



# ROOTS AND SHOOTS

December 2009, Volume 25, Issue 12

## 2009 MG State Conference Both Delightful and Educational

On the day of this writing, it is Thanksgiving. I have shared the day with family and friends, great food, and many memories. So it is now that I choose to share with you some memories of the 2009 MG state conference. I am thankful for being awarded the annual MCMGA scholarship which paid partial tuition for attending the state conference. Without it I probably would not have chosen this time off work, even though I have attended many other rewarding continuing education events statewide. By using the scholarship I was again richly rewarded. The Michiana MG Association pulled off a fact- and fun-filled few days of wonderful gardening experiences. I'll try to share some of my memories here.



By  
Barbara  
Hays

I had never heard of quilt gardens before; now I would like to plot one for my own yard. The Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau has jumped on a unique visitor destination idea involving community groups and local businesses in which traditional quilt patterns and bountiful annual gardens are interwoven. Designs to be translated into living landscaped plots are juried, then planted, then admired all season. Variables such as weather and bicycle vandals make the gardens ever evolving throughout the season.

My favorite speaker was Rita Randolph, who owns a nursery in Tennessee. One of her seminars spoke of *Plant Poetry: Containers for Collectors*. Especially fond of variegated plants (she bought one right out from under me in the vendor area!), Rita practices a foliage-first theme in all her container plantings. While she showed many specific plants in specific designs, her ultimate goal is to vary the plant height, leaf shape, leaf color, and depth of color. Another talk by Rita was titled *Confessions of a Road Nerd*, when she admitted to braking for plants. She often packs specimens for her trips to prove her nerdiness in bartering situations and always returns with a van full of greenery and a cooler full of plant starts, not snacks. Never mind that she has to leave the spouse at home—there's barely room for humans!

Janet Macunovich (love those jeans!) told attendees how to get eight months of color in our  
(continued on page 4)

## Free Plants!

I have two large Boston ferns in plastic hanging baskets that I would like to give away! They are at least three feet in diameter and are currently in good shape. Feel free to take both or just one. Contact me [telephone] 876-6006 or [email] [m-cpaul@att.net](mailto:m-cpaul@att.net).

By  
Mary-  
Carol  
Paul

## Member News

Members who attended our annual Holiday Dinner were treated to a carry-in buffet of favorite dishes served by members of the dinner committee, Cindy Benson, Karen Bish, Susan Eastman, Esther Minnick, Mary-Carol Paul, Vicky St. Myers, Jeff Schafer, and Diana and Herman Young. An election of officers was held after dinner, and the slate from the nominating committee was approved by voice vote. Our speaker for the evening was David Higgins, IU Jacobs School of Music faculty member and bonsai enthusiast. David has enjoyed the art of bonsai for many years and is a member of the Indianapolis Bonsai Club. He amazed us with a demonstration while relating interesting facts on the history of bonsai. We are grateful to David for sharing his talent and interest in this ancient art.



By  
Nancy  
White

Special invited guests for the evening were Marilyn Behrman, Extension Educator for Consumer and Family Sciences and her husband Eric, and Donna Miller, new staff member in the extension office.

New Board Members elected on November 30 were Vicky St. Myers, vice president for programs; Diana Young, treasurer; Helen Hollingsworth, journalist; and Dan Nichols, director of records. Welcome to these new and returning members of our board.

### **Thank You, Susan**

We thank Susan Osborne, out-going director of records, for her service on the board.

### **Gain Hours at Hinkle-Garton Farmstead**

Danielle Bachant-Bell, from the Hinkle-Garton Farmstead, has sent MGs an invitation to join a work session on December 6 or December 13, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. each day, at the Farmstead, 2920 E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, to complete bulb planting, and till and plant a winter crop. Contact Danielle at [Danielle@kiva.net](mailto:Danielle@kiva.net) for more information.

### **An Invitation from Purdue**

Attention Poinsettia Lovers: Rosie Lerner, Purdue Master Gardener State Director, invites us to attend the 2009 Purdue National Poinsettia Trials Consumer Open House at the Purdue Horticulture Greenhouse, Sunday, December 6, 1:00—5:00 p.m.. Over 95 different cultivars will be displayed and information on poinsettia care will be provided. Attendees will have the opportunity to win one of 25 plants, although no plants will be sold during this event. Visit the Purdue horticulture website for directions to the greenhouse.

### **MCMGA Garden Event**

Committees are starting work on our May 1, 2010 community gardening event that will be held at the National Guard Armory on south State Road 37. Vicky St. Myers and her vendor committee are contacting both commercial and non-profit groups in Monroe and surrounding counties for participation in the event. They would appreciate any suggestions you have for groups that could be interested in booth space. Contact Vicky with your ideas.

In addition to vendors and non-profit booths, the coordinating committee is planning a raffle, organized by Diann Lock. The MG special sales committee is investigating creative ideas for our MCMG Booth. Many thanks to all who have volunteered so far to serve on a committee. Committee work for this event qualifies for volunteer hours, and it's not too late to volunteer—what a great way to earn hours this winter!. Contact any member of the (continued on page 2)

## **Member News** (continued from page 2)

coordinating committee, Diann Lock, Jeff Schafer, Vicky St. Myers, or Nancy White, to volunteer.

### **Bloomington in Bloom Update**

At a recent meeting of the floral and landscape committee, chaired by MGs Mary Jane Hall and Gretchen Scott, a review of the 2009 events and proposed changes and improvements for 2010 were discussed. Some of the events to put on your 2010 calendar include a fund-raising hanging basket sale in May, a front yard contest with judging in early June, and the America in Bloom judging panel visit to Bloomington on June 18 and 19.

### **Education Opportunity**

Porter County Master Gardeners will start off the new year with their seventh Annual Gardening Show on Saturday, January 23, 2010, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Porter County Expo Center. Education classes will be offered, along with vendors of gardening products on-site, and a seed and bulb exchange. Registration fee is \$7, and information is available at [www.pcgarden.info](http://www.pcgarden.info).

## **Hilltop Offers Holiday Workshops**

Hilltop Garden and Nature Center is pleased to offer the following two workshops.

### **Holiday Wreaths Workshop on Saturday, December 5, 10:00 a.m., cost: \$25**

Lorrie Falkenthal will offer her perennially popular workshop on holiday wreaths. Move over, Martha Stewart! You can make a magazine-worthy wreath of your own. All materials provided.

### **Wrapping the Perfect Gift Workshop on Saturday, December 12, 10:00 a.m., cost: \$20**

What could be better for the holidays than a gift from your garden, made by you? Find out how to share your garden's bounty in the dead of winter with thoughtful gifts for friends and family.

All workshops will be offered at Hilltop Garden and Nature Center, 2367 E. 10th St. For information: call 812/855-2799 or email [hilltop@indiana.edu](mailto:hilltop@indiana.edu).

## **Winterizing Strawberry Plants**

Perhaps the last garden chore of the season is tucking in the strawberry planting for winter. Strawberry plants have already set their buds for next spring's flowers, and the crop can be lost unless you protect them from harsh winter conditions. A fully dormant strawberry plant's flower buds can be damaged at temperatures below 15 deg. F.

By B. Rosie  
Lerner,  
Purdue  
University

Mulching strawberry plants will insulate them from extreme low temperatures, minimize soil heaving and decrease excessive drying (desiccation) of the plant crowns. But be sure to wait until plants are dormant before you pile on the mulch. Applying mulch too early can cause the crown of the plant to rot. Plants should be mulched before the temperature drops below 20 deg. F About 2-3 inches of mulch, after settling, should provide adequate protection.

## 2009 MG State Conference (continued from page 1)

zone by charting not what is blooming, but rather what is in peak bloom, and provided month-by-month guidelines for what to do and not do. For instance, she says to stay away from the garden and garden centers in the dog days of July, as the month is better suited for planning than planting. Janet also spoke of *The Great Garden Giveaway*. I thought the subtitle *What Your Garden Says About You* sounded a bit feng shui, but the photos illustrating her talk clarified how you might guess the height or family heritage of gardeners, their favorite travel destinations, even elements of homeowner personalities. The photographs were taken by Janet's husband Steve Nikkila, a professional nature photographer, who also spoke at the conference. His talks centered on technical aspects of the equipment, the importance of training the gardener's eye to see more, and formulas for attracting wildlife that go beyond basic food, water, and shelter. His photos were quite an inspiration to the crowd, drawing many "oohs" and "ahs."

That's almost it. Except, wait, what about Connie Richmond telling us how to grow exotic orchids at home? It's easier than most think, and I added to my collection with three new specimens from the vendor area. Connie said that next to overwatering, failure to repot is the main reason home orchid growers lose their plants. A theme I heard from Connie and the orchid vendor is to LOSE ALL THE OLD MEDIUM when repotting. It has turned to compost, a no-no for orchid health. Another speaker, who had what I perceived to be the most popular vendor booth, was Esther Benedict, a specialist in alpine plants and fairy gardens. In full Amish garb, Esther spoke of the strict definition of alpine plants, then told a fascinated audience how to translate that definition to fit the climate we are given and the microclimates we can create. Esther's booth included a hypertufa fairy garden with a scene that would have been difficult or impossible for me to imagine. She had asked her husband to teach her how to weld, which resulted in a miniature gazebo and bench, then used clear resin to create a very realistic-looking pond, all surrounded by diminutive living plants that mimicked trees, shrubs and ground covers. I brought home a chunk of real tufa she purchased in the Sandusky, Ohio area, along with a few succulents. Time will tell how winter treats my tiny new landscape.

Do I believe the conference was time-well-spent? My continuing Master Gardener education has not always been easy to arrange, but it has always been worth the attempt, and for the most part just plain FUN! So next time the opportunity presents itself, please make the effort. I'm fairly certain you won't be disappointed.

### Assess Pruning Needs

Now that other yard chores have slowed down, many gardeners turn to their landscape plants to assess their pruning needs. Dead limbs can and should be taken down whenever they are present. But cutting into live tissue should be delayed until late winter or early spring of next year. That is the time of year when the pruning cuts will heal most rapidly. Make notes of what to cut late next winter or spring before the new growth begins. Most mature trees should not need pruning except to remove dead limbs. For large limbs or tall trees, it's best to call a professional who will have the proper equipment and skill.

By  
B. Rosie  
Lerner,  
Purdue  
University

## All-American Selections: New Flowers for 2010

Four exciting new flowers have been chosen as All-America Selections (AAS) 2010, based on superior performance in test gardens throughout the country.

By  
B Rosie  
Lerner,  
Purdue  
University



Gaillardia  
'Mesa Yellow'

**Gaillardia 'Mesa Yellow'** is the first hybrid blanket flower bred for compact growth habit and prolific flowering. The early, 3-inch daisy-like flowers are excellent for cutting but will attract butterflies if left on the plants. The plants form a neat mound, reaching up to 2 feet in full sun, perfect for containers and limited-space gardens. Recommended spacing is 12-18 inches.

**Snapdragon 'Twinny Peach'** is a unique, double-flowered snapdragon in a blend of peach tones -- soft shades of peach, yellow and light orange. The plant produces abundant spikes in full sun, which are excellent for cut flowers. The compact plants (to 12 inches) will continue to flower all season with good heat tolerance in the AAS Trials. Recommended plant spacing is 6 inches.



Snapdragon  
'Twinny Peach'

**Viola 'Endurio Sky Blue Martien'** was selected for its unique spreading/mounding and vigorous garden performance. Fall plantings will continue to bloom well past frost and will come back again for an early show of color in spring. It can also be planted in early spring and will provide a bounty of sky-blue blooms well into summer. The plants form neat spreading mounds up to 6 inches tall and 10-12 inches wide, perfect for edging garden beds, window boxes and hanging baskets. Recommended spacing is 10-12 inches.

**Zinnia 'Zahara Starlight Rose'** offers a new bicolor rose-and-white blossom and good resistance to heat, drought, leaf spot and powdery mildew. The mature



Viola 'Endurio Sky  
Blue Martien'

plants reach about 12-14 inches tall and wide and are covered with 2.5-inch blooms all season. Recommended spacing is 10-12 inches.

AAS winners are selected from many new cultivars, based on performance in the garden, as well as in the greenhouse. Although no plant offers a guarantee of success in an individual garden, the AAS winners have proven themselves worthy over a broad range of growing conditions. Try these new selections alongside your old standbys so you'll have a means of comparison. AAS winners should be available through local garden centers and mail-order catalogs next spring.

(Photos courtesy of All-America Selections)



Zinnia 'Zahara  
Starlight Rose'

# The Unacknowledged Gardens in Gardeners' Lives

Gardeners garden lots of things besides flowers. They raise vegetables; tend grape vines, and nurture fruit and nut trees. But inside their homes, they “garden,” too. In addition to cut flower arrangements and potted houseplants, gardeners usually have decorative items around their homes that they “just like” but haven’t realized



By  
Susan  
Eastman

are part of their self-image as a gardener. At least, I have plenty—more than I imagined before writing this. As I look around, I see marble grapes, teapots with flowers, and several floral plates.



Marble grapes



Applied flowers

Being a gardener is something that grows into your deepest self over a lifetime, and your own strongest outside interests emerge in many small inside ways. Even if you are no longer able to dig in a garden, who you

are shows in how you decorate your home, choose your dishes, and set your tables. It also emerges in your clothing. That doesn’t mean you wear loud floral patterns (although a lot of Hawaiian shirts seem to pop up during summers). While you might reject overtly floral shirts or blouses as far too busy to wear, at the same time, flowers and other plants may appear on a necktie, a little pin, or an ancient evening purse that turns out to be decorated with tiny flowers.



Vintage floral evening purse



Flowers and leaves on a vintage clip



An oil painting of pansies

Where else does the inner gardener show up? It may be in what you choose as pictures for your walls or in lamps for light. You may have floral patterns on furniture or cushions, perhaps realistic or perhaps much abstracted.

You may have tablecloths and tea towels with plant motifs--and leaves hidden in plain view.

You may have wooden carvings, glass flowers, or metal reproductions of plants. If you like antiques, perhaps a splendid container for jeweled fruit comes out only at holidays.

Of course you may have table scarves, wall hangings, or leaded glass windows that depict plant themes. And on tabletops, wonderful air ferns—those long-lasting/no care substitutes for houseplants (continued on page 7)



One edge of an antique table cloth

## Unacknowledged Gardens (continued from page 6)

—those long-lasting/no care substitutes for houseplants—may give the feel of greenery inside your house, even if they don't do anything to improve the quality of the air you breathe.

Then there is jewelry. You may not have thought of it, but most jewelry, especially Victoriana and vintage items for both men and women, are floral. Look closely, and you may find you have watches, fobs, brooches, earrings, and necklaces that depict grapes or leaves or flowers—or even vegetables.



Cheerful tomato and an eggplant pins

Take an inventory and you'll probably be surprised at the quantity and variety of things around you that reflect your inner gardener. Meanwhile other people recognize that part of you: Think of the many gifts you've gotten over the years that were floral in some way.

Another thing most gardeners do is bring the outside inside through views and houseplants. I know I insist on having lots of green outside all my windows. Having year-round views of greenery is one of my most basic requirements for a place to live. Seeing trees and shrubs and grass from every window makes me feel expanded, not enclosed. The spaces I inhabit seem far bigger if the windows bring in green living things.

In spring, I drag giant houseplants outside onto decks and then in the winter, drag them inside.



A green view on the edge of spring from a window

And pothos [*epipremnum aureum*, related to philodendron] grows on a dozen dark shelves year-round. Even those totally lacking green on their thumbs can grow pothos, at least for a year. (Then, if necessary, throw them out and get new ones.) Everybody needs green things to breathe and feel restful.

We might also speak of the ways gardeners “cultivate” and “tend” animals and other people, but those are topics for another day. If you are truly a gardener, this green part of your nature is expressed in many ways and makes the spaces around you brighter and more alive for others. Gardeners garden everywhere!



A brass teapot with an air fern



Antique copper pot with



Three tiny porcelain flowers, gifted just for decoration

## Where Chocolate Comes From

When you cuddle up with a steaming cup of hot cocoa during these chilly fall days, you might be pondering where chocolate comes from. Chocolate comes to us courtesy of the cacao plant (pronounced ca-cow), *Theobroma cacao*. The name Theobroma is an appropriate one as its translation is "food of the gods." The plant is believed to have originated in the Amazon area of South America at least 4,000 years ago. The Aztecs and other native groups made a bitter tasting drink from the roasted beans. The Incas also used the seeds as currency. Most of today's commercial production is in eastern Brazil in South America and the Ivory Coast and other countries of Africa.

By  
B. Rosie  
Lerner,  
Purdue  
University

Cocoa is an evergreen tree that grows up to 40 feet in height and is hardy only in moist, tropical climates. Each cacao plant produces 60-70 pods, which mature in about six months from bloom. The pods resemble an elongated acorn squash, about 10-14 inches long.

Each pod yields 20-40 white seeds (beans), which are fermented for several days until they develop a brown color and the chocolate flavor. The beans are then dried and shipped to processing plants. Here, the beans are cleaned, roasted and ground into a thick, dark-colored paste. This paste is the base for all chocolate and cocoa products.

The hardened paste becomes baking chocolate. If the paste is heated to high pressure, cocoa butter is extracted and the remaining cake-like mass is ground into cocoa powder. To make chocolate bars or other candy, additional cocoa butter is blended with the paste, along with sweeteners. To make white chocolate, Cocoa butter is used without the paste.

Some candy makers use other fats, particularly vegetable oils, in place of cocoa butter, but the resulting product cannot legally be called chocolate but rather confectionery coating.

Still craving more information about the cacao plant? There are many books and Web sites devoted to the subject.

Selected Web sites:

Purdue University New Crops

[http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/duke\\_energy/Theobroma\\_cacao.html](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/duke_energy/Theobroma_cacao.html)

Field Museum of Natural History

<http://www.fnmh.org/Chocolate/about.html>

Chocolate at Exploratorium

<http://www.exploratorium.edu/chocolate/>

Hershey's Chocolate History

<http://www.hersheys.com/consumer/history.shtml>

Selected Books

"The New Taste of Chocolate: A Cultural and Natural History of Cacao with Recipes" by Maricel E. Presilla, Ten Speed Press, 2002

"Chocolate: From Start to Finish" by Samuel G. Woods and Gale Zucker (Photographer), Blackbirch Marketing, 1999

"All About Chocolate: The Ultimate Resource to the World's Favorite Food" by Carole Bloom, IDG Books Worldwide, 1998

## Volunteer Opportunities Compiled by Nancy White

Location	Time	Jobs	Contact
Hilltop Garden and Nature Center	year around	various	Greg Speicher, 855-2799 or gspeiche@indiana.edu
Bloomington in Bloom Planning Committee	year around	various	Mary Jane Hall, 824-2762 Gretchen Scott, 330-7548
MG Demonstration Garden	seasonal	various	Bethany Murray, 339-8876, bethany.murray@gmail.com
T. C. Steele SHS	seasonal	various	Davie Kean, 988-2785
Flatwoods Park Butterfly Gardens	seasonal	various	Cathy Meyer, 349,2800
MCMGA Horticulture Hotline	year around	inquiries and research	Amy Thompson, 349-2575
MCMGA Speakers Bureau	year around	various	Amy Thompson, 349-2575
MCMGA Newsletter	year around	writing, stapling, labeling	Helen Hollingsworth, 332-7313
MCMGA Web Site	year around	various	Barbara Hays, 332-4032
MG Program Committee Member	year around	plan MG programs	Vicky St. Myers, 323-7072 Jeff Schafer, 325-3130
Middle Way House	seasonal	various	Clara Wilson, 333-7404
Wylie House	year around	various	Sherry Wise, 855-6224
Mother Hubbard's Cupboard	year around	education, resource	Libby Yarnell, 355-6843
WonderLab Garden	2 times monthly	various	Nancy White, 824-4426

**PLEASE WEAR YOUR NAME BADGE WHEN VOLUNTEERING.**

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Cooperative Extension Service  
Health Building  
119 West Seventh Street  
Bloomington, IN 47404

FIRST CLASS MAIL  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Have you renewed your MCMGA membership?

*Folia and Flora* comes out soon, and to be included, you must have paid yearly dues. Membership renewal forms are available online at [www.mcmga.net](http://www.mcmga.net) and at the extension office.

2009 MCMGA Board

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Happy  
Holidays!