



# Roots & Shoots

A Publication for Members of the MASTER GARDENER SOCIETY OF OAKLAND COUNTY, INC.

January 2017

## Reminder – January General Meeting Tuesday, January 10, 2017

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
5631 North Adams Road, Bloomfield Hills

**SPEAKER: Sue Grubba**  
**The Magic of Night Lighting**

Free to MGSOC Members! Join us to meet and mingle your fellow Master Gardeners!

*Please wear your MG badge.* Visitors pay \$5.

Complimentary refreshments and desserts served. Dinner of soup (winter) or salads (summer) may be purchased for \$3. Members making or bringing meal portion soups or salads need not pay \$3. Meeting starts at 6:30 p.m., Dinner is served at 6 p.m.

*Please contact Kathy Sobanski, Team Leader of Hospitality, at: [sobanskk@yahoo.com](mailto:sobanskk@yahoo.com) to bring a soup, bread or dessert. 1 Hour Volunteer Time!*



## MGSOC Office / Carol Lenchek's Position

We're sure that you're all wondering what is going to happen to Carol Lenchek's position. In an email from **Sheila Leddy, MSU Extension, Oakland County**, she advised that Carol's position is now posted. She has asked us to spread the word about the position. This position will be responsible for coordinating the upcoming MGV Training (not sure *when* that will happen yet) but please review the link in case you, or someone you know, may be interested. <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/oakgov/jobs/1616090/natural-science-program-coordinator> Note that this posting is for a part-time position.

Another letter we received from the MSU Extension 4-H Educator advised that MSU is working with Oakland County to find a permanent replacement. They are hoping to negotiate with the county to fund an MSUE Employed Educator to take over her duties. It's all a bit complicated and confusing now, and we will certainly keep you apprised. For now, Lynne Shull is on leave until the end of January, and there is no one available in the office at this time.

We certainly all miss Carol AND Lynne! ■

## Note From Your Editor

Yikes! What do I do with this poinsettia I received for Christmas? Place the poinsettia near a sunny, south-facing window, as they like plenty of bright, indirect sunlight. Keep them away from cold, drafty windowpanes, heaters, and direct sunlight. They like temperatures between 65 and 80 degrees (68 is the preferred temperature) during the day and around 60 degrees at night. If you keep the temperature constant, the plant will thrive and reduce leaf drop. Don't be alarmed if a few leaves drop off in the beginning, it is just getting acclimated to your home.

Keep the plant evenly moist. Don't let it dry out, as it causes leaves to curl and drop. Never let the plant's pot sit in water at its base. Make sure to empty their saucer after watering. And, fertilize soil every 2 to 3 weeks with an all-purpose, liquid houseplant fertilizer at half the recommended rate.

Getting poinsettias to re-flower is the tricky part. Keep watering the plant until the middle of spring, then allow the plant to dry out and the stems to shrivel. Using hand pruners, cut back the plant to just below flowers, when bracts (red leaves) fade and fall off to a height of 6- to 8-inches. Continue to water, keep it in a warm spot, and give it houseplant fertilizer until you see new growth.

A month later, when temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees at night, you can place the plant outside in bright, indirect light. The plant will continue to grow (green only) all summer. In midsummer, cut back the plant by about one-third. Bring inside when temperatures begin to drop below 50 degrees at night. Place in a sunny, south-facing window and continue watering.

This is the most important step to getting fall color next season. Beginning around Labor Day, cut off light (complete darkness) to the plant between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. for 8 weeks. A dark closet, basement corner, or empty box with a lid will suffice. During the day, return the plant to a sunny, south-facing window. Once it re-flowers with red, colorful bracts, you can leave it in its regular spot for a showy, Christmas display.

Note: The best time to make cuttings is in May or June to start new plants.

Happy Gardening, Marsha Beeman ■

## ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK AND SILENT AUCTION

The 2016 **Annual Holiday Potluck and Silent Auction**, on Tuesday, December 13, was a tremendous success in every way.

The **Fundraising Team**, under the direction of **Denise Brown**, outdid themselves, setting a record for funds raised. Denise's recap of her team's success is best summarized by her comments: "We had 150 items up for Auction for a total value of \$7,560. Of those, 149 drew bids for a total of \$4,149 plus a \$200 donation from Bloomington Brands (Osmokote) for a total total of \$4,349. We incurred \$795.53 in expenses, which includes the \$200 donation we used to purchase items for the Auction. The grand total final number is \$3,553.47. This beats our 2014 Silent Auction (last one held) total, which was \$2,802.94, by \$750.63." Congratulations to that team!

The raffle for donations made by Society Members was won by **Bev Moss**, which was a \$50 gift card. Two other Fundraising Team awards were given out at the event. First award was for the Team Member that brought in the most donations which was awarded to **Maureen Dinverno**. The second award

was for the Team Member who brought in the highest value donation which went to **Sally Teague**.

As always, the **Troy High School Choir** performed for us, and led the caroling. It was great to have **Susan Tatus McLarty** again leading us through her original MGSOC version of "*The 12 Days of Christmas*."

Many thanks to **Team Leader Kathy Sobanski**, and her team for organizing one of the best gourmet food spreads ever. Nothing was left ...

Thanks to **Margy Truza** for again planning the setup with **Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church**. We are so fortunate to have the use of this facility for all of our purposes.

And ... thanks **Margy and Laura Miehl**s for sharing their photos.

As always, an event of this magnitude takes a **TEAM**, and thanks to all who contributed their time, effort, food and prizes. It was a stellar event. ■



*The Fundraising Team!*



*A surprise visit from Lucy Propst home for the holiday from her assignment in China ...*





# GARDENING DURING THE CIVIL WAR

By Carolyn Black

With all the excitement, celebration, passion, and enthusiasm of the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, I thought that it would be fun to learn about gardening during the Civil War. Gardening was a means of sustenance and survival during the era.

In the 1860s, corn was grown because of its unlimited uses. In addition to providing food for the table, the ashes of corncobs possessed the alkaline property essential for raising dough. Whenever "soda" was needed for baking, corn was shelled. Red cobs were used, because it was thought that they contained more carbonate of soda than white cobs. The cobs were burned in a clean place, and the ashes were gathered and placed in a jar or jug. To form a good consistency, water was poured into the jar, according to the quantity of the ashes. A tablespoon of the alkali was used with the flour to make bread.

Tea was enjoyed by everyone during the Civil War period. When it became scarce, the population tried various substitutes for this precious commodity. The leaves of the blackberry bush, huckleberry leaves, and leaves of the holly tree were dried in the shade and used to make tea. Coffee was also scarce during the Civil War. Dandelion roots (*Taraxacum officinale*) were dug up and washed. The roots were roasted for about four hours in an oven, until they became dry and dark brown. Then they were ground and brewed as real coffee, using 1 teaspoon per cup of water.

Peaches were grown for their fresh fruit qualities and also to make "Confederate raisins." The peaches were dried, then clipped with scissors. The raisins were also used to add flavor to pudding.

In place of kerosene for lights, the oil of ground peas mixed with the oil of compressed lard was used. It served well the need for lighting during those times.

Gardening was essential during the Civil War, because vegetation could be used medicinally when manufactured medicines were not available. The Confederate States Medi-

cal and Surgical Journal of July 1864, listed a "*Standard Supply Table of Indigenous Remedies for Field Service and Sick in General Hospital.*" Stimulants could be derived from calamus, lavender, partridgeberry sassafras, Seneca snakeroot plants, tulip tree, and Virginia snake root. Astringents came from the bark and leaves of sumac. Tonics were made from blackberries, dewberries, dogwood, hops, persimmon, sage, white oak, white willow, and wild cherry.



The berries of the dogwood were taken for quinine, as they contained alkaloid properties of cinchona and Jesuit's bark; also called Peruvian bark. A soothing cordial for dysentery and similar ailments were made from blackberry roots. But, ripe persimmons were thought by some to be more superior to the blackberry roots. An extract of the barks of the wild cherry, dogwood, and poplar were used for chills. For coughs and lung diseases, syrup made with

the leaves and roots of the mullein plant (*Verbascum thapsus*), globe flower (*Trollius*), and wild cherry tree bark were thought to be infallible. Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) was used to treat heart conditions and syphilis.

Women were encouraged to grow the red garden poppy in their garden, because acceptable opium could be extracted from it. Heart stimulants were derived from wild cherry and bloodroot. Those who grew and harvested them received high prices for their produce. High prices were also advertised for cranesbill, skunk cabbage, and wild cherry bark. Agents and circuit riders were employed by the purveyors to collect certain plants, and to encourage rural citizens to grow and harvest them.

The inner bark of the Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) contained an astringent. If it was boiled in milk, or a tea made with water, its astringency was so good that it made a great remedy for diarrhea and dysentery. The leaf of the gum contained a large portion of tannin.

Alfred Hoyt Bill expressed the importance of gardening very eloquently by saying, "In this country, women were digging with their own hands in the earth of their smokehouse and tobacco barns to extract from it nitre for the manufacture of gunpowder. And yet these same dirt-digging dames were also angels of mercy, who strove, along with the male medics, to minister to the sick and wounded men in uniform. Thankfully, Mother nature worked alongside in the soil, providing plants for sustenance and herbs for healing."

Carolyn Black is a Penn State Master Gardener in Adams County, Pennsylvania. Article submitted by John Humprey. ■

**MASTER GARDENER SOCIETY OF  
OAKLAND COUNTY, INC.  
2017 EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE,  
MARGARET TRUZA, CHAIR**

The Master Gardener Society of Oakland County, Inc. Garden Conference Committee is pleased to announce that tickets are now on sale for our 5th Annual Educational Garden Conference “*Gardening and All That Jazz – Instruments for Great Design.*” The date is Saturday, April 22, 2017 and this is an all-day seminar. Early bird tickets are \$70; after March 14, 2017 the price increases to \$80. We encourage you to purchase your tickets early as only a limited number are available.

For this, our fifth year, we believe our four keynote speakers will be exciting, informative, relevant, and inspiring. This year’s nationally-known speakers / authors are: **Shawna Coronado, Kelly D. Norris, Jessica Walliser and Paul Zarnit.** Bios and websites for each author are available on our website as well. They will be selling their books at the event and the authors will be available for book signing during lunch and breaks.

As in past years, this outstanding educational conference will again be held at the **Oakland Schools Conference Center**, 2111 Pontiac Lake Road, in Waterford. This conference is open to the public; you need not be a Master Gardener to attend. Those who are Master Gardeners will receive 5 educational hours for the day.

To register, please visit the home page of our website <http://www.mgsoc.org/index.php>. There are two ways to purchase your ticket from the site. You can purchase tickets and select your luncheon choices via online registration using your credit card with the hotlink [http://www.mgsoc.org/2017Conference\\_registration.htm](http://www.mgsoc.org/2017Conference_registration.htm). A detailed description of luncheon selections is available on the site. Please note that luncheon choices must be pre-selected when you register. There are three choices this year, and we can accommodate special requests such as gluten free and vegetarian.

The second option to register online is to print the online registration form and mail a check to our registrar, **Laura Miehl**; her address is on the form. Both options are available under “News and Events” from the home page. If you have questions, please direct them to **Laura Miehl via e-mail: [Laura.Miehl@gmail.com](mailto:Laura.Miehl@gmail.com)**.

You will also be able to register with a credit card, cash or check at our monthly Master Gardener General Meetings. Full color brochures will be available to take along to your friends.

This event also includes an outstanding garden market featuring many local vendors and artisans bringing their garden-related sculpture, artwork and plants. The price includes continental breakfast, lunch, snacks and all program materials.

In addition to the outstanding keynote speakers, the event features a quartet of live jazz featuring internationally-known trumpeter Dave Tatrow and his quartet playing for your lunchtime enjoyment. The live jazz is sponsored by the Greater Detroit Jazz Society. ■

**JANUARY GARDEN TIP**

Last fall you put your garden to bed for the winter. But, did you do the same for your gardening tools? If you didn’t, use the following tips to ensure proper, working tools in the spring. First, make sure tools are free of dirt. If not, use a stiff bristled brush, fine sandpaper, or steel wool to remove mud and rust. When doing the task, wear protective eyewear. Second, cutting and digging tools should be sharpened with files or sharpening stones. For safety, wear protective gloves. Third, smooth out wooden handles with sandpaper or a medium-grit emery cloth. Finally, use WD-40 or light cooking oil to coat metal parts. Then, apply linseed oil to protect wooden handles. Or, place small hand tools in a bucket with a mixture of sand and oil to prevent them from rusting. ■

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**ROOTS & SHOOTS NEWSLETTER**

**Marsha Beeman – Editor**

**[beemanmarsha@yahoo.com](mailto:beemanmarsha@yahoo.com)**

*For article suggestions or contributions,  
please contact Marsha.*

**Design – Sally Bolle**

**[sallybolle@comcast.net](mailto:sallybolle@comcast.net)**

**Master Gardener Hotline: 248-858-0902**

**MMG MSU Extension, Oakland County Office**

1200 N. Telegraph Rd., Pontiac, MI 48341

**Extension Program Coordinator**

**Open Position – 248-858-0900**

**Full-Time Office Assistant – Lynne Shull 248-858-0887**

Please visit our website for contact information for the above Board and Team Members – **[www.MGSOC.org](http://www.MGSOC.org)**