Get ready for Spring

Let’s see a show of hands of everyone who played some part in the 2016 Garden Fair. Excellent – nearly every member! You should be proud to have conceived and executed a yearly event that offers so much, to so many. The vendors get to display their wares to hundreds of people who might not have sought them out; the Master Gardeners who staff a number of booths get to meet those hundreds who might not have known about the organization; and the best part, those Master Gardeners get to work together and get to know their fellow MG’s. Or is the best part that local gardening efforts benefit from the proceeds? That’s a tough choice.

It is a sight to behold when the Garden Fair comes together one Saturday a year, with its rows of tables with bright yellow coverings, and displays of plants and garden tools spilling into the aisles, and bouquets of daffodils and tulips and blue bells and snowdrops gracing the tables around the room. This year’s event landed on a blustery day outside, but it was a spectacular splash of springtime on the inside.

The Café Crew is grateful for all the gifts of desserts that arrived. The sale of these treats contributes significantly to the gifts awarded to the community gardens. Thank you to all whose culinary skills covered the Café tables. Any leftover cookies magically appear at the May meeting where you get to enjoy them at the pitch-in, it’s all good!

Café Crew Committee members again this year were Donna Terry, Jackie Gilkey, Cindy Benson and Trish Gustaitis. Another 16 members joined them at the Armory to wash, chop, slice, bag, and serve.

Please be sure that the May meeting at the Fairgrounds is on your calendar. May 24th is our annual pitch-in and Plant Swap. When you are cleaning up Winter’s mess in the garden, it is a good time to look for plants that need to find a new home, and make a mental note to pot them up before May 24. Most members have ‘favorites’ from the Plant Swap and that now make themselves at home in the landscaping.

May 24th at the Fairgrounds. Please make a note of it.

- Evelyn Harrell, MCMGA President

Meeting Announcements

For those that missed the March general meeting, you missed a good one! Ms. Anita Bracalente and Ms. Terri Vicenzi presented a wonderful and thought-provoking program on Garden Landscaping and Planning. For those who were present, you should have walked away with hundreds of ideas for landscaping your property or to kick start a future project! A big Thank You goes out to our refreshment committee for the yummy goodies provided during the meeting. Those members include Mary Cusack, Larime Wilson, Marilyn Bourke, Dale Wilkens, and Mary Hoffman.

Another event planned for April 26 at 6:30pm is a class on Orchids. This event will be held at the Extension Office and is open to the public. A $5 fee is being assessed for each participant to help defray the cost of the speaker and if an orchid is purchased the $5 will be deducted.

Article continued on page 6
**Garden Fair Fast Facts**

*The vendor count was 29 commercial vendors and 9 non-profits. Four new vendors joined the count.*

*There were 20 door prizes donated. Grand prize was a tree donated by Bloomington Valley Nursery.*

*Sponsors were Altra Design2000, Bloomington Valley Nursery, Fowler Tree Services, Speedway Mulch and More.*

*Donors for door prizes were Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, Hall’s Nursery plus several of our vendors.*

*The estimated paid attendance was just short of 600.*

*Somewhere around 20 pies were donated (and consumed).*

*48+ Master Gardeners served on or chaired GF committees.*

*The weather was blustery and cold but warm inside the Armory.*

*46 yard signs were seen around town.*

*David Dunatchik served as our Garden Fair roving photographer.*

*300 white oak trees got new homes.*

*5 Leadership Corps workers from 4-H helped with the clean-up and were a great help.*

*John Emerson and his break-down crew finished at 55 minutes after the 4:00 close, a new world’s record.*

*Our Master Gardener Cookbook and plant markers were sold at the MG Info booth.*

*The Garden Fair roving reporter overheard these comments: “This was the best Fair ever.” “I really liked the vendors with plants to sell.” “Now I’m ready for Spring.” “Everyone is so friendly.” “I learned a lot at the Pollinator Plants class.”*

- Nancy White, MCMGA Past President
April 2016 Grow Calendar

HOME (indoor plants and activities)

Start seeds of warm-season plants, including tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, marigolds, zinnias and petunias, indoors for transplanting later to the garden.

Harden off transplants started earlier in spring before planting outdoors - gradually expose the young plants to outdoor conditions of wind, brighter sunlight and lower moisture.

Apply fertilizer to houseplants according to label directions as days grow brighter and longer and new growth begins. Foliage plants require relatively high nitrogen fertilizer, while blooming plants thrive on formulations that are higher in phosphorus.

Keep Easter lily in a bright, cool location, out of direct sunlight. Water as soil begins to dry. The yellow, pollen-bearing anthers inside the flower can be removed by pinching to prevent staining of the petals.

YARD (lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

Plant a tree in celebration of National Arbor Day, which is April 29. Bare-root stock should be planted before new top growth begins. Balled- and-burlapped and containerized stock can still be planted later in spring.

Fertilize woody plants before new growth begins. Two pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet should be sufficient. Complete pruning chores, removing dead and injured branches first.

Apply a pre-bloom, multipurpose orchard spray to fruit trees. Remove winter coverings from roses, but keep mulch nearby for protection from late freezes. Prune and fertilize as needed. Apply pre-emergent herbicide to control crabgrass in lawns.

Approximate dates of application are late March to mid-April in southern Indiana and mid-April to early May in northern Indiana.

In the grow: Amaryllis hints

Q - I have several amaryllis that did not bloom last year and so far haven't bloomed this year. I fed them during the summer; they got plenty of morning sun and water. I brought them in sometime in October, put them in my basement, and then brought them up in early December. So far, no leaves are coming up, but the top of the bulb has green on it, so I don't think it's dead. They have not been transplanted and have about 3 or 4 inches between the bulb and the pot. I would welcome any suggestions. — BM, Ramsey, IN

A - Amaryllis bulbs require significant rebuilding of food reserves (carbohydrates) in the bulb in order to bloom again. After their blooms fade, they need lots of sunlight, such as out in the garden in full sun after danger of frost has past. Morning sun might not be quite enough to replenish the carbs. As the plants fade at the end of summer, cut the stem off and air-dry the bulb and store in a cool, dry place. Amaryllis bulbs require a resting period of 8-10 weeks at about 45-55 F. Then it's time to repot, moisten the soil, but keep on the dry side until growth emerges. Be sure the top one-third to one-half of the bulb shows above the top of the soil. Flowers should appear in 6-8 weeks following potting. More information can be found in Purdue Extension Bulletin HO-19, Forcing Bulbs for Indoor Bloom. — B. Rosie Lerner, Horticulturist
It should be 'leaflets' of three...

Most gardeners have heard of the wise advice "leaves of three, let it be" referring to the pest plant poison ivy. While not quite as catchy, the saying really should be "leaflets of three, let it be." Poison ivy leaves are compound rather than simple; a single leaf is divided into three separate portions, called leaflets. Plants with three leaflets are often referred to as being trifoliate.

Poison ivy is typically a vine that can climb quite high by means of aerial rootlets. But older poison ivy plants, especially those that have been cut back repeatedly, can take a shrub form.

Poison ivy flowers are rather inconspicuous and usually not noticed by gardeners. The subsequent fruits are greenish white, smooth berries in clusters about the size of currants. Birds and other wildlife eat the berries and then spread the seed in their droppings, so poison ivy can show just about anywhere.

There are a few look-alike plants that gardeners could mistake for poison ivy. Boston ivy is a common landscape vine that is trifoliate, but only the very young foliage. In Boston ivy, each leaflet is attached by a stalk. In poison ivy, generally only the top leaflet is attached by a stalk. Mature Boston ivy leaves are three-lobed, but not separated into separate leaflets. Fragrant sumac, a small shrub, is also trifoliate, but none of the leaflets have stalks.

All parts of the poison ivy plant, including the stem and roots, contain and secrete a nonvolatile oil that affects the skin. This oil is insoluble in water. That means if you simply wash with water alone after coming into contact with poison ivy, you may spread the oil to other areas and increase the discomfort. Be sure to wash immediately with soap and water to reduce potential rash.

Once established, the woodiness of the poison ivy plant makes it difficult to control. Repeatedly cutting the plant back to the ground may eventually starve the plant; however, each time you cut it you expose yourself to the oil. You can dig up and discard small plants, but if you leave behind any portion of the root system the plant will likely re-sprout.

Several herbicides are available for poison ivy control. Keep in mind, that any herbicide that kills poison ivy will also kill any desirable plants.

If the poison ivy is growing among shrubs and trees, you must apply chemical controls directly to the poison ivy plant and not to any of the other plants.

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B. Rosie Lerner
Purdue Extension Consumer Horticulturist

In the grow: Alberta Spruce dieback

Q - This is one of our two dwarf Alberta spruce trees. In the fall we noticed the very top of one turning brown; it kept getting worse from top down, and we noticed white webs. We took a picture of it, took it to a local nursery and showed them the picture. They said it was spider mites. We bought a systemic insect control and used per directions seven days apart with three doses. We did not see more webs. But it was still turning brown, so put another dose on. It is still turning brown farther down even now, still in January. Any ideas on what to do to save this tree? — SR, Martin County, IN

A - There are many potential causes for dieback of dwarf Alberta spruce — or any spruce. Certainly, spider mites can be a problem, especially likely in hot, dry weather. When the top of the tree dies first, some of the most likely culprits are problems with the root system and/or the trunk of the tree. The most common suspects include root rot from waterlogged soil; compacted soils, resulting in poor aeration of the roots; excessively droughty soil; "mower or weed whip blight," causing injury to the trunk; planting too deeply, especially in heavy soil; and twine or wire left around the trunk of the tree at planting. Rodent damage can also cause significant damage to the trunk. You mention only one of the trees are affected. Are they planted near each other under similar growing conditions? It does appear that the one in the picture is potentially planted too deep, since it seems to be sited with the lowest branches directly on top of the gravel mulch. How much of the trunk is buried in the gravel?

Unfortunately, there is no way to restore the top of the tree; it cannot replace the dead needles. The tree will always appear disfigured even it survives. Your best bet would be to replace the tree this spring, but I advise choosing a different species until and unless you can get this problem diagnosed. Purdue Publication ID-477, Stress-related Conifer Dieback provides more information on the possible causes. You might consider taking additional photos, and perhaps an actual sample of a branch that still has some green in addition to the brown needles, to your local county office of Purdue Extension. Or you can submit directly to the Purdue Plant and Pest Diagnostic Lab. - B. Rosie Lerner, Horticulturist
R&S: Who are you? Tell us a little about yourself.

Mary: Greetings to all Master Gardeners! My name is Mary Cusack (no relation to the actor, although I like to tell people we are 3rd cousins twice removed!) I am the current Director at Large taking care of coordinating volunteers for events where MCMGA representatives are needed. I keep myself busy by being the Executive Coordinator for a Montessori teacher certification organization (Montessori Educational Programs International) and also enjoy teaching classes for those interns in the program. I enjoy having a studio along side my house where I can make pottery items (wheel thrown and hand-built) and beeswax candles using wax from our bees which we raise.

R&S: What drew you to join the Master Gardener program?

Mary: Initially, it was from a suggestion by a friend. I was not familiar with the program! But my husband and I have gardened for as long as we have been married (44 years in July) and it sounded like a great addition to our gardening skill set.

R&S: When did you join the MCMGA?

Mary: My class began in January 2013 and was held in the afternoons. I received my advanced certification in May 2014.

R&S: What drew you to the program?

Mary: Initially, it was from a suggestion by a friend. I was not familiar with the program! But my husband and I have gardened for as long as we have been married (44 years in July) and it sounded like a great addition to our gardening skill set.

R&S: Where are you from originally?

Mary: We spent 20 years in the Black Hills of South Dakota – growing about 85% of our food crop within a very short growing season. We spent years building up the soil with truckloads of worm castings, cow manure, and growing green manures. We never left in the summer as we did not have the luxury of a long enough season to be able to leave when our crops matured. When we moved, our friends wanted to come dig our soil to use in their gardens! We have always loved the Midwest. I grew up in Chicago, Tim and I both went to school at the U of Evansville, and we had some family residing here in Bloomington. We absolutely love it here with the vibrancy of the University, the cultural offering of the city, and the low-key peaceful environment in which we live. Since moving here, both our grown children have relocated here as well.

R&S: How did you accumulate your volunteer hours? How did you decide where to volunteer?

Mary: I volunteered at various places; Wylie House, Bloomington in Bloom (a great way to get to know the area), the IN Home & Garden show, MCMGA Display garden, County fair. Ultimately, I like to contribute something back to the community and have become involved with the native garden at the County Courthouse. It’s fun talking to passersby as they ask about the plants being planted. Many remember their parents or grandparents growing the varieties being planted there now.

R&S: Why do you continue your membership?

Mary: I appreciate the eclectic membership MCMGA draws and I find there is always something to learn from other Master Gardeners. It is an organization worth supporting. It has given me much, and a $10 yearly dues is a small token from me to help the organization continue with its mission.

R&S: Anything else you wish to share?

Mary: We keep transplanting and moving plants given to us by friends. So some perennials growing with us here in Bloomington are from South Dakota, some from Kansas, and some from our days in Virginia! It’s a nice reminder of days and friends past! Oh yes – I finally have a nice Hosta garden – guarded from the deer by our 3 dogs!

Meeting Notes (continued from page 1)

from your purchase. Please see further details in this month’s newsletter.

The next general meeting will be May 24 and the program will be Raised Beds presented by Ms. Rene Malone. The meeting will be at the Community Building in the Monroe County Fairgrounds. Our refreshment committee will be chaired by Ms. Cindy Benson and will include Nancy Deckard, Tom Lovell, Dorothy Wilson, Marilyn Bourke and Pamela Hall. This meeting is traditionally our plant swap and “pitch-in” dinner, so stand by for more details and information from Cindy.

- Jeff Schafer, Meeting Director
Hilltop Spring into Gardening Event

Interested in gardening but don't know where to start? Spend the afternoon at Hilltop Gardens during our annual Spring into Gardening event! Engage in hands-on gardening demonstrations, connect with local gardening organizations and pick up free plants!

This is a FREE, family-friendly event, but please bring a non-perishable food item(s) to donate to local food banks.

Date: Saturday, April 16th
Time: 1-4pm (drop-in)
Location: Hilltop Gardens at Indiana University
2367 E. 10th St. Bloomington
iub.edu/~hilltop

About MCMGA ...

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