



Master Gardener

Vol. 12 No. 3, March, 2007

News for Delaware County Master Gardeners



Calendar



Here is one of Gail Sklar's winning orchids from this year's Philadelphia Flower Show. Look at the other two on page 2.

March 6th MG Board Meeting,

7:00 pm Smedley Park
Officers, Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs, and Class Representatives are all members of the MG Board. All Master Gardeners are welcome to attend Board meetings.

March 17th—Taylor Arboretum 10:00 AM

Seed Starting for Warm Weather Crops

March 20th MG Meeting at Smedley –

7:00pm
Growing Orchids presented by our own award-winning Gail Sklar

March 21st—Grant Writing

7:00 pm Smedley

HOME GARDENER'S SCHOOL

March 24th – *Home Gardeners' School* –
American College, 8 am-4 pm

March 31st - Preparing Smedley for Spring

9:30 am—Come armed

Composting Workshops at Smedley Park:

March 27.....7PM
April 24.....7PM

April 3rd— MG Board Meeting,

7:00 pm Smedley Park

April 14th— 2nd Saturday at Smedley –

10-12 Noon
Veggie Gardening presented by Leslie Trimble

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From the Coordinator: *Linda Barry*

Thanks to Gayla McCluskey for organizing the Flower Show volunteers, and to the Master Gardeners who attended training and worked at the Penn State booth at the Flower Show on Saturday

and Sunday. I hope it was a fun and rewarding activity. Congratulations to Gail Sklar who entered three orchids and won a Second Place and Honorable Mention ribbon at the show.

The Teaching Gardens committees have planned to get together and get the Smedley Gardens ready for spring on March 31, beginning at 9:30. Any Master Gardeners who are able and available are invited to join us. We will also be spreading mulch, so bring whatever tools you need.

Chuck McLaughlin has been working with the Holcomb House for the last two years, and told me last week that the home which houses 6-8 mentally challenged men did not purchase any vegetables last summer – they ate from the raised bed gardens that Chuck had helped them install in their backyard. This inspired a suggestion from Joyce Morrison – that each of you have anecdotes and successes to share from your many MG activities, and it would be great if we could share them. Please take a minute and send me your story.

Gerri Eunson has planned a wonderful gardening trip to Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD. A flyer is included with your newsletter. If you wish to go with us, please register early. We will be advertising the trip next month.

We still have seats available for the Home Gardeners' School. Please try to join us. It will be a great day. Alyce has arranged for some exciting new vendors, and has been scouting out new plants for our plant sale. This event allows us to have the many community projects that we undertake.

New Garden Website

Denise Cowie, former garden writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer, has designed a new website for area gardeners.

Go to www.greaterphiladelphiagardens.org to see what's happening in the Delaware Valley's gardening world.

Pruning Workshop Offered – March 27, 9 am-3:30 pm

An advanced pruning class will be offered to the Master Gardeners in Philadelphia. A morning

ARBOR DAY IS COMING

Elsie Mueller

I'm certain that most of you have seen a tree that inspires you to exclaim "Wow."

However, not only is a tree a joy to look at but crucial to our health and environment. That's why the Arbor Day celebration is significant. It encourages us to plant trees, reminds us to take care of the existing ones and to educate the younger generation.

This year Smedley Park will be the scene of the Arbor Day event on Sunday, April 22 beginning at 1 p.m. - rain or shine. We are inviting and welcome area Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts to attend.

Anyone who has any association with these young people is urged to call me. Another request is for donations of tree seedlings and ideas for educational activities related to trees.

Bring your family to Smedley Park on April 22 which is designated also as Earth Day.



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April showers bring May flowers, but March brings that long awaited first day of spring on the 21st and the official celebration of World Water Day on the 22nd!

Ah, water, our most precious natural resource. Seventy-five percent of planet Earth is covered with water, 97% of which is salty and cannot be utilized by many living creatures, including the plants over which we gardeners sweat and toil for food and home improvement. Only 1% is liquid freshwater that supplies our gardening needs and our personal ones for drinking, bathing, and cooking. As the world population increases so does our dependence on this precious one percent. Yet, estimates indicate "...that many gardeners use about twice the amount of water in their landscapes as necessary."

Because we garden, two issues included in this year's WWD theme of "Coping with Water Scarcity" are particularly pertinent:

- 1) **sustainable management of water resources** and
- 2) **degradation of groundwater and surface water quality.**

Sustainable management of water resources involves using conservation and wise use practices to minimize consumption. Adding compost to the soil helps to hold water, and mulching prevents soil from overheating and drying out. Using rain barrels to catch water as it falls allows it to be used later during dry periods. Planting native perennial species that are adapted to weather conditions in this area helps achieve greater survival, and once established these plants do not require supplemental watering except during prolonged dry spells. Passive watering with soaker hoses provides water only when and where needed in the garden. Watering during the early morning before temperatures begin to rise is generally the best time, but late afternoon-early evening is also satisfactory if watering is done with soaker hoses. This still allows sufficient time for leaves to dry before nightfall so fungal diseases do not become a problem.

And for those of you with a lawn, you can do several things to wisely use water resources. One is to plant drought-tolerant species that require less water. A second method is to reduce the amount of lawn your property contains. This will decrease the area that needs to be mowed and fertilized, thereby reducing the amount of organic matter and chemical runoff that can get into local streams and waterways through the storm sewers, thus contributing to the second pertinent issue, **degradation of groundwater and surface water quality.**

Grass clippings and chemical runoff from lawns add nutrients (including nitrogen and phosphorus) to local freshwater aquatic environments that promote excessive growth of algae and microorganisms. When these organisms die, they are decomposed by bacteria and fungi and oxygen dissolved in the water is depleted. This is detrimental to fish populations and can result in fish kill.

So if you have a lawn and feel compelled to fertilize, do it sparingly. Using manure and/or compost will allow for slower release and percolation of nutrients into the soil, more retention, and less runoff. (This is true for your garden beds as well.) When you mow or someone else does it for you, please do not allow grass clippings to remain in or be hosed into the gutter. This debris gets washed into storm sewers and eventually into local waterways where water quality can be severely compromised and kill aquatic species. Besides, grass clippings are great additions to your compost bins.

Welcome **Spring and World Water Day!**





MARCH *TO DO* GARDENING TIPS

BY JOE DANIELS

Seasonal:

1. Prepare soil for planting. Do not till your soil if it is wet, it should crumble in your hand.
2. Have soil tested or just use last fall's soil test recommendations.
3. Sharpen and repair garden tools.
4. Cut off last year's growth on ornamental grasses, epimediums, and ferns.

Houseplants:

1. Take root cuttings of our favorite houseplants to increase your supply of plants.
2. Begin fertilizing your plants after new growth appears.
3. Start tuberous begonias indoors.
4. Repot houseplants that are pot-bound.

Bulbs:

1. Fertilize spring flowering bulbs.
2. Check any stored bulbs for decay; discard damaged bulbs.
3. Start Caladiums indoors for later planting outdoors.

Compost:

1. Clean up any dead stems or leaves left from last fall and add them to a new compost pile.
2. Turn your old compost pile to restart the composting process. Add nitrogen and water to boost the process.
3. Spread compost over garden and landscape areas.
4. Look for our upcoming evening compost classes offered on March 27 and April 24 at 7PM in the evening.....you may need a refresher course or a new bin.

Vegetable Gardens:

1. Plan carefully to be able to harvest spring, summer, and fall. Plant for your needs, for example 2-3 tomato plants per family member will supply fresh tomato needs, add more plants if you are canning or making juice.
2. Remember that it takes about 2 hours per week to care for a 20'x50' garden, not including harvest and planting.
3. Begin planting cool-weather crops as soon as the ground can be worked, including lettuce, broccoli, and spinach. Check your outside planting date and count back to the appropriate sowing date, as plants do best when on the younger side of the transplant age.
4. Asparagus ferns should be cut back if new spears have not yet emerged. Side dress with nitrogen or manure.
5. Parsley can be started now for transplanting later.

Tree Fruits & Nuts:

1. Begin dormant oil, fungicide, and insecticide sprays on fruit trees. Not spraying as needed can result in disease and insect problems later.
2. Prune fruit trees in early March before growth starts. You should remove dead, dying, and insect or disease damaged branches.
3. Remove mulch from strawberries when growth begins, but keep it nearby to use against frost and freezes.
4. If planting raspberry plants, start with 6-10 plants. Since they send out underground runners, install an 8-12" sheet of metal vertically all around the raspberry bed.

Herbs:

1. Start annual, biennial, and perennial plants for the garden and for use as indoor plants.
2. Purchase plants of hard to germinate types such as rosemary and lavender.

Lawns:

1. Remove winter debris from the lawn.
2. Make lawnmower and garden equipment repairs.
3. Avoid over-fertilizing lawns in the spring. Too much fertilizer will increase lawn disease problems and will cause top growth at the expense of root growth.
4. If some areas of your lawn do not green-up with the rest, then check for disease or insect problems.
5. When the forsythia begin to bloom, apply pre-emergent herbicides to lawns. Spot spray for dandelions, henbit, and chickweed.
6. Damage to lawns from sod webworm begins at this time, check for the insect and treat if necessary. If birds are feeding on them from your lawn, that may be enough control.
7. Thatching and aerification of lawns can reduce soil compaction; this is a good time to renovate lawns. Special equipment is needed for this; hire a professional or rent the equipment.
8. Do not use lawn equipment on soft or soggy lawns. It will compact the soil and damage the roots.

Perennials, Biennials & Annuals

1. Sow seeds indoors of marigold, impatiens and tender perennials.
2. Cool tolerant annuals can be sown outdoors as soon as the soil can be worked. These include: alyssum, California poppy, candytuft, larkspur, pansy, phlox, pinks, Shirley poppy, snapdragon, stock, sweet pea, and viola.
3. Begin to divide and transplant perennials.
4. Spray peonies occasionally with a contact fungicide as they emerge from the soil. This will help to reduce disease problems that would destroy the flower buds later.
5. Cut ornamental grasses to 3-5" above ground.

Trees & Shrubs:

1. Prune off deadwood, unless it involves major removal of limbs. Do not prune in damp or wet weather.
2. Fertilize conifers with a top-dressing of manure or 5-10-5 fertilizer.
3. Fertilize ornamental deciduous trees and shrubs.
4. Prune summer flowering shrubs. Wait until after they flower to prune spring flowering shrubs. Do not prune in damp or wet weather.
5. Plant new deciduous and coniferous trees.
6. Prune deciduous trees, except for birch, maple, and walnut, which should be pruned after they leaf out.
7. Spray shade trees if tent caterpillars, webworms, or leafrollers were a problem last year.
8. Hedges can be pruned after growth starts, leave the base of the plants wider than the tops.

Roses:

1. Remove deadwood and damaged canes; pruning should be at an angle above a dormant bud. Avoid pruning until one week prior to the last killing frost.
2. Spray roses with lime-sulfur.
3. Fertilize with an organic fertilizer.

WORDS TO WEED THROUGH

By Tracey L. Carson

Kindred

In lieu of the countdown to spring, I found myself wondering if others were as excited about its arrival as I. So I decided there was only one way to find out, just ask. When the opportunity arose I approached a varied array of individuals and posed the question, “When you hear the word “*spring*”, what comes to mind?”

The replies were:

A policeman: “I hear spring, I think sprung. This to me means to break out.”

A mechanic: “an elastic coiled wire”

A fisherman: “a natural water flow from the ground”

A 10 year old: “the season between winter and summer”

An athlete: “to jump forward”

Grandma: “time to clean, clean, clean!”

Their answers made perfect sense, but now my curiosity seemed to be fueled as it turned into a quest for a like-spirit. This led me to a gardener. I asked the question, and the answer was...”Theater”. I had to sit down as my full attention was consumed in the explanation.

The gardener continued....

The curtain rises when for the first time in months I open my windows and both my lungs and home experience the flood of the new season’s fresh warmed breezes. Act one commences when the orchestra’s bird section opens with a spellbinding chirping overture. Scene one starts with the tulips, daffodils, and lilacs softly kissing the amaryllis and lenten rose goodnight.

The orchestra’s bee section smoothly transitions you to the second act when a cast of weeping cherries, azaleas, sweet williams, rhodos, and dogwoods storm the stage and give a stellar performance. In the wings the butterflies and hummingbirds await their cue as the baptisia and iris lead the procession while the majestic magnolia takes its throne.

The play’s finale begins with oriental poppies strutting as they fluff the pillows on the roses’ beds, and the daphne push the doors open for the foxglove, mountain laurel, and potentilla to take the stage. As the lights fade, this and every scene closes with melodious instrumentals from the orchestra’s cricket section, and a passionate dance from the firefly ensemble. As the curtain falls, on the distant edge of the backstage you can see a small vacant trellis. The lights dim, and you are left with the anticipation of the climb of the clematis.

I found the kindred spirit that I sought! I was so full that I wanted to say something profound with big words to let this gardener know that I shared every aspect of this vision, and that on this subject we were one. I thought, and then I came up with the perfect words. With a tear in my eye, I said, “Me Too!”

“Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush” ~ Doug Larson

Green Thumb Schedule always at 6:45 pm

NEW DATE

April 24th Walnut Hill Restaurant School
in West Philadelphia

Merry Place Schedule 9AM—12 Noon

March 31st Basic Gardening
Talk for Girl Scouts working on a badge
May 12th Community Volunteer Day
June 2nd Compost Workshop

Janae Alberts

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Stephen Hinds
Butterfly: Kathy Hornberger
Terrace: Carl Pfeiffer
Marion Nelson
Shade: Maru Hollen
Carolyn DiPaulo-
Julia King

Taylor Arboretum: Ed Lyons
Darlene Delany

FOCUS ON FALL FEST

No, it's *not* too early to think about what you'd like to contribute to our Fall Fest Plant Sale this year! Planning ahead is a good thing. People were quite impressed with our sale last year. We are in the process of developing a reputation for quality and variety...how cool is that?

This year it would be great to have more trees and shrubs, so now is the time to think about propagating some babies by layering branches of hydrangeas, azaleas, rhodos, and other cooperative shrubs in your garden. You could even layer them directly into a pot---instant plant sale material! Don't forget to check for those shrubby volunteers that may be hiding in your garden. Save them for the plant sale! And while you're out there, are there any perennials you can divide and save for the sale?

Questions? Contact Marion Y

DOOR PRIZES NEEDED FOR HGS

Nancy Novak is soliciting door prizes for the Home Gardeners' School from any businesses that MG members may want to approach, or regifts from MGs' own collections, such as books, knick-knacks, plants, etc. Please bring items to the March 20th meeting. Here's hoping to a good collection of goodies for HGS attendees!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Here's an opportunity to get hours. We are going to assemble the registration packets for the Home Gardener School on Thursday, March 22nd at 1:00 pm in the MG office. Please give Linda a call if you plan to come and help.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO GET SOME UNUSUAL PLANTS

The Providence Garden Club of Pennsylvania will hold its **59th Annual Plant Sale on Saturday, May 5, at The Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades, 106 South Middletown Road (Route 352) Middletown Township from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

If you pre-order between April 1st and April 30th, you have an opportunity to come on Friday, May 4, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. where you can pick up your order and purchase additional plants for your garden. Order Forms will be available at the March meeting, the Home Gardeners' School or call Karen Barnes, Plant Sale Co-chair.

Providence Garden Club is working closely with local growers to offer many hard-to-find species of annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs. A selection of choice plants for containers is included in the sale. Be sure to mark your calendar for this date and plan to come early, as many varieties sell out early in the day.

Another feature of the sale is the opportunity to purchase a wonderful selection of time-tested perennials that come from the gardens of club members. If you are looking for reasonably priced plants that are sure to do well in your garden, then be sure to visit the "Hort Table," where you'll find these plants.

MORE MERRY PLACE NEWS

We are scheduled June 2nd for Merry Place Composting. We have had better crowds recently since the local State Representative Greg Vitali has been pushing it. He is big on the environment and he advertises us in his newsletter. We will be 10-12 and the \$5 must be sent in advance because the Twp truck goes out to the farm and picks up the bins and has them there for the participants. They don't want to be dragging bins back and forth for the no shows. So they need a count and want that commitment of \$5..People need to call the Parks Dept (JeanMarie) to register 610 446 9397 and send their money to 599 Glendale Road Havertown 19083.