

March 2013



Roots and Shoots

Volume 29, Issue 3



Two speakers at our March meeting

By Susan Lovell



As we eagerly await the arrival of the spring equinox in, we also can look forward to our general meeting on Tuesday, March 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the extension office.

Ken Cote, Indiana Department of Natural Resources will present *Boxwood Blight and Landscaping Alternatives*. Our second presenter, Tracy D. Branam of the Indiana Geological Survey, will discuss *Paupaw Patches and Persimmon Groves: How to Start Your Own*. Two hours of education credit will be available.

At our March meeting you will hear more about a new event, *Bug Fest 2013*, which will be held at Hilltop Garden and Nature Center on June 22, 2013 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monroe County Master Gardeners Association and the Purdue Extension Office will be participating along with Monroe County Parks and Recreation and several other agencies.

Thank you in advance to Vina Kinman, Donna Terry, and Nancy White who have agreed to bring snacks for our March meeting. As usual, we could use two or three more volunteers to help with refreshments for that meeting. We have to plan for 50-60 attendees. If you can help, please contact Susan Lovell at 812 339 5914. We plan to have snacks and drinks available by 6:00 p.m. so we will have social time prior to the meeting. We will need extra hands to help in setting up the room prior to the meeting and in cleaning up afterward. If everyone pitches in, the work is done quickly. Remember that time spent shopping for or preparing food earns volunteer credit so do keep track of your time.

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Special points of interest:

- *What is the value of a tree?*
- *Come to the Be More Awards ceremony on Tuesday, April 6*
- *Susan Eastman reveals strategies for gardening as we age*
- *Focus on Flower is now on television*
- *Evelyn Harrell writes about living in harmony with deer*

Member news



By Evelyn Harrell

It's that time of year when educational opportunities abound, and several Monroe County Master Gardeners are taking advantage. Watch for information from Nancy White about the field trip that several members took on February 14 at the Indianapolis Museum of Art for the program titled *Shade Savvy*.

Area Master Gardeners host late winter garden events

Ann McEndarfer, Gloria Noone, Nancy Page, and Evelyn Harrell will travel to Paoli on March 2 to attend the sixth annual *Spring Tonic*. Orange County's Hoosier Hillside Master Gardeners provide five hours of educational credit with topics on landscaping, annuals, wooded areas, gardening with physical disabilities, and the effects of our recent drought, plus vendors and door prizes. Registration fee of \$40 includes continental breakfast and lunch. For more information call 812-278-6794.

Our neighbors to the north, Morgan County Master Gardeners, will hold their *GardenFest and Pansy Sale* on March 22-23. If you are interested in car-pooling, please contact ear4841@comcast.net. For more information, log on to www.mcmastergardeners.org.

Greene County Master Gardeners will hold their *Flower and Patio Show*. If you are interested in car-pooling, contact ear4841@comcast.net.

Report your education and volunteer hours

Speaking of educational hours, this is a good time to catch up on recording your educational and volunteer hours on the online site at www.mcmga.net. It will be harder to find the time when we need to be working in our gardens. Spring gardening chores are just around the corner, and some are already here, as Bob Baird pointed out in his February 23 column for the *Herald Times*, where he described cutting back butterfly bushes to about three inches above ground and raking chores normally scheduled for March.

Focus on Flowers now on television

Moya Andrew's radio program, *Focus on Flowers*, debuts on television starting March 3. Upcoming programs are March 3 at 7:00 p.m., March 7 at 8:00 p.m., March 9 at 12:30 p.m. and March 11 at 1:00 p.m. Check your WTIU viewer's guide for additional dates and times.

Garden Center seminars

Submitted by Amy Thompson



Bloomingfoods East garden center is hosting a series of free classes this spring, designed to help you hone your gardening skills, simply and inexpensively. On Sunday, March 10, Sara Kinne will offer a seminar on daffodils and spring bulbs; and on Sunday, March 24, Ed Burns will explore the use of vermiculture in your gardening activity. All classes will take place between 2:00—4:00 p.m. in the garden center patio. Master Gardeners can earn education hours for attending these upcoming programs.

Facts about trees

Submitted by Amy Thompson

The U.S. Forest Service (Sherer, 2006) estimated that over a 50-year lifetime, one tree

- generates \$31,250 worth of oxygen
- provides \$62,000 worth of air pollution control
- recycles \$37,500 worth of water
- controls \$31,250 worth of soil erosion

From http://lda.ucdavis.edu/LDA180.181L/parks_for_people_Jul2005.pdf

Focus on Flowers on television

Focus on Flowers, a long-time favorite radio program on WFIU, is now on television on WTIU. Master Gardener Moya Andrews shares gardening tips with infectious enthusiasm on such topics as selecting native plants for attracting birds and butterflies, dealing with deer, diversity in the garden, planting a spring garden, and planning and architecture of the garden. Air dates for *Focus on Flowers* are Thursday, March 7, 8:00 p.m.; Saturday, March 9, 12:30 p.m.; and Monday, March 11, 1:00 p.m. Additional air dates are March 17, 18, and 19; consult your program guide for times.

You can also see Moya on YouTube on the following links:

Beginning Gardeners: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UuG4bLcKaI> and
Transplanting Irises: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf6A7d0g4Nk> .

Low maintenance gardening as we age

By Susan Eastman



All gardens need maintenance, but some kinds of effort get harder as we grow older. Heavy lifting and digging, protracted bending—indeed, *anything that involves a wheelbarrow or a shovel*—puts strains on our increasingly limited resources. What can we do to minimize effort for our bodies? Most of all, we can restrict our own work to those plants we especially enjoy. The rest of our gardens should be devoted to low-maintenance plants, and we should hire help with the periodic heavy work. To lighten our load, the garden should be structured to make gardening relatively easy in all seasons.



Say yes to hardscaping. A low maintenance garden may have lots of hardscaping, preferably stone, brick or other edging to outline planting areas, create tiers, raise some beds, frame paths and level the soil. Hardscaping controls creep and limits the areas to be gardened. Framing paths with heavy stone or concrete allows for leveling of sloping land. When flowerbeds are raised, little bending is required, consequently easing the processes of planting and maintenance. Frame in the areas to be gardened or walked on and designate the remainder for trees, shrubs, walkways, grass or patios.

Say no to pools, crops, and rock gardens. Some activities we enjoyed when younger have less appeal when we are reducing our garden effort. Water features that involve regular cleaning of screens, draining, and other maintenance are big trouble and should go by the wayside. Also, avoid raising food crops because they necessitate annual digging, heavy fertilizing and lots of bending to weed. Growing a little parsley, lettuce, or basil is easy and practical, but say no to serious vegetables. Rock gardens look pretty but are dangerous because walking amid stones and in uneven soil leads to twisted ankles and falls.

Do plan to spend money. Low maintenance gardening is not cheap. Part of the cost is for initial set-up, both in hardscaping and soil amendment; part of the cost is for paid help for routine maintenance. The third cost is in buying low care plants. Ideally, before you even start planting, replace local clay with a mix of top soil and compost in all the flowerbeds.

Say yes to shrubs. Fill your garden with shrubs and a few understory trees. Low trees, such as redbud and dogwood, shed little that needs cleanup. Similarly, most shrubs leave little mess and take little care. But emphasize native and dwarf varieties. Most such shrubs will endure extremes of wet and dry weather. They won't need much fertilizing or pruning or leaf cleanup, while bugs and disease will do little damage. On the other hand, there may be some shrubs you can't live without, such as hydrangeas or rhododendrons or butterfly bushes. (continued on page 5)

Low maintenance gardening as we age

(continued from page 4)

Provided they are placed for easy access for pruning and deadheading, their care may be activities you really enjoy!

Say no to invasives. We've all been told many times to be careful what we put in our gardens, but different sorts of invasives invariably turn up, including at our favorite nurseries. Watch out for grasses such as Miscanthus. Grasses spread and spread in a season and, like bamboo, are difficult to get rid of completely. Watch out, too, for self-seeding plants. It sounds nice to have new plants coming up by themselves next spring, but how many do you really want? And where are the birds spreading those seeds? Keep control.

Say yes to easy-care plants. Fill those raised flowerbeds with low-care perennials, bulbs, and annuals. Choose hardy varieties that will take care of themselves—unlike shasta daisies, for instance, that ought to be deadheaded weekly for many weeks. Choose short varieties, and avoid tall ones that constantly need propping up. Staking and re-staking gladiolas, State Fair zinnias, and heavy-headed dahlias, for example, isn't usually fun.

Hide the mess. Also, remember what some bulbs and perennials look like when past their prime in mid-summer? Daffodils and daylilies, for instance, just last and last while looking pretty messy. Rubber banding or braiding does not help. The secret is to place such plants and bulbs far away from window and patio views, hidden behind fencing, shrubbery or other solid masses of plants. If you can't see the mess, the mess won't bother you.

Weed and mulch early. Early mulching reduces weeds in spring, summer and fall, and helps with water retention as well. Mulch planted areas heavily early in the spring (but have someone else do it). Hauling sacks or shoveling into wheelbarrows should be passed to someone else. And have that person do the weeding. Pulling out tiny weeds in March is far easier than later in the season, so have that tackled early, too.

Water deeply. Watering is an intractable problem, and hauling hoses is heavy work. Our weather has changed significantly in recent years. We can't count on an inch of rain most weeks, but non-native plants will demand water. A gentle sprinkler that covers a huge area can be left to run for many hours (I did say low maintenance is not cheap!). The advantage to long watering periods is that water goes deep into the soil, providing moisture for trees and large shrubs in dry times. If the trees get what they need deep in the soil, they won't be stealing the surface moisture away from the shallow roots of your new plants. Avoid competition for water if you can. Water occasionally in each planted area for long hours, not frequently for short times.

Care for what you enjoy. Fall cleanup in a low maintenance garden should be easy, though any yard near big trees will need some leaf blowing and raking. Happily, the same people who remove your snow will probably be glad to remove your leaves. Remind yourself that trying to save bulbs and winter over non-native plants is *not* low maintenance. Stick to the ones you truly enjoy, and let the rest go. After all, a trip to the nursery in spring is one of the best parts of gardening in Bloomington!

Living in harmony with deer

By Evelyn Harrell

*“One Christmas Eve an emaciated deer stumbled across the yard of Helen Hoover's remote cabin in northern Minnesota. Barely surviving the brutal winter, gaunt from starvation, blind in one eye from a hunting wound, he became the central character in Hoover's popular book, *The Gift of the Deer*. Hoover and her husband Adrian named this deer Peter, nursed him back to health, and observed Peter and his growing clan for four years.”*

Preface from *The Gift of the Deer* by Helen Hoover

Someone gave me a copy of *The Gift of the Deer* more than 40 years ago. I didn't live in the country at the time, but I have spent much of my adult life in one country home or another and now have lived somewhat secluded for more than 13 years in a house nestled in the middle of ten acres of woods. Ever since Monroe County's deer population has been front page news, Helen Hoover's story about Peter and his progeny has been lurking at the fringes of my consciousness, and I only recently managed to dredge it to the surface. When I read that book many years ago, I thought it charming, even a little quirky, a story about two people who became enamored of deer and chronicled so memorably how their own lives became enmeshed with those of the deer. Part of the charm was learning about these lives so very different from my own. Little did I know.

Deer were still a novelty to me 25 years ago when my family and I lived at the edge of Lake Lemon. Deer wandered down the drive at dusk to the water's edge for a drink and then slowly grazed their way back up the drive into the nearby woods. A living room window overlooked the drive, and the deer would bolt at the slightest sign of movement at that window. On the other side of the living room, more windows overlooked the lake in front, and sometimes a Great Blue Heron also came at dusk to the dock to try to snatch up a fish for dinner. The heron startled just as easily as the deer and flew off at the slightest movement. The arrivals of the deer and the heron didn't coincide often, but when they did, I crossed the expanse of the living room floor on my hands and knees in order to avoid disturbing their respective dinners. Have you seen how skinny those herons are? I could never be the cause of that skinny bird missing a meal! A philosophy of cohabitation with nature began to gestate.

Ten years later here we were, building our house on top of a deer path that ran east and west right down the middle of the ridge top. The deer path was clearly defined, and that should have been a clue. Hardly fazed by the looming structure, the deer simply created a divided highway to the north and south of the building and garden, thus joining up the severed ends. In other words, they adapted to our intrusion.

Our property is wooded all around, except for an 800-1000 square foot triangle that stretches eastward from the front of the house, bordered on three sides by two walks and a retaining wall before blending into woodland. The front windows and the screened-in porch overlook this *space, garden, landscaping*. I have never settled on what to call it. The deer call it lunch. (continued on page 7)

Forced branches bring spring indoors



By Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulture Specialist

Winter days may be gloomy and dull, but you can give your home a touch of spring by forcing landscape branches to bloom indoors.

Spring-flowering trees and shrubs set their flower buds the previous fall. Once the buds have been exposed to cold for several months (usually by mid-January), a branch can be cut and forced to bloom indoors. The easiest branches to force include forsythia, pussy willow, honeysuckle, crabapple, redbud, magnolia and flowering dogwood.

Generally, shrub branches are easier to force than tree branches. Buds take from one to five weeks to open, depending on the plant you choose. The closer to the natural blooming time you cut the branches, the shorter the wait.

When selecting branches, choose healthy branches that are free from disease, insect and other injury. Consider the plant as much as you would when you are pruning. Cut the branch just above a side bud, being careful not to leave a stub. Take branches from crowded spots or other areas where they will not be missed.

The length of the cut branch can vary, but between 6 and 18 inches is a good length. Look for branches with many flower buds (usually larger and fatter than leaf buds). Cut the stem with a sharp knife or pruners. Recut the stems just before placing in water. If you cut the branches when temperatures are below freezing, immerse the stems in cool water for several hours to prevent the buds from opening too soon.

Next, place the branches in an upright container and add hot water (180 F) to cover no more than 3 inches of the stem. Allow to stand about one-half hour, then fill the container with cool water. Flowers will last longer if kept in a cool (60-65 F) location.

Living in harmony with deer (continued from page 6)

With time and lots of experimentation, I have accepted the inevitability of the deer, and I strive to live with them. I find that I count the size of our herd almost every day—six to eight of them as a rule. I thrill at the sight of the antlered bucks every fall and cringe for the skittish does as they race past the house with four-footed love in hot pursuit. I watch for glimpses of their dappled babies. I curse them for having so many dappled babies. I worry about them when the winter weather is severe. I take measure of their health with a mother's eye. I set out buckets of water during times of drought. But the deer aggravate me when I look out the window to see four of them strolling through the garden.

Sandy Belth's program in January, *Living in Harmony with Wildlife*, was a consciousness-raising experience. As our population moves into Nature's habitat, we have some decisions to make. Next time, I'll provide some tips on living in harmony with deer.

Everybody's home

By Dianne May



Earth, Air, Fire, Water. This morning I picked a leaf of kale that had made it through the winter in my raised bed—dark green, ruffled. I know I tend to take plants for granted. There are so many of them. But every once in a while I stop to think that the amazing thing about plants is that with a few exceptions, *they make their own food—and ours—out of earth, air, fire and water.*

It seems like science fiction when you look at the details. Let's start with *air*. Plants, along with certain bacteria, take carbon from the carbon dioxide in the air. Every living thing is made out of long strings of this carbon with other things tucked in. Without plants, carbon would mostly hang around as a gas in the atmosphere, not doing much of anything. And there isn't a lot of it. Less than one per cent of earth's atmosphere is carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Animals get the carbon they need to exist only by eating something which has already pulled carbon from the air and put the long strings in order. And that is a plant. (Animals may also eat an animal that has already eaten a plant.) I've read many articles discussing how much we need plants for food, clothing, and energy, but writers often don't put it in nearly strong enough terms. Life as we know it on land could not exist without plants.

But turning air into life doesn't take place using carbon alone. Plants take CO₂ and put it together with *water*, H₂O. Water is amazing in itself. It's the most abundant compound on earth, but most is in the oceans. Only 2.5 per cent of it is the fresh water that land plants need. Of that, 98.8% is ground water or tied up in glaciers. We're dealing with something nearly as scarce as carbon. It's the only common substance found in nature as a gas, liquid, and solid. As a liquid, it's called the universal solvent. That means that many other substances, such as carbon dioxide, dissolve in it. As a gas, it mixes with air and can move as water vapor over long distances to fall as rain. As ice, it floats instead of sinking in liquids like most solids, and in turn, moderates the temperature of the earth.

Carbon and the hydrogen from water are turned into the carbohydrates of which all living things on earth are made. Plants then use a small amount of the oxygen they take from water to break down their own carbohydrates. Most of the oxygen is chucked as waste, luckily waste for which animals have great use. Of the 18 elements a plant needs to live, these three—carbon, hydrogen and oxygen—make up 95% of its weight.

There's a name for the process by which plants pull the scarce carbon out of thin air and mix it with water. It's called *photosynthesis*. I think I first heard the word in third grade. I know I heard it in Master Gardener classes. But the long, official word hides how amazing the whole thing is.

Volunteer opportunities

Compiled by Nancy White

Location	Time	Jobs	Contact
Hilltop Gardens	year around	various	Charlotte Griffin, 345-8128
MG Demonstration Garden	seasonal	various	
Bloomington Community Orchard	seasonal	various	Stacey Decker, getinvolved@bloomingtoncommunityorchard.org
Cheryl's Garden at Karst Farm Park	summer	design and maintain	Nancy Fee, 332-1940
T. C. Steele SHS	seasonal	various	Davie Kean, 988-2785
Flatwoods Park Butterfly Gardens	seasonal	various	Cathy Meyer, 349-2575
MCMGA Horticulture Hotline	year around	inquiries & research	Amy Thompson, 349-2575
MCMGA Speakers Bureau	year around	various	Amy Thompson, 349-2575
MCMGA Newsletter	year around	write articles	Helen Hollingsworth, 332-7313
MCMGA Web Site	year around	various	Stephen Anderson, 360-1216
MG Program Committee Member	year around	plan MG programs	Sandy Belth, 825-8353 Susan Lovell, 339-5914
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	Kendra Brewer, garden@mhcfoodpantry.org
WonderLab Garden	2 times monthly	various	Nancy White, 824-4426
Hoosier Hills Foodbank	year around	various	Nicole Richardson , 334-8374

Garden Fair news



By Nancy White

Karen King and her Garden Fair vendor committee report a good response from our booth sales to both commercial and non-profit vendors. If you know of a vendor who has not been with us in past years but who might like to be contacted for this year's fair, please contact Karen at tunnking@yahoo.com or members David Dunatchik or Nancy White.

Be sure to spread the word that this year's fair will welcome back many old friends among the vendors and add some new exciting booths. New this year will be The Garden Tower Project, Strangers Hill Organics, Altra Designs (hardscaping), and Worm's Way, among others.

Any local business or entity may purchase advertisements at a very reasonable rate of \$20 in our Garden Fair booklet. These ads can be as simple as a business card or can be designed to fit a third of a page in the booklet. If you know of a business or person who might be interested in sponsoring an ad, contact Karen King or Nancy White. Deadline for submitting an ad is March 6.

Barb Cappy and her Master Gardener sales committee will be selling plant markers this year along with pots of pansies for reasonable prices. Be thinking about how many of these markers and pansy pots you will need. Both items make great spring gifts for friends and family.

Garden Fair posters, save the date cards, and yard signs will be available at the March 26 general meeting. If you need any of these items before that date to post at your workplace, school, or church, please contact Nancy White, 824-4426, and they can be delivered to your home or place of business. Some have already requested yard signs. If you live in a visible area and would like a yard sign, call Nancy White or leave a message at the extension office, 349-2575.

As you know, the Garden Fair is a big undertaking each year. Working to plan and implement the fair is lots of fun and helps members greet old friends and make new ones. If you are not already on a committee but want to volunteer on a committee or for a special task on Garden Fair day, April 6, we need you. Please contact David Dunatchik, Jeff Schafer, or Nancy White. You will be glad you did!

**You're
invited!**

Nancy White has nominated Master Gardeners for the *Be More Award* for volunteer service, sponsored by the City of Bloomington. Let's all join Nancy on Tuesday, April 2 at Buskirk-Chumley Theater. Festivities begin at 6:00 p.m. with a reception and hors d'oeuvres and live music. There is a nominee group photo at 6:45 p.m., and at 7:00 p.m. is the public celebration and award recipient presentations. At 8:30 p.m. the party moves to Nick's English Hut for a special After-Party. Send RSVPs to www.volunter@bloomington.in.gov before March 29. Or RSVP to 812-349-3433.

Designing at its best



By M. Susan Osborne

The Well-Designed Mixed Garden: Building Beds and Borders with Trees, Shrubs, Perennials, Annuals, and Bulbs by Tracy Disabato-Aust, Timber Press, 2009.

If you attended the 2012 Master Gardener Conference in Noblesville, Indiana, this past year, you had the pleasure of hearing author Tracy Disabato-Aust speak about garden design. This book was one of three offered at the conference illustrating her expertise in garden design and maintenance. Previously, I reviewed her earlier book, *The Well Tended Perennial Garden: Planting and Pruning Techniques*, which is an excellent guide to planning and caring for perennials. So, after learning so many valuable maintenance instructions, I knew I had to read what she had to say about plant design.

The Well-Designed Mixed Garden is written for “gardeners who are passionate about plants of all kinds.” The 460 page book includes design plans, color theory, plant combinations, and a directory of garden plants. Contents are divided into three parts, with lots of excellent resources in the back. With so much to offer, it could be considered one of the only garden books you might need.

Part One: Mixed Garden Design Basics consists of seven chapters covering mixed gardens; first steps in design; color, texture, and form; design principles; designing on paper; art and gardening; and garden maintenance.

Part Two: Mixed Garden Design Examples contains two chapters, one on small to medium gardens and one on large gardens, offering appropriate design fundamentals. Dynamic photos of Ms. Disabato-Aust’s personal gardens (and other gardens) showcase plant color combinations and placements, with tips on how to keep plant combinations at their best. Extensive diagrams offer garden layout suggestions with an organized list of trees, existing trees, shrubs, perennials, vines, bulbs, and annuals.

Part Three is an encyclopedia of 27 different plant combinations including an explanation of design considerations and maintenance, plant details, and photographs of the combination at its peak.

Disabato-Aust has truly outdone herself with *The Well-Designed Mixed Garden*. The information that she has compiled from her years of work offers gardeners a “nearly foolproof guide to every aspect of designing superior gardens with superior plants”.

Besides over 200 photo plates, the book’s chapters also include design renderings by Megan H. King; color model, value scale, and color scheme watercolors by Stacey Renee Peters; and color scheme icons by Martin Knapp.

Editor’s note: Monroe County Public Library has two copies available for check-out.

Monroe County Master Gardener Association

Cooperative Extension Service
3400 South Walnut Street
Bloomington, IN 47401

Helping others grow!



At our general meeting on **Tuesday, March 26**, hear Ken Cote, Indiana Department of Natural Resources explain *Boxwood Blight and Landscaping Alternatives*. and Tracy D. Branam, Indiana Geological Survey, discuss *Paupaw Patches and Persimmon Groves: How to Start Your Own*. Two hours of education credit will be available.

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Master Gardener Calendar

March 22-23, 4:00—8:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m., Morgan County Master Gardener *GardenFest and Pansy Sale*, at National Guard Armory, 1900 Hospital Drive, Martinsville; log onto www.mcmastergardeners.org for information.

March 26, 6:30—8:30 p.m., MCMGA general meeting in the extension office meeting room, with presenters Ken Cote and Tracy D. Branam, two hours education credit.

April 6, 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m., *Garden Fair*, at Indiana National Guard Armory, 3380 South Walnut Street, free garden seminars and parking, free shrub seedling to first 200 visitors