

October 2005

# Roots and Shoots

Monroe County Master Gardener Association, Inc. Newsletter

## Member News by Nancy White

Volume 21, Issue 8

### November Holiday Extravaganza

Tuesday, November 29 will be a very special event for all Master Gardeners. This year we are combining our November general meeting with our annual holiday party at 6 p.m. at First United Church, 2420 E. Third Street on the east side of Bloomington.

Be searching your favorite recipes for your specialty to share with those attending. Meats, cheeses, breads, and drinks will be furnished; anything you can add to the meal will be welcomed.

Music and a special program on gifts to prepare for the holidays presented by Sue Berg from the Extension Office will make this an evening to enjoy as we enter the busy holiday season. We may even have a surprise or two to add to the pleasure of the evening. Come and join your Master Gardening friends for fun and fine food.

### Advanced Training Coming Soon

Make a note on your 2006 calendar. Save the morning of Saturday, February 4, 2006 for an Advanced Training session on trees. You asked for tree information in our member interest survey last year, and we are really going to meet your needs. We have lined up two terrific presenters:

- ◆ Ralph Unversaw, Indiana Department of Natural Resources District Forester, will teach us skills on tree identification, planting, disease recognition, and managing our tree lots, large and small.
- ◆ Lee Huss, Bloomington Urban Forester, will give us pointers on trees for the urban environment and strategies for being successful tree stewards.

A continental breakfast and snacks will be provided. More information on this Advanced Training is coming soon as we approach February. Mark the date on your calendar and plan to volunteer and attend a fine training session. All Master Gardeners and the general public are welcome.

### Advanced Training Committees

If you didn't sign up at the September general meeting, you can still sign up to volunteer and help with planning and preparations for our February Advanced Training. We will be hosting Master Gardeners from surrounding counties as well as our local members and the general public. To do this, we need volunteers to help with pre-event planning as well as on February 4. If you work on any committee, you can count those hours toward your volunteer hours, whether you are an intern or certified. Call or email Ann McEndarfer or Nancy White to get your name on the list. This is an easy way to collect volunteer hours in winter.



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### Upcoming Events:

- Tuesday, November 29, MG Holiday Extravaganza, First United Church, 2420 E. Third Street, 6 p.m.
- January 26, 2006, MG Intern Class begins.
- Saturday, February 4, 2006, Advanced Master Gardener training in Monroe County

## Just Not the Same “Euonymous I Euost to Be” - Question and Answer

### Question:

I have a client who has a variegated euonymus that is losing its variegation, going all green. Any ideas?

### Answer:

Phil, the part of the plant that is turning green is simply reverting back to the original plant type. Oddly, we call this reversion. You might hear the phrase "wild type" used to refer the original type plant (OK, maybe it's just me, but if I talk about it, now you'll know what I mean.)

This happens to almost all variegated plants to some extent. Some are known to revert regularly and these can be hard to maintain in the variegated form. Others revert only occasionally. You do need to realize that part of the plant can revert to plain green while the rest stays variegated. You can expect that the reverted green part will not change back to variegated.

Variegated and green foliage can co-exist on the plant. However, the all green leaves have more chlorophyll, and thus that part of the plant grows more quickly. It's not uncommon for the green portion to out-compete the variegated part for sun and the variegated portion will become quickly overgrown and may disappear because it can't get its fair share of resources.

The only thing you can do is prune out any all-green parts as soon as you see them so the variegated part

does not suffer and decline. The reversion (it is a genetic mutation, just as the original change to variegated was a genetic mutation) occurred at the point that the stem started producing all-green leaves, so simply cut below that point. Since the remaining part of the plant is all variegated it should now produce new variegated leaves - at least until a new reversion occurs.

As far as I know, you can't manipulate growing conditions to encourage or discourage reversions. They just happen. Keep a watch on the plant and cut out the all-green when you see it.

You will also see reversions in flower colors (e.g. white-flowered cultivar of purple coneflower will revert to purple wild type) and even in growth form (dwarf conifer produces non-dwarf needles and starts to add many inches of height each year, rather than just a few). The solution is always the same - cut out the parts that have the wild type form if you can (I don't think you can with the coneflower reversion).

Let me know if you have other questions. Mary

### New Certifications by Joanna Howe

We welcome Mary Hawkins ('04) to the rank of certified Master Gardener. Mary has helped at the extension office and facilitated several MG training classes. In addition she was heavily involved with our first members garden tour and is serving on the Board of Directors as part of the treasurer's team.

Helen Hollingsworth has stepped up to the Bronze level (minimum of 200 volunteer hours and 60 education hours). Helen has been a presenter at the MG training class and has staffed the Purdue booth at the Indianapolis Flower and Patio Show. She is a board member as well as **Roots and Shoots** editor-in-chief and publisher and attends many continuing education opportunities. Congratulations!

### Volunteer Opportunity by Joanna Howe

As the calendar year begins to come to an end, a search for new board members/officers will begin. Serving on the board not only keeps your finger closer to the pulse of this organization, but time spent counts toward your volunteer hour total (whereas general membership meetings do not). This also includes any preparatory work such as secretarial minutes, treasurer's reports, and committee reports.

Please keep this in mind and let any current board member know if you are interested in serving. An outline of various positions and duties can be found in your **folia and flora** membership guide, page 36-37, article III.

## October to do List by B. Rosie Lerner

### **HOME (Indoor plants and activities)**

- ◆ Keep poinsettia in complete darkness for 15 hours each day, for example, between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m., for eight to 10 weeks until red bracts begin to show.
- ◆ Pot spring-flowering bulbs to force into bloom indoors. Moisten soil and refrigerate 10 to 13 weeks. Transfer to a cool, sunny location, and allow an additional three to four weeks for blooming.
- ◆ Houseplants, especially those grown outdoors during the summer, commonly drop some or many of their leaves in response to the lower natural light intensity in autumn and reduced light intensity indoors.
- ◆ Water indoor plants less frequently, and discontinue fertilizer as plants slow down or stop growing for the winter season.

### **YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)**

- ◆ Keep plants, especially newly planted stock, well watered until ground freezes.
- ◆ Have soil ready to mound roses for winter protection. Do not mound or cover roses until after leaves drop and soil is near freezing, usually late November or early December.
- ◆ Strawberry plants need protection from winter's extremes, but applying winter mulch too early may cause crowns to rot. Apply winter protection when plants are dormant but before temperatures drop below 20 F, usually late November or early December.
- ◆ Rake or shred large, fallen tree leaves, such as maple, to prevent them from matting down and smothering grass. Raking smaller leaves, such as honey locust, is optional.
- ◆ Continue mowing lawn as needed.

### **GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)**

- ◆ Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 F), humid location. Storing produce in perforated plastic bags is a convenient, easy way to increase humidity.
- ◆ Harvest Brussels sprouts as they develop in the axils of the leaves from the bottom of the stem. Brussels sprouts will continue to develop up the stem.
- ◆ Harvest pumpkins and winter squash before frost, but when rind is hard and fully colored. Store in a cool location until ready to use.
- ◆ Harvest gourds when stems begin to brown and dry. Cure at 70-80 F for two to four weeks.
- ◆ Harvest mature, green tomatoes before frost, and ripen indoors in the dark. Warmer temperatures lead to faster ripening.
- ◆ Asparagus top growth should not be removed until foliage yellows. Let foliage stand over winter to collect snows for insulation and moisture.
- ◆ Remove plant debris from the garden to protect next year's planting from insect and disease buildup. Compost plant refuse by alternating layers of soil, plant material, and manure or commercial fertilizer.
- ◆ Have garden soil tested for fertilizer needs every three to five years.
- ◆ Plowing and incorporating organic matter in the fall avoids the rush of garden activities and waterlogged soil in spring. Fall-prepared soils also tend to warm faster and allow earlier planting in spring.
- ◆ Carve a Halloween jack-o'-lantern.
- ◆ Dig tender, garden flower bulbs for winter storage. Gladiolus corms should be dug when leaves begin turning yellow. Caladiums, geraniums and tuberous begonias should be lifted before killing frost. Dig canna and dahlia roots after a heavy frost. Allow to air dry, then pack in dry peat moss or vermiculite, and store in a cool location.
- ◆ Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.

## Gardening Calls the Faithful to Worship by Louise Kehoe

By Louise Kehoe, Chicago Tribune, May 14, 1992

Gardening should be reclassified in the great library of human endeavors. It does not belong under "hobbies." The essence of a hobby is its lightness of purpose, its lack of seriousness, and gardening is neither light nor inconsequential; it is earnest, heavy work. Gardening has no place, either, under "pursuits" or "pastimes." These imply a flirtatiousness and dilettantism, which malign and misrepresent the dedicated monogamy practiced by those who garden. Gardening should be filed under "religion."

Gardening has all the hallmarks of a great creed, as a closer look at the behavior of its adherents will reveal. Apart from anything else, there's the question of conviction: to cling doggedly to the promise of spring while floundering frigidly through the iron-hard rigors of winter is an impressive act of faith in itself, but it becomes even more impressive when viewed against the undulating outlines on the hardiness zone map. A sort of spiritual sieve is at work here. Those who have honed and perfected their faith by enduring long years of the uncompromising harshness of northern winters eventually achieve a state of grace and percolate piously southward to the beneficent climate of Zones 7 through 10.

Those like myself, who have sinned mightily and whose credence requires further work, are destined to spend their days in the horticultural purgatory of Zones 1 through 4. Here we languish through the agonizingly slow months of winter, fighting to hold on to our faith and combating lapses by zealous study of the scriptures and devotional literature so thoughtfully provided by the book clubs and seed companies.

All religions must have ritual; there must be ceremonies, observances, symbolism. The rituals of gardening qualify it amply for ecclesiastical status. The gardening year is carefully quartered, and each segment has its own peculiar liturgy.

There is fall, with its ponderous, sad procession, the rhythmic raking and the mournful cutting away of the last signs of summer's abundance. There is the rustling golden pyre of leaves and brush, which we consign in sure and certain hope to the compost heap.

Winter makes hermits of the faithful, enveloping them in a spartan, windy emptiness and driving them into a prolonged state of penitence, during which the sins and omissions of the previous year are miserably cataloged, and stirring resolutions for the forthcoming year are made.

Above all, there is the ecstatic rite of spring, full of tilling and toiling, sowing and mowing, weeding and hoeing; the giving of thanks for germination, the prayerful tending of

tiny seedlings. And of course there's the grand finale, the highest of high holidays, the Hallelujah Chorus of a mid-summer border in full bloom.

Not surprisingly, gardening has spawned its share of dissenters who, while remaining faithful to the spirit of its canonical law, have developed their own sects under the protective umbrella of the mother church. There are many varieties of these horticultural Huguenots: those who worship hostas, or irises, or daylilies; those who revere evergreens; those for whom shade gardening is a religious experience in its own right. There are those who collect, and those who propagate; those who garden only in white, those who grow only roses; those whose souls hunger only for herbs. Gardening, in short, breeds zealotry, and where there is zealotry, there is often also dogma.

Outwardly, communicants in the Church of Horticulture are a disparate bunch; they come from all walks, all ages and all stages of life. But they have one thing in common, the one universal attribute guaranteed to surface wherever two or more are gathered together: dogmatism. Gardeners are the most mindbogglingly opinionated group of people under God's warm sun — and each has a different opinion.

Now, I'm no theologian, and I have no particular ax to grind in pleading for the churchification of gardening or the ordination of its pre-eminent practitioners. I just know that at this time of the year, something stirs within me that has nothing to do with hobbies or pastimes. Mary Gurney, a 19th Century English poet, put it this way:

'The kiss of the sun for pardon  
The song of the birds for mirth;  
One is nearer God's heart in a garden  
Than anywhere else on earth.'

I rest my case.

Louise Kehoe is a Massachusetts-based free-lance writer.

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***How difficult it would be to compose a satisfactory garden without shrubs. Apart from the interest and beauty of their flowers, berries, and leaves, their great contribution is the solidity which they add to the planting and design. They and they alone are capable, if rightly placed, of dividing the garden into separate areas and thus adding surprise to its many joys.***

—Graham Stuart Thomas

## Fall Leaves: Litter or Loam?

By B. Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulturalist, Purdue University

The hot dry weather experienced throughout much of Indiana is bringing an early leaf drop to many landscape plants. While there is potential for a rainbow of colors, the stressful conditions may make for a less-than-awesome display. For some homeowners, the annual show is overshadowed by chores of leaf raking and disposal.

What's needed here is an attitude adjustment! Autumn leaves don't have to become trash. On the contrary, they easily can be turned into valuable soil-enhancing organic matter that helps turn poor soil into loam.

Green-thumbed gardeners have long known the value of recycling plant material. Dry leaves can be plowed or tilled under in the vegetable or annual flowerbed to provide a source of organic matter. Shredding the leaves first will speed the breakdown so that the leaves will not be visible by spring. Be sure to mix the leaves into the soil, rather than leaving them on top through the winter. This helps prevent the soil from being too cold and wet to work in the spring.

Tree leaves can be recycled directly on the lawn. Use your power mower or shredder/vacuum to break dry leaves up into smaller pieces. A mulching blade on the mower will speed this process, but even a standard blade will do an adequate job. For large leaves like maple and sycamore, it may take several passes to get a finely shredded product. Once the leaves are pulverized, they will break down quickly. A fall application of nitrogen fertilizer (about 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet) will help speed decomposition of the leaves and also will benefit the grass plants.

Fall leaves also make great composting ingredients, especially when mixed with green trimmings and grass clippings. Again, the smaller the pieces, the faster they'll break down, so shred or chop dry leaves before adding them to the compost pile. If you don't have green trimmings or grass clippings, add a source of nitrogen to dry leaves, such as commercial fertilizer or composted cow, horse, sheep, or poultry manure. Microorganisms need nitrogen as they break down the carbon in plant materials. Add a sprinkling of soil or finished compost to introduce a source of the microorganisms, and water just enough to moisten. The compost will heat up in the center as it breaks down. Stir the contents occasionally to add air and allow for uniform heating. Generally, the more often you turn the pile, the faster you'll get a finished product. Compost is ready to add back into the garden when it looks uniformly dark and crumbly.

Last, but not least, shredded leaves can be used as a winter mulch to protect tender perennials through the coming harsh weather. Shredding the leaves will help prevent them from packing down as they get wet and smothering the plants that they are supposed to protect. To provide winter protection, apply a 3-6 inch layer of shredded leaves over the top of tender perennials after several hard freezes. The goal of winter mulch is to keep plants dormant through the winter, so it must be applied after the ground is cold and plants are fully dormant. The timing of application will vary from year to year with the weather, but generally will be appropriate sometime between the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

### Q & A: In the Grow by Beverly Shaw, Advanced Master Gardener, Purdue University

**Q. I have a rhododendron bush that looks like it is getting rust on the leaves. I think perhaps something is eating on it. What should I use to control this? Thank you. -- Joan Wininger**

**A.** It's important to determine if the rust is a problem or a natural occurrence. Many rhododendrons have a natural, rusty-brown, scaly appearance, particularly on the underside of the leaf. Rhododendrons may also be showing leaf scorch at this time of year. Neither requires treatment.

Rust diseases can occur on rhododendrons, but are rarely seen. If the symptoms you see are due to a rust disease, the problem will be randomly distributed. Small pustules appear on the underside of leaves. These pustules burst open to discharge bright yellow, orange or brownish spores that re-infect the rhododendrons or azaleas. Control of this disease is usually not necessary. Many of the new varieties

have some resistance to rust.

Hemlocks and spruces are alternate hosts for rust diseases, so try not to plant rhododendrons near these trees if rust is a problem for you. Also, keep plants vigorous with proper water and nutrition, keep the area free of infected leaves, reduce humidity, improve aeration, avoid excessive leaf moisture and use resistant cultivars when possible.

The fact that something appears to be eating it is probably a separate issue. Many questions should be answered before a diagnosis is given, but look for irregular shaped notches on leaves to signal the feeding of adult black vine weevils, one of the most common pests of rhododendrons.

Black vine weevils are black in color, have a fairly long snout and are about three-eighths of an inch in length.

**(continued on page 6)**

## Summer's End Signals Bulb Planting Time by B. Rosie Lerner

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If thinking about the end of summer is getting you down, start planning your spring flowering bulb show. Autumn is the time to plant crocus, daffodils, tulips and many other spring bloomers.

Spring flowering bulbs are planted in fall to allow them to establish roots before top growth begins in spring. Planting too early may cause the bulbs to sprout this fall, only to be killed back by winter weather. Planting too late may not give the bulbs adequate time to root before winter. Bulbs should be planted in late September through mid October in the Lafayette area. Plant a couple of weeks earlier in northern Indiana and likewise, later in southern Indiana.

Start your bulb garden out on the right path by planting only quality bulbs, which are available from local garden centers or reputable mail order sources. It's best to shop early to ensure the best selection of variety and quality. Select large, firm bulbs, and avoid those that are sprouting or molding.

While many bulbs can adapt to a wide range of soil types, none can tolerate poorly drained soil. Prepare the planting bed by adding organic matter, such as peat moss, well-rotted manure or compost. Adequate fertility can be achieved by adding a low-analysis, balanced fertilizer, such as 5-10-5 or 6-10-4, at the rate of 2-3 pounds per 100 square feet of bed. Mix all amendments thoroughly with the soil in the bed, before you plant the bulbs.

The size of the bulb and the species will dictate the proper planting depth and spacing. The bulbs should come with planting instructions specific to that particular flower.

For more information on the many types of bulbs that can be grown in Indiana, you can download a copy of HO-86 "Flowering Bulbs" from <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-86.pdf>.

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### Q & A: In the Grow (continued from page 5)

Adult weevils feed on the leaves of yews, rhododendrons and many other trees and shrubs. Notches on these leaves are typical symptoms of feeding damage in late spring and early summer. During the summer months, adults will mate, and the females will lay eggs in the soil located under the host plant. The eggs hatch into root feeding larvae that feed on roots from midsummer until fall. A few of the larvae may overwinter in the soil and continue feeding in the spring. However, many larvae will pupate in the fall, with the adults emerging in late fall and overwintering in plant debris, and then becoming active in the spring.

Black vine weevils feed primarily at night, so you may not see them in action. Also, the damage from a previous year remains on these broad-leaved evergreens, so be sure you're seeing new activity before you choose to treat them. The adults cause unsightly leaves, but the larvae are a more serious threat to the plant's survival. Their root feeding can cause the damaged roots to be unable to take up the proper amount of water and nutrients needed for the plant to live.

Once all of the weevils have matured, apply imidacloprid in late July. This can kill adults feeding on leaves and the larvae that hatch from eggs of adults. Read and follow label directions carefully.

**Q. Hope you can give me some advice on ridding the pest that is eating up my plants: mums, sunflower leaves, small mimosa trees and an evening-blooming flower related (I believe) to the Jimson weed or nightshade family. The bugs are a half inch or less in size, black with neon greenish-yellow stripes, and orange head and underside. Thank you for your help, -- Mary Coveyou, French Lick, Ind.**

**A.** It could be the 4 lined plant bug. The damage is very distinctive, with circular brown spots on the leaf tissue where it was feeding. Adults attack a variety of bedding plants and perennials, with plants in the daisy and mint families especially susceptible. Damage occurs in late spring and early summer when the nymphs are active. Nymphs are reddish-orange and are quick to run to the underside of leaves when disturbed. Adults are lime green with four black stripes on the back.

As nymphs and adults feed, they inject enzymes into the plant. Feeding damage appears as small (one-sixteenth inch) round sunken spots on the leaves. Large numbers of this insect may cause entire leaves to curl and wither.

Since the nymphs cause most of the damage, control at this stage is suggested. Small numbers can be dislodged from the plant into a container of soapy water, and large numbers can be controlled with an insecticidal soap or a labeled insecticide.

## Volunteer Opportunities Compiled by Nancy White

Location	Time	Jobs	Contact
Hilltop Garden & Nature Center	year around	various	Marcia Figueiredo, 855-2799
Templeton Garden Project	spring/fall	teaching children	Nancy White, 824-4426
MG Demonstration Garden	seasonal	various	Lydia Anderson, 825-2961, landers@wormsway.com
T. C. Steele SHS	seasonal	various	Steve Doty, 988-2785
Cheryl's Garden	seasonal	various	Larime Wilson, 339-9705
Flatwoods Park Butterfly Gardens	seasonal	various	Cathy Meyer
MCMGA Horticulture Hotline	year around	inquiries and research	Dan Baugh, 349-2575
MCMGA Speakers Bureau	year around	various	Dan Baugh, 349-2575
MCMGA Newsletter	year around	writing, stapling, labeling	Helen Hollingsworth, 332-7313
MCMGA Web Site	year around	various	Barb Hays, 332-4032
MG Program Committee Member	year around	plan MG programs	Ann McEndarfer, 334-1801 Nancy White, 824-4426
Middle Way House	seasonal	various	Clara Wilson, 333-7404
Wylie House	year around	various	Sherry Brunoehler, 353-3065, 855-6224
Bloomington Hospitality House	year around	educate seniors work with Horticultural therapist	Rene Thompson, 353-3000
Mother Hubbard's Cupboard	year around	education, resource	Libby Yarnell, 355-6843
Clear Creek School	spring/on-going	identification, education	Charlie Hawk, 824-7969
Advanced Master Gardener Training	October 2005 through February 4, 2006	various	Nancy White, 824-4426 Ann McEndarfer, 334-1801

## Monroe County Master Gardener Association, Inc.

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

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**Inside: Read *Fall Leaves: Litter or Loam* by B. Rosie Lerner**

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