



Master Gardener

Vol. 10 No. 3, March, 2005

News for Delaware County Master Gardeners



Second Saturday—March 12th

Pruning by Rick Ray
Smedley Park—2 PM—4 PM

Tuesday, March 15th

Monthly MG Meeting
Presentation: Hummingbirds in the garden
Smedley Park— 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Saturday, April 2nd

Home Gardeners School
Register deadline: 3/22/05
American College—Fee: \$50

Tuesday, April 5th

MG Board Meeting
Smedley Park—7:00 to 9:00 PM

Second Saturday—April 9th

Herbs & Veggies
Smedley Park— 10:00 AM—Noon

Saturday, April 14th

Pruning—Field Workshop 10:00 AM
213 Lenni Road, Media
Rain or Shine

Save the Dates:

Friday, May 6

2005 MG In-Service
State College, PA—Fee \$65

Saturday, June 4

Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve
& Renny's Hortulus Bus Trip
7:45 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Cost \$47.00 includes transportation and snacks.

From the Coordinator:

We have requests for volunteers for five student gardens in our area. If you are interested in working with youth gardening please contact me. Some of these young gardeners also need tools. Donations of used gardening tools would be appreciated. They need basic equipment – shovels, hoes, watering cans and hoses, hand tools.

Our newsletter is now on the Cooperative Extension website. Kathy Moyer worked with Barbara Smith to get a version that could be edited to remove personal contact information. It looks very good!

Committee chairs should all have a list of volunteers for their committees. Please contact these volunteers and involve them in the planning for 2005 activities. If you wish to schedule a meeting at the Environmental Center, let me know when you will need the building so that I can reserve the room. A number of community and Cooperative Extension programs are held at this facility and scheduling can be difficult during certain seasons.

Fran Alloway (Nutrition Educator) and Helaine Brown (4-H Educator) were involved in writing a grant proposal last year that supported nutrition and gardening programs in Chester schools. Four schools have two-tier grow lights. Representatives from the schools attended the excellent *Second Saturday Seed – Starting* session presented by Leslie Trimble. They were given seeds, cell packs, and starting mix from the Urban Gardening program, and are all anxious to move



to outdoor gardening as soon as the weather permits. This program also provided us with a digital camera and photo printer. The camera is available for our use. We do have a reservation system for using shared equipment in the office, so please let me know when you would like to have the camera available.

March begins the twice a week Hortline schedule. If you are on the Hortline committee and available Tuesdays or Thursdays during March or April, please contact Liana Bauerle. If you need Hortline training,

contact Liana or myself and we will schedule training for you.

Welcome Spring!

Linda Barry

MG OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

President: Alyce Zellers
Vice President: Kathy Hornberger
Treasurer: Ken Paulsell
Secretary: Tara Clarke
Hours Keeper: Chantal Wildma
Coordinator: Linda Barry—610-690-7669
lrb16@psu.edu

Committee Chairs:

Newsletter : Barbara Smith

Mentoring : Marty Roelandt
Field Trips: Gerry Eunson
Social Events: Jennifer Dean
Arbor Day : Mary Sambor
Elsie Mueller
Garden Select : Robin Queenan
Gail Brewer
Flower Show: Gayla McCluskey
Hort Therapy: Delilah Fordes
Hortline: Liana Bauerle
Home Gardener's School:
Diana Breen
Ken Paulsell
Speakers Bureau: Joe Daniels
MG Recruitment: Marty Roelandt

NEWSLETTER STAFF:

Editor: Barbara Smith
Web Designer: Kathy Moyer
Committee: Cynthia Sabatini, Linda Barry, Joe Daniels, Carolyn DiPaulo, Barbara Meahl, Carl Pfeiffer, Arlene Pugh, Tina Coleman, Jane Baserga, Christine Gradel, Kathy Hornberger & Marion Nelson
Web site address: <http://delaware.extension.psu.edu/MG/>
Cooperative extension e-mail: DelawareExt@psu.edu



FROM MG PRESIDENT . . . *Alyce R. Zellers*

Since I missed last month's issue for this column, let me start off this month by saying that I am truly honored to be a part of Master Gardeners let alone the president. It was a bit of a shock to realize that I would need to step into the position; I just thought Vice President was a good back up role for two years! Anyway this is a wonderful volunteer organization filled with interesting, talented, humorous, caring and just great people.

I have volunteered with other groups over the years but have not felt such sincerity that everyone connected with MG brings to the group. A sincere thank you needs to be extended to each and everyone for all that you individually do and we, as a group do. Verbal appreciation costs nothing but certainly goes a

long way towards the general outcome of any endeavor. I wish companies felt that way towards their employees but often good work goes unnoticed and unappreciated. Thank you for all your good work in the past and for all that you will do in the future.

It may seem silly to say, but thank you for being gardeners. Too many people take nature for granted and feel that the environment should take second place to whatever they have going on in their yard. If we have the ability to change people's perceptions, (bats are bad) misguided plant selections (loosestrife, burning bush etc), ill-conceived ideas (throw leaves out in bags to be collected!) then we should do it at whatever pace it takes. Ideas can be changed a lot quicker than a tree can grow back.

Thanks.

SECOND SATURDAYS FOR 2005. . .

March 12th—Pruning—Rick Ray—2-4 pm

April 9th—Herbs & Veggies

May 14th—Container Gardening

June 11th—Perennials

July 9th—Pressed Flowers

August 13th—Planting & Care of Bulbs

September 10th—Garden Design

October 8th—Scarecrow Making,
Pumpkin Painting

November 12th—Holiday Ornaments

December 10th—Wreath Making

All programs are held at Smedley Park and run from 10AM to Noon. Cost is \$5 per person, except for July, October, November and December workshops which are \$10 to cover materials for a take-home project.

Compost Tea Time

I recently read an article in one of my favorite magazines, that discussed a "New Product" - Compost Tea.

"Organic farmers always say 'feed the soil, not the plant.' One of the most effective ways to do it is with compost tea—a solution made from traditional or worm compost - which contains billions of microorganisms that help convert soil nutrients and minerals into a form more easily absorbed by plant roots. Now it's gotten a lot more convenient to buy it. SoilSoup Kitchens has begun stationing self-serve espresso cart look-alikes at local nurseries that dispense tea for about \$8 a gallon. Apply the tea directly from a watering can onto foliage and soil (both should be moist before applying). Contact SoilSoup for a list of participating nurseries (if there aren't any near you, encourage your local nursery to install a cart). www.soilsoup.com or 877-711-7687"

-B.L.S. *From Sunset Magazine, Sept. 2004*

Over the last two issues, I have discussed getting into shape before the gentle breezes of spring draw us out of our warm winter cocoon and soon have us looking like the letter “N” in the garden.

Like any athlete, we need to be in shape before we put pressure on our backs and spines and turn what begins as a happy afternoon into one that results in fatigue, pain and even injury.

A warm-up before every gardening session is just the beginning of working wisely when it comes to your back. The biggest faux pas gardeners make is to stay in one position too long. Miriam Levenson, the creator of The Effortless Gardening Program says, “It’s okay to weed for several hours at a time, but not in the same position. You can bend over, kneel down, sit in a chair, pull with one hand, then the other hand. You can kneel on one knee and then the other. Each position will change the shape of your back and the muscles you use.”

The other waterloo for gardeners with aching backs is lifting. We lift mulch, topsoil, trees, stone, great forkfuls of dirt, pots & planters. Probably the smartest way past this is to hire a burly high-school kid to haul the heavy stuff, says Robert Berghage, PhD, associate professor of horticulture at PSU. Although many landscape gardeners also suggest wearing a back belt, studies to date don’t report added protection. In fact, belts may persuade some gardening zealots to lift more than we should. Belts also shift the work to smaller, weaker muscles, upping the risk of injury.

Without a burly youth, we’re left to our own devices. If you must lift, says Levenson, ask yourself first, “Am I about to do this in a way that will feel good or bad after I’m done?” You want your core muscles—your strong stomach muscles—underneath the object you’re lifting and smack up against it. That may mean squatting and then lifting with your strong leg muscles instead of your back—advise from Byrd’s great-grandmother, an avid gardener who tilled and mowed into her late 80s.

The way we warm up, move and plan can protect our backs but so can good tools. Quality tools are better balanced, and the stronger they are, the more work they do for you. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind as you shop.

- Match the tool to the job. Most people use tools that are too big for them, thinking it will ease the work, but it doesn’t. Whenever you can, use a small shovel, rake, spade or pitch fork. That way you’re lifting less weight.
- Look for back-friendly features. Tools an extra 3 to 5 feet long—rakes, spades, hoes, pruners, even trowels—extend your reach, relieving strain on

your back. Most garden shops sell extenders to customize tools. Some tools are also designed with bends in the handles to maximize leverage.

- Try it on for size. Before you buy something, imitate the motions you’ll use in the garden. Make sure it’s not too heavy or short for you to use comfortably.
- Borrow power. Small garden tillers can be a blessing for the back-pain afflicted, although they’re not useful for breaking new ground. Look for a light-weight one that you can manage easily.
- Pad profusely. Kneeling pads and garden benches can pamper your back and joints. Padded hand tools also reduce the strain on your hands and arms.

Here’s some interesting back-friendly tools:

Relax on a padded Garden Kneeler (\$34.95), flipped over it converts to a chair. Slide down the rows with a Tractor Skoot (\$59.95) a wheeled cart with a swivel seat. To trim pesky spider grass, try the stand-up long-handled grass shears (\$27.95) **Gardener’s Supply** www.gardeners.com



Try the stand-up Weed Hound (\$24.95) invented by a gardener with a broken back who still wanted to weed. Or the stand-up Bulb Hound (\$29.95) with two spades that cut and hold the soil as you lift it out of the hole. Don’t miss the Step & Edger (\$29.95) a stand-up tool for edging. **Hound Dog Products.** www.hound-dog.com

Customize your tools with Fist Grip add-on handles that add leverage to your tools. (\$15.95) or try the back saving handle on any long-handled tool (\$19.95). **Life with Ease** www.lifewithease.com

Telescopic tools (\$15 each or set of four—trowel, flathead rake, fan rake and cultivator \$50) allow you to adjust the tool’s length. Wiser Hand Tool (\$10 each or set—hoe/cultivator, trowel, weeding blade, rake - \$35) work the same way, except they start with a shorter handle for close up work. **Gardenscape.** www.gardenscapetools.com

A “Heirloom Trowel” (\$39.00) is a cross between a trowel and a shovel that allows you to divide perennials and move bulbs in a kneeling position. A garden tool caddy (\$129.00) does the tool toting for you—and has a pouch for stashing gloves and seeds. The “classic English Floral Shovel” (\$55) weighs only 3 pounds. It’s small head makes it easy to drive into soil, saving your back. **Smith and Hawken.** www.smithandhawken.com



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.

Houseplants:

1. Root cuttings of your favorite houseplants to increase your supply of plants (or to use in outside containers this summer.....wandering jews, spider plants, etc....)
2. Begin fertilizing your plants after new growth appears.
3. Start tuberous begonias indoors.
4. Repot houseplants that are pot-bound.

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.

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' x 50' 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, under row covers or in cold frames. 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. Mow any cover crops and turn under the residue at the end of March.
5. Asparagus ferns should be cut back if new spears have not yet emerged. Side dress with nitrogen or manure.

Small fruits:

1. Early March is premium time for pruning brambles, blueberries and grapes.
2. Fertilize brambles and blueberries.

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 our 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, and chickweed.
6. Lawns can be seeded, or over-seeded with cold-season grasses (Kentucky bluegrass, dwarf fescue, perennial ryegrass).
7. 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.
8. Do not use lawn equipment on soft or soggy lawns, it will compact the soil and damage the roots.

Perennials and 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. Cut ornamental grasses to 3-5" above ground.

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.

Reminder.....Second Saturday for March.....Pruning.....will be at 2—4 PM on March 12th....with Rick Ray giving the talk.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO GET SOME UNUSUAL PLANTS

The Providence Garden Club of Pennsylvania will hold its 57th Annual Plant Sale on Saturday, May 7, at The Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades, 106 South Middletown Road (Route 352), in Middletown Township from 9 am to 2 pm.

If you Pre-Order, you have an opportunity to come to the Early Sale on Friday, May 6, from 1 – 3 pm 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 by calling Sallie Anderson, Plant Sale 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 as well as a variety of hand-made troughs are 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 exciting 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.

If you have some perennials in your own garden that are in need of dividing and that you'd be interested in donating to the Providence Garden Club Sale, please call Sallie Anderson. Donations are tax-deductible.

All proceeds of this sale benefit local non-profit organizations, including the Helen Kate Furness Library, The Thomas Leiper House, The Scott Arboretum, Tyler Arboretum, and others.

HOME GARDENERS' SCHOOL DOOR PRIZE DONATIONS

Master Gardeners who would like to donate door prizes for the April 2nd Home Gardeners' School are requested to bring them to the March 15th general meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may leave your donation at the Co-operative Extension Office any day between 8:30 and 4:30. If you need more information, please contact Nancy Novak.

MASTER GARDENER TRAINING FOR 2005

Classes for the 2005 Master Gardener class will be held on Tuesdays from 2:00 until 5:00 p.m. Recruitment begins in April. Orientation is scheduled for August 23rd. The cost will be \$85.00 which includes MG Manual, name badge, teaching materials, and a contribution toward travel expenses for the instructors.

If you have a friend who may be interested in becoming a Master Gardener should contact Linda at the office and request an application. Interviews will be held on June 23rd and 24th.

SCOUT STARTS BLUEBIRD TRAIL AT SMEDLEY

Brian Wolford, in working to become an Eagle Scout, built ten Bluebird boxes with his father this winter. With permission from Mark Manfree of the Delaware County Park System, Brian, fellow scout Sam Haines, his friend Matt Masterpasqua and Mr. Wolford placed the boxes on metal posts along the drive to the Extension Office and along the creek in Smedley Park.

Now we'll just watch for the birds to discover them.

Delilah Foldes