

October 2010

Roots and Shoots

Monroe County Master Gardener Association Newsletter

Volume 26, Issue 10



Master Gardeners attend AIB Conference

Several Master Gardeners attended the annual America in Bloom national conference on September 30-October 3 in St. Louis. Events included a visit to the Missouri Botanical Gardens, seminar sessions on environmental issues, community beautification, healthy and sustainable neighborhoods, urban tree inventories, and seasonal city planting displays. Bus trips to several sites gave conference participants first hand views of the seminar topics.

The 2010 America in Bloom winners were announced at the awards banquet where America in Bloom cities were recognized for their outstanding achievements. The Bloomington delegation was loud and appreciative as our city was named the outstanding city in the 50,000-100,000 population category. As views of Bloomington were shown, positive comments from the competition judges were shared with those attending. Accepting the award for Bloomington was Gretchen Scott, the general chair for the two year project. Earlier in the conference, Bloomington forester, Lee Huss, accepted the AIB Urban Forestry Award which went to Bloomington as the best of all the population entry cities. Bloomington MGs attending were Gretchen Scott (team leader), Mary Jane Hall, Dot Owens, Amy Thompson, and Nancy White. Other local attendees represented the City of Bloomington, Parks and Recreation, and the Bloomington Board of Realtors.

By
Nancy
White

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Back, left to right:

John Turnbull, Brian Thompson, Elizabeth Kehoe, and Dot Owen.

Front: Susan Eastman, Gretchen Scott, Mary Jane Hall, and Dot Owen

Special points of interest:

- Bloomington wins America in Bloom award*
- Time to renew your membership*
- Read our newest column, Web Castings*
- Check houseplants for insect infections before bringing them inside in the fall*
- Enjoy fresh herbs year around*

Member News

Gretchen Scott received the BRAVO award recently from the City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation for her excellent job organizing and motivating the Bloomington in Bloom project. We are proud of Gretchen and congratulate her on this well-deserved honor.



By
Nancy
White

Master Gardeners learn about irises

On September 28, over 40 members and guests attended our general meeting at the new Extension Office. After a welcome to members and new interns, the speaker, Charles Bunnell of Lafayette, gave a presentation titled *Iris, the Rainbow Flower*. With visuals of many lovely examples, he discussed the hybrids he has developed of median bearded varieties, some of which are available on the commercial market. Other examples were of tall bearded, miniature bearded, intermediate bearded, and border bearded.

Bunnell advised beginners to start with some of the beardless types that seem to like our soil such as Japanese and Siberian, his favorite, for our area. Responding to questions from the audience, he discussed dividing techniques, fertilization, mulching for winter, and removing dead leaves. Refreshments were served after the speaker by Ann McEndarfer and her committee of Jackie Gilkey, Mary Hawkins, and Mary Hoffmann.

Visit Kidsgardening.org

For those who get involved with gardening projects for children, the website for Kidsgardening.org has many interesting publications and materials. This is a division of the National Gardening Association and is a source for seed identification kits, rainforest habitat growlabs, and indoor gardening tools, among other products.

Nominating Committee issues report

MCMGA's nominating committee met early in the fall to develop a slate of officers for the 2011 Board. As stated in our bylaws, each year the seats on the board rotate to provide continuity. This year, positions open are president, vice president for education, vice president for programming, secretary, director of communications, and director at large. The slate will be presented and voting will take place at our November 30 general meeting.

Program Survey

At our recent general meeting, a survey activity was held for all members to suggest ideas for programming and education sessions for 2011. Jeff Schafer, vice president for education, will be reviewing the results of this survey with the program committee in October. If you were unable to attend the September meeting and have some ideas for speakers, topics, or field trip locations, you may want to complete the survey. Copies are available at the Extension Office. Call 349-2575 and request a copy.

Gretchen Scott honored with BRAVO award



Gretchen Scott

Master Gardener Gretchen Scott was recognized with a BRAVO award by Bloomington Parks & Recreation for her leadership of Bloomington in Bloom. In a small ceremony at City Tuesday, September 28, Kim Ecenbarger, Special Services Coordinator for BP&R, praised Scott for her impact on the community, her two years of enthusiastic effort on behalf of beautification in Bloomington, and her commitment to collaboration among realtors, service groups, churches, businesses, and environmental organizations. The BRAVO Award recognizes community members who generously give their time and energy to activities benefiting our community.



By
Susan
Eastman

Hall on
Tuesday, September 28, Kim Ecenbarger, Special Services Co-ordinator for BP&R, praised Scott for her impact on the community, her two years of enthusiastic effort on behalf of beautification in Bloomington, and her commitment to collaboration among realtors, service groups, churches, businesses, and environmental organizations. The BRAVO Award recognizes community members who generously give their time and energy to activities benefiting our community.

Master Gardener Holiday General Meeting is on November 30

Please plan to join us for the festivities at our Holiday General Meeting on Tuesday, November 30 at 6:30 p.m. Our meeting will be held in Fellowship Hall at the Sherwood Oaks Christian Church located at 2700 E. Rogers Road, Bloomington. We will have a business meeting, a speaker, door prizes, and a pitch-in dinner. Look for more details in the November issue of *Roots and Shoots* and future emails.



By
Vicky
Myers

Report your earned Education Hours for 2010

As we complete the year, you may be checking to see if you have completed your required education hours. Education hours were offered at our general meetings during 2010, as listed below, as well as the hour anticipated for the November meeting.

By
Nancy
White

January—2 hours

March—2 hours

May—1 hour

September—1.5 hours

November—1 hour

If you attended any of the garden chats at the Monroe County Fair, those will qualify for 45 minutes each. Some of our field trips had qualifying education time also. Contact Vicky St. Myers at vstmyers@hotmail.com with questions about education hours for the field trips in 2010.

Web Castings

Gardeners love worm castings, right? Well, this new monthly column has this odd title because when gardeners go online, there is useful stuff to be had, but we often need to sort through and ‘digest’ a number of sites before we get to the good stuff. Does this take loads of time? Oh yeah. Would we like a topical, timely, reviewed and edited little list each month to use and play with? (Do I need a volunteer project where I can contribute and learn?) Hmm...



By
Karen
Sparks

Introduction: I am in the current Intern MG class and have wanted to take this for years; now that I am retired and we have landed here, the time is right. We are from Wisconsin, where we had an apple orchard of 250 trees and sold apples and cider for many years, as an all-consuming hobby. After four years of crop failures, we got the message. We are in Brown County at the former Possum Trot Winery (and former Possum Trot B&B), which were developed and operated by my husband’s parents, Ben and Leora Sparks, over the last 50 years. While I do miss Wisconsin, the longer spring and fall seasons here are really nice. Summer? Well....

This column idea grew suddenly out of the brainstorming session at the September meeting (following the Iris program) and within minutes, Amy T. and Editor Helen were on board, and I suddenly had a Friday, October 1 deadline, three days away!

My main premise is that we each have a couple of those go-to sites that we use all the time and take for granted. We could share! If *you* have a site for me to review and include, please send the link to me at Karen.k.sparks@mac.com. I will name contributors, with thanks. Your link might not appear right away, since we want to make this seasonal and topical, and I will include some general sites, blogs, whatever turns up. Thanks in advance for your links, and here we go!

The Big Momma starting point for us all, Purdue Extension: www.ag.purdue.edu/extension/pages/ConsumerHorticulture.aspx This page best describes itself: ‘The list below serves as the central access point to the broad range of consumer horticulture expertise at Purdue and abroad.’ Believe it!

Those DEER! For a really good listing of deer resistant plants (annuals, perennials, shrubs and more) that can even be sorted and provides both common and Latin names, the Rutgers site <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/deerresistance> is my go-to.

Get Busy Our own Rosie Lerner at Purdue has a very complete task list in her Autumn Garden Calendar, at the following: www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/ho-93.pdf. It is excellent. Now I need a nap. If you read it all, you may feel like a nap, too!

Farmers Almanac can be a hoot; for example, did you know that October 1 was the best day to ‘can fruits and vegetables, mow to retard growth, brew beer, get married’? I guess we missed it. Their site provides several calendars, such as *Gardening by the Moon* and more. Here is a link: www.farmersalmanac.com/calendar/best-days. Of course, take this seriously at your own risk. Better to see Purdue, as above, no?

Thanks for reading, and please do send along your favorite gardening sites. Enjoy!

BOGA fall plant swap at Bloomington Farmers' Market

The Bloomington Organic Gardeners Association (BOGA) will host a free plant swap on Saturday, October 9, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Bloomington Farmers' Market. Native plants, tree saplings, and seeds are encouraged but all non-invasive plants are welcome.

Submitted
by Jen
Cook

Have you renewed your Master Gardener membership?

A membership renewal form can be printed from our website, www.mcmga.net and may also be requested at the Extension Office. The information you submit when you renew your membership is used in updating our membership guide, *Folia and Flora*. By submitting your membership information immediately, you'll be included. Please send your membership renewal to the Extension Office as soon as possible.

Search for Excellence award guidelines are online

The 2011 Search for Excellence award applications and guidelines are now available on the eXtension MG website at http://www.extension.org/pages/International_Master_Gardener_Search_for_Excellence.

The Search for Excellence program is the recognition program to honor the work done by Master Gardeners in the USA and Canada. This program searches for deserving projects in your counties. The IMGCC is hoping for a great response and we hope to have lots of great programs nominated for these awards. Applications are due by February 1, 2011. Awards will be given out at the International Master Gardener Conference in Charleston, West Virginia on October 11-14, 2011.

By Rosie
Lerner,
State
Master
Gardener
Coordina-
tor

The Vanilla Orchid is not a typical orchid

Although much of the vanilla used for flavoring and fragrance today is produced synthetically, natural vanilla comes from the seed pod of an orchid plant. *Vanilla planifolia* is a vigorous, vining orchid that can reach up to 300 feet in its native tropical American environment.

The vine produces greenish-yellow flowers that must be hand-pollinated outside of its native habitat to ensure good fruit set. The pods grow to about 6-9 inches long and are harvested when fully grown but not yet ripe, about 8-9 months after flowering. Vanilla flavor is then further developed by curing and fermenting the pods.

One can grow vanilla as a houseplant, but it rarely flowers or fruits. Homes are not well suited for a vanilla crop. Keep the plant in a warm, brightly lit area, but away from hot drafts. Running a humidifier or grouping plants together on pebble trays partially filled with water will add some much-needed moisture to the air. Given the plant's potential height, it's probably a good thing that it doesn't thrive as a houseplant.

By Rosie
Lerner,
Consumer
Horticult-
ure
Specialist

Autumn Inspiration Seminar offered in Miami County

Miami County Master Gardener Association cordially invites you to *Autumn Inspiration Seminar* on Saturday, November 6, from 8:30-3:00 p.m. at the Miami County Fairgrounds, 1029 W. 200 N, Peru, Indiana. Registration is \$25, which includes the cost of lunch. This program will count for five (5) education hours.

Speakers include Connie Slagle, Advanced Master Gardener and owner of an herb shop for 17 years; Dr. Pawan Srivastava, developer of soilless media products at steadyGROWpro; Esther Benedict, a specialist in alpiners and other unusual plants; Del Sease, owner of Garden Gate Greenhouse and a specialist in heirloom plants; and Lynn Hausner, a specialist in creative food design who participates in tapping and making maple syrup.

Send contact information and \$25 check payable to Miami County MGA to Miami County Extension Office, Attn: MG Seminar, 1029 W. 200 N., Peru, Indiana 46970. Registration deadline is October 29. Please indicate one soup and one sandwich choice from the following lists: stuffed pepper soup or broccoli and cheese soup, and chicken salad croissant, veggie wrap, no meat, or veggie wrap with meat.

Evergreen needles don't last forever

Evergreens provide green color all year long, but that doesn't mean that the individual needles live forever. Evergreens shed their older needles to make room for new growth, but what makes them evergreen is that they retain some foliage all year long instead of shedding all of the leaves at once.

Evergreen needles have varying life spans, depending on the species. Arborvitae and pine needles live for two years while spruce needles live 3-10 years. Some species of evergreens have a more noticeable leaf drop than others. In autumn, arborvitae and white pine will drop their two-year old needles all at once, which can be quite alarming if you don't realize that it's perfectly normal.

On other species, needle drop occurs gradually with a small number of needles falling at one time. The older needles of yew shrubs will turn yellow and drop in late spring or early summer. Broad-leaved evergreens such as rhododendrons drop their 2-3-year-old leaves in late summer and early fall.

The hot, dry weather experienced over much of the region appears to be causing many plants to drop needles early. Inner and lower needles that are hidden from light are usually the first to drop. Pruning excess growth and dead limbs can help open the plant to more light. But for most plants, there's no need to worry; they are just doing what comes naturally.

By Rosie Lerner, Consumer Horticulturist, Purdue University

Keep plants watered for drought recovery

Much of Indiana found rainfall scarce throughout the summer, and even into fall, so gardeners need to make sure their landscape plants have an adequate supply of moisture before winter arrives.

Most plants could benefit by a deep watering every couple of weeks or so, right up until the ground freezes. But some plants will need even closer attention. Newly planted trees and shrubs may have limited root systems and may need a weekly watering. Evergreen plants are particularly subject to winter drying since their leaves continue to lose moisture all winter long. Once the ground is frozen, little water is taken up by the roots to replace that which is lost through the leaves. Broad-leaved evergreens, such as rhododendrons and hollies, have more leaf surface exposed and are most subject to injury.

By Rosie
Lerner,
Consumer
Horticulture
Specialist,
Purdue
University

It's best to water deeply occasionally, rather than frequent shallow sprinkling. Apply an inch to 1.5 inches of water around the root zone of the plant. Be aware that the roots may spread farther than you think. The size of the root system varies, depending on the plant species, its age and the soil conditions. In general, the roots extend quite a distance beyond the drip line of the tree or shrub.

For newly established plantings and shallow-rooted plants, a winter mulch can be helpful not only in conserving soil moisture, but also in keeping plants in the ground. These plants can be heaved out of the ground if the soil tends to alternate frequently between freezing and thawing. Apply winter mulch after the plants have become fully dormant, generally by late November or perhaps December. Use a 3-4-inch layer of coarse material such as straw, chopped leaves or shredded bark.

Many woody plants may continue to show effects of the drought next spring and beyond. Some branches may die back during the winter and fail to leaf out next year. In the case of twig injury, rather than death, the stems may leaf out, but die back later in spring or summer as that branch becomes stressed. Prune out any dead or damaged branches by cutting back to their point of origin.

If plants appear to be dead, cut away the outer bark and look for green tissue underneath, an indication that there is still hope for regrowth. Also, check for the presence of buds, which, likewise, should be green in color when cut open. Dead plant twigs generally will break clean when bent; live twigs should still be somewhat flexible.

Procedures for electronically reporting education and volunteer hours

Before logging onto your account, you need your email address and password as well as a record of hours you wish to submit. Log onto <http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/mg/> and follow on-screen directions. If you do not know your password, click on "forgot my password" link and follow instructions. Remember to report only 2010 hours electronically.

Bringing houseplants back indoors

Many houseplants thrive during the long, bright summer days, especially when properly moved outdoors. But these plants may have some trouble adjusting to indoor conditions when colder weather strikes.

By Rosie
Lerner,
Consumer
Horticulture

Many of our common indoor plants are native to the tropical or subtropical climates and cannot tolerate cold temperatures. Houseplants should be brought back inside before the outdoor temperature drops to 55 F. If days are warm but night temperatures are cold, you might consider bringing the plants indoors for the night and putting them back out in the morning.

Many plants will drop leaves in response to the lower light conditions inside most homes. Gradually exposing the plants to lower light intensity before permanently moving indoors should help lessen the shock. However, some leaf drop is unavoidable.

Plants will likely slow down their growth considerably, so less water and fertilizer will be needed. The best moisture meter is your finger. For most plants, you should allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Reduce your fertilizer applications or discontinue if plants seem to be in a resting period.

Be sure to inspect your plants closely for signs or symptoms of insect attack. Insects such as spider mites and aphids are very prolific outdoors and may increase their population rapidly once they are brought indoors. And, these pests may spread to other plants very quickly.

Often a sharp spray from the garden hose will remove insect pests from houseplant foliage. Insecticidal soaps also work well, particularly on soft-bodied insects such as aphids. Several treatments may be necessary to be sure that the pests are gone. Start checking your plants now, so that control measures will have time to work before you bring the plants indoors.

Garden Conference in Evansville offers a variety of topics

Southwestern Indiana Master Gardener Association, in partnership with the Evansville Courier & Press, present *Garden Conference* featuring eight speakers on Saturday, October 15 at the University of Southern Indiana, Mitchell Auditorium, 8600 University Boulevard in Evansville, Indiana. USI is located on Indiana Highway 62 SWest; follow the signs on campus.

Speakers include Jason Delaney, Roy Klehm, David Salman, Larry Caplan, Judy Schneider Kron, Grant Hartman, Kathy Eicher, Tom Hickey. The conference hours are 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tickets are \$40, which includes lunch and beverage service.

Registration may be made by calling the University of Southern Indiana reservation service at 812-464-1989 or 1-800-467-8600 and give the code number CON390. Deadline for registration is October 12 .

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
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 articles	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	Stephanie Solomon, 334-8374
WonderLab Garden	2 times monthly	various	Nancy White, 824-4426
Hoosier Hills Foodbank	year around	various	Jessica Williams, 334-8374
Cheryl's Garden at Karst Farm Park	summer 2010	design and maintain	Nancy Fee, 332-1940

Please wear your name badge when volunteering.

Remember to report 2010 hours only at <http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/mg/>.

Propagate herbs now for yearlong enjoyment

Herb gardeners can snip fresh herbs throughout the winter by propagating their garden plants now.

There are several approaches to overwintering plants. One easy method is to dig up a plant, or a portion of one, and pot it up. Plants such as chives, lemon balm, mint, burnet and sweet woodruff can be lifted and divided into sections to create more plants. Dividing is a fairly foolproof method of propagation because both roots and shoots are already formed. Leggy plants should be pruned back about halfway to encourage new growth.

By Rosie Lerner, Consumer Horticulture Specialist, Purdue University



Many herbs can be propagated by cuttings for rooting indoors. This method works especially well for plants too large to move in their entirety. Plants such as basil, oregano, lavender, rosemary, thyme and sage root easily from shoot tip cuttings. Take the cutting at a node on the stem (where the leaves attach), because this is where root formation is more abundant. Remove the lower leaves and insert the cut end of the stem into moist media such as soil mix, vermiculite or perlite. Cover the container with plastic to help increase relative humidity. If the plastic lays on the foliage, it can decay. Place the pot in a warm, shaded location.

Some herbs, including mint, lemon balm and thyme propagate easily by layering. Bend a stem to the ground, remove leaves from that stem section, cover the section with soil, and water gently. The new plant will be nourished by the mother plant until it is ready to survive on its own. Leave about 6 inches of the upper portion of the stem above ground and upright. If necessary, stake stems to hold them in place, or put a rock or other heavy object on top of the mound. To help stimulate faster rooting, cut a wound just below a node on the stem portion to be buried. Once rooted, the new plant can be severed from the mother plant and potted for indoor growing.

Herbs can be grown indoors, but will need a well-lit location, especially when they are first brought inside. Even a sunny window may not match the light intensity of a lightly shaded outdoor location. Indoors, a sunny southern exposure would be ideal. Supplemental or artificial lighting may be needed. Special plant-growing light bulbs can be purchased, but the same results can be achieved by using a combination of warm white and cool white fluorescent lights.

Most herbs thrive in infertile soil and do not require extra fertilizer in the garden. However, if planted in one of the soilless potting mixtures commonly used today, some fertilizer may be necessary. A balanced, low-analysis fertilizer such as 5-10-5 or 6-10-4 should be sufficient. Read the product label for application specifics.

Although herbs differ in their moisture needs, your finger can be a guide. Water when the top inch of soil feels dry (crumbles) when pinched. Apply enough water so that some drains from the bottom of the pot, thus washing away any excess salts.

Cut back perennials now or later?

Gardeners often ask, "When is the best time to cut back the dead tops of herbaceous perennials (stems die back to the ground each year)?"

By Rosie
Lerner,
Consumer
Horticulturist,
Purdue

"Should we cut them in fall as the tops fade?"

"Or wait until spring just before new growth begins?"

The answers depend, in part, on the specific plant and whether disease or insect pests are a factor.

For most healthy plants, leaving plant tops over winter is fine and, in many respects, preferable. Many species retain dried seed heads and foliage that may have aesthetic value. Ornamental grasses are at their best in fall and winter.

And, if you don't cut back the tops, your native wildlife will thank you! Seed heads, fruits, stems and foliage provide food and shelter. Although late-season bloomers, such as brown-eyed Susans and coneflowers, may have turned brown, birds still feed on the seed. Many butterflies overwinter on plant debris.

Allowing plant tops to remain over winter can also help collect leaves and snow for insulation and moisture. For some marginally hardy perennials, like garden mums, waiting until early spring to cut back the dead tops can actually improve a plant's chances of survival.

And, of course, leaving the tops in place will remind you where the plants are, in case you're thinking of adding more plants or rearranging the elements of the garden before spring growth begins.

On the other hand, plants with disease or insect pest troubles should be pruned back in fall to reduce the chances of carryover to the following season. Sanitation is one of the best investments gardeners can make in reducing problems for next season. Peonies and Rudbeckia with blackened foliage should definitely be cut back in fall. The same is true for bee balm and phlox, which are routinely plagued by powdery mildew. Removing iris and asparagus foliage in the fall reduces overwintering sites for the iris borer and asparagus beetles, respectively.

Badly damaged or infested foliage can and should be removed as soon as possible. Otherwise, wait until after several hard frosts have killed back the tops. Cut back the tops to about two inches above the soil. Hand pruners and hedge clippers work fine, if you have just a few plants to cut back. But for larger plantings and large clumps of ornamental grasses, a power hedge trimmer works well.

Berries in your backyard? Fall is a good time to plant blueberries, raspberries and strawberries. Berries require full sun and adequate space to spread. Select varieties carefully for an extended crop season.

October 2010

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Bloomington was named the America in Bloom winner in cities 50,000-100,000 in population size. Bloomington was also cited for its work in forestry and preservation. Several Master Gardeners attended the ceremony. See story on page 1.

20010 MCMGA Board

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2010 Hours: <http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/mg/>

Master Gardener fall calendar

Saturday, October 9, 9:00-1:00 p.m., BOGA Fall Plant Swap, Farmers' Market, Bloomington

Saturday, October 16, 8:15-3:30 p.m., *Garden Conference*, Evansville, Indiana

Saturday, November 6, 8:00-3:30 p.m., *Going Wild*, Georgetown, Indiana

Saturday, November 6, INPAWS conference, University of Indianapolis

Saturday, November 6, 8:30-3:00 p.m., *Autumn Inspiration Seminar*, Peru, Indiana

Tuesday, November 30, 6:30 p.m., Holiday General Meeting, Sherwood Oaks Christian Church, Bloomington