a question for which you don't readily have an answer, tell them you'll look it up and get back to them. Okay, I am getting dizzy and it's time to come down from the soapbox.

So - moving right along - - - last issue we batted around the idea of winter gardening and how fun Michigan weather can be. I mentioned that if I could remember to put in some tips for predicting frost I would. So I will. Some of this information might be more usable (and likely obvious) in the fall but if experience tells me anything, an unexpected nip in the early season can be way more heartbreaking than whatever happens in the fall just because you know the end is near after Labor Day and we're more ready for it.

The first indicator of potential frost is the absence of cloud cover. If the sky is clear and humidity is low, the chance for frost is indicated. With cloud cover, the radiant heat of the earth doesn't dissipate so readily. Actually, the first indicator should probably point out that we are not referring to conditions with temperatures above 45-50 degrees or so, unless there is some really freaky weather. I don't generally worry about frost in July, but I've seen it in August. Who knows what evil lurks? They are calling it the Godzilla Niño.

Wind is another factor in predicting frost. Since the earth absorbs heat from the sun during the day, that heat radiates upward and cooler air settles downward. If there is a gentle breeze, the warmer and cooler mix which moderates the temperatures a bit.

You also need to take into consideration micro-climates. We have both positive and negative micro-climates in nature. Cold air is far less buoyant than warm air. In fact, it's just dense and heavy, no offense. Cold air can flow downward into lower lying pockets and the temperature can vary close to twenty degrees between the top of a sunny slope and its bottom in the valley. A cold-air windbreak can be provided on sunny facing slopes by planting trees, which increase the humidity through transpiration and warm the air somewhat on its way down the hill. But planting a forest is not really something you can accomplish in an afternoon.

Speaking of slopes...I know that sometimes it's hard to remember what the sun looks like during a Michigan winter, but - a sunny slope, as in a southern exposure, is an ideal spot for a garden. Who

knew? Probably the people who built Machu Picchu. The only reason I bring it up is that this type of location would be the last area to get frosted. But we need to finish the science before we can finish up with ways to protect ourselves from the F bomb.

One more factor on the weather station to consider is the dew point. Temps generally fall after dark and the air holds less moisture as they drop. The moisture condenses and forms dew. When dew forms, it releases heat so there is less likelihood of frost formation when there is more moisture in the air at sunset. Many growers use overhead sprinklers at night when conditions warrant protection. I have had very good luck through the years by turning on my sprinklers before sunrise. I would actually wash the frost off, and if I didn't beat the sun, I lost the leaves. If the dew freezes, it's over. Overhead sprinklers cover a lot more territory than an old sheet but that old sheet is better than no sheet. No sheet.

In the last issue I mentioned a few methods of human intervention in the weather department to protect our photosynthesizers from almost certain mayhem. There are also a couple of other tools in the bucket that aid in the development of micro-climates but they don't fall into the overnight fix category.

Trees were mentioned earlier to mitigate cold air at the bottom of slopes but a garden surrounded on three sides by mature trees can survive heftier frost situations than a non-forested stand. For example, here the main vegetable garden is rectangular with the longest sides running east and west. When I bought the place, several Norway spruce along the north side grew within ten to fifteen feet of my precious land. One year, straight-line winds attempted to topple the first spruce in line and before I knew it, a disreputable tree service crew busied themselves destroying these fifty foot beauties. The only trait they possessed that was a source of irritation was their ability to send roots all the way to the southern edge of my garden. Each year we would till up frighteningly ugly bunches of feeder roots but there was no other way to plant the crops. The raspberries in the northeast quadrant of the garden did their best to persevere and did pretty well because of their shallow root systems.

Another frost-deflecting consideration is the use of walls, which can be stone, fences, or dense vegetation, and placement is paramount. Walls are ambidextrous; they can collect cold air and frost at the base on one side or be wonderfully warm places on a south side. It is suggested that if you deal with a wall situation, be it fencing or foliage, create an opening in the barrier to allow the cold air to drain.

So now you know how to predict and prevent frost but you can probably just ask your really smart phone. No doubt there's an app for that.

Since every gardening publication and website is discussing seed starting at the moment, of course I have to throw my two cents in. If you've tried it before, you probably have learned by experience what works and what doesn't. In the grand order of things, the first step to growing your own seedlings is preparation. It is always a good idea to decide what you want to grow, especially since that is the chief consideration when determining seed starting date. But I would suggest that before you wash and sterilize your containers, and dampen your potting mix, and level the soil, and make divots with a pencil and insert a seed, consider exactly how you will be introducing your plants-to-be to that which they require to make food – and that is light.

You might have all of the incidentals covered but without a plan for promoting proper photosynthesis you don't stand a chance. Though some plants require darkness to sprout, it won't be long before they will be craving the same juice that light cravers need. Some will require bottom heat and even temps and you can't really accomplish that on a window sill without having to rig up some kind of light and/or heat device. Most seedlings do not appreciate those energy saving devices known as setback thermostats and most require 14 to 18 hours of light in order to morph into sturdy, upstanding and green little citizens so timers are good to have handy as well as a little fan or two. The stems of plants like tomato, eggplant and pepper develop get stronger when periodically exposed to a gentle beneficial breeze.

So while you are deciding what to grow, consider something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue---ancient grains like sumac and amaranth, parsnips for winter greens, tubers from around the world and blueberries and elderberries. Some of the dirtiest commercially produced foods like apples, peaches, nectarines, strawberries, grapes, celery, spinach, peppers, cukes, cherry tomatoes, imported snap peas, potatoes, kale and collards are best grown in the home garden because the control of what they ingest and what we subsequently ingest when eating them is literally in our hands, not anyone else's.

If you're concerned about pesticides residues, genetically modified organisms and better nutrition, growing your own food or sticking to organics is about the only way you can be safe, or at least safer. Besides the wonderfulness of cooking and consuming fresh clean food, the benefits of edible gardening go beyond the culinary delightfulness of grazing your own garden. If you think in terms of carbon footprints, the energy savings from less travel involved in growing your own is monumental – no trucks, boats, trains, energy consuming mule teams. Less energy expended plowing, spraying chemicals and harvesting with fuel guzzling equipment. You save water and money and the payback is better nutrition. And maybe a blister and a backache or two.

As I have done my research over the years to create these love letters to you, I learned that it is fairly unwise to buy cherries, berries and other produce from outside of the USA. At this time of year I look at those Chilean cherries and start to drool a little. It's the same with those little 5 ounce containers of blueberries. No, put them back. Use the blueberries you froze last summer, make pancakes, think about Tollgate maple syrup and get over it.



Everywhere you turn you can be bothered by lists of good and bad, what's in, what's out, what costs, what saves. Food safety is a very important issue in the news every day. Chipotle's salmonella problems and Flint's water problems have been in the news for weeks. What is Flint water doing to food crops exposed to it? A friend told me the other day as we discussed the water crisis that when he lived in a certain Oakland county city, he had to buy bottled water for his houseplants because the tapwater killed them. Maybe it was from conditioned water but I really don't know. He said that he and his wife drank the water with no ill effects that they know of. But who really knows???

The list of lowest pesticide laden foods is interesting in that I detect a little bit of a theme. Most of the foods have either relatively tough skins, layered leaves or grow fast or underground. Avocados and pineapples are like hand grenades; eggplant, mangoes, grapefruit, cantaloupe and papayas have skins that fit nicely and protectively; sweet corn, cabbage, onions, cauliflower have layered skins and leaves

for keeping detriments from getting in and sweet potatoes and onions again grow underground. Asparagus grow so fast they must not have time to get contaminated. One report I read that was conducted on imported nectarines showed 100% contamination and at least 99% of the apples showed residue from at least one pesticide. Grapes tested showed residues from 15 different pesticides and the celery, cherry tomatoes, strawberries and imported snap peas showed over 13 pesticides.



Remember the first item listed in the Participant Code of Conduct is supporting environmental stewardship. When we educate our communities on how and what to grow safely we are doing it.

Right now I'm signing off to research non-criminally-punishable ways to deal with the genius who told me he'd grow his own food but he can't find bacon seeds. See you at the sales.



Winter carrots are sweeter than any others

Some Information You Should Know

MGSOC Board Members

President: Corinne Anderson.....(248)821-7324
1st Vice President: Sally Bolle.....(248)909-8668
2nd Vice President: vacant
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Mission Statement

The Mission of the Master Gardener Society of Oakland County, Inc. is to enrich the lives of those who love gardening. We are volunteers who fulfill our commitment to community outreach by providing hands-on gardening and research-based horticultural education. Members of the Society are Master Gardeners certified by Michigan State University.

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

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To help reduce mailing expenses, if you have Internet access we encourage you to read Roots & Shoots online at the Master Gardener Society website www.mgsoc.org.

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