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July came in, not like a lamb or a lion, but wet, with never-ending bursts of showers and storms, welcome at first, but not so much anymore. July also brought the Monroe County Fair, preceded by work at the Demonstration Garden earlier that week. Twenty stalwart Master Gardeners swarmed over the demonstration garden just four days before the fair opened, to weed and to shovel mulch into waiting wheelbarrows that trundled away to be emptied before quickly returning, and as importantly, to socialize. If you can find Amy's Facebook page, you'll find photos of beautiful flowers in all their gaudy glory for visitors to enjoy.

A significant part of the county fair experience for many people is to walk through the display areas where selections of flowers, flower arrangements, herbs and every vegetable known to grow in this area have been entered into competition by our friends and neighbors, and then judged by experts. In the stifling, sticky, even crushing heat at times, 25 Master Gardeners, and faithful troopers Lloyd Minnick and Bob Deckard sweltered many hours at the tables where those entries were catalogued and then arranged on display shelves to await the judges. Well before the judges could finish their work, visitors to the fair were strolling past the tables, pointing at entries, commenting, and no doubt doing a little judging of their own.

Over the weekend a hardy crew led by Diana Young and Esther Minnick transformed the Community Building Patio from its rustic everyday face into

its Sunday best, by draping tables with cloths and stringing twinkling lights from a gazebo. By Monday afternoon rows and rows of flowers and herbs and vegetables were lined up on display for the education and enjoyment of the public. As though they did not have enough to do, these Master Gardener leaders also hosted the garden chats for the public, including the ever-popular heirloom tomato tasting.

And now suddenly, or so it seems, it's August and time for this organization to begin preparing for the next year's activities. It's also a good time to escape the heat and find a big tree to sit under with a good book. Speaking of trees, be sure the September 27th general meeting is on your calendar. We'll spend a cool fall evening to catch up with friends, and enjoy snacks, and announcements, and a program on, what else? Trees. But let's give August its due. It's an interesting month of transition.

Often August is the month when the rains stop and the struggle to keep up with produce and weeds begins to subside, at the same time that new seedlings with their promise for late fall have to be nurtured and protected from the wealth of weeds that a rainy year like this one can generate. Perhaps a new attitude toward weeds can be helpful. Here's a thought from the poet A. A. Milne: "Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them."



- Evelyn Harrell,
MCMGA President

Meeting Minutes

What a great turnout we had for our July meeting at the Demonstration Garden located at the Monroe County Fairgrounds. It was a hot and sticky day but there were a bunch of gardeners out there getting the area weeded, trimmed, mulched, and ready for the Monroe County Fair. A special thank you to Diana and Herman Young for their persistence through previous weeks in getting the garden looking like it did before we got there. I'm sure there were others spending every Tuesday over the past few months there too that I'm failing to mention. Regardless, if it wasn't for these dedicated and loyal gardeners, our task that Tuesday evening (July 19) would have been even harder and quite frankly I don't think we would have completed it in one evening. Again, a big "Thank You" goes out to Diana & Herman, and everyone else that was present to dig in to help out!

In addition, I would like to thank everyone who brought refreshments, including Tom Lovell, Ada Simmons, Mary Cusack, Diana Young, Stephen Anderson, and Heather Daley. I think I probably left a few folks off this list who brought refreshments, but these folks who brought water, nuts, skewers, watermelon, and a "I would die for" salsa! are those to whom we offer again a huge Thank You!



Our next general meeting will be September 27, where our program will be about Trees. The location is yet to be determined, but most likely it will be either the Extension Office or the IU Greenhouse.

- Jeff Schafer, Meeting Director

Reflections on 2016 Purdue Master Gardener State Conference

The 2016 Purdue Master Gardener State Conference, held June 16-18 in West Lafayette, featured four keynote and 12 breakout session presenters, and nearly two dozen vendors offering plant materials, garden art and décor, artisan metal and gemstone jewelry, and gardening tools and apparel, among other products. For this MG conference newbie, my first MG conference experience was informative, inspirational, and fun! Were these qualities not enough, nine educational training hours were earned for attending the core conference, and four additional hours could be earned for pre-conference activities including local tours of Purdue's horticultural properties and research farm, or a bus trip to Hamstra Estate gardens a little further afield.

The conference kicked off with a history of the first MG program launched in 1972 by Washington State University Cooperative Extension in the Seattle area. Those efforts began a legacy of trained volunteers offering horticulture and gardening advice to community members that has endured over 40 years and spread to all 50 states and several provinces in Canada. Master Gardeners are educators in the purest sense, gaining new knowledge themselves as they share their experiences and expertise with others, inspiring both parties to garden more frequently and more joyfully.

Highlights for me, included:

Steve Foltz' keynote presentation based upon his lengthy history as director of the botanical gardens at the Cincinnati Zoo. Trial gardens have been essential to Steve's success in identifying and selecting plant materials for the zoo that will not only flourish in Cincinnati's climate but will also withstand the off-path missteps by the zoo's 1.2 million visitors annually.

Additionally, Dr. Pam Bennett, a faculty member at The Ohio State University, identified and explained the biology that results in the 10 most common gardening fatalities. From the nods, chuckles, and occasional sighs of the participants, I was relieved to find others share the dubious honor of committing some of these mistakes, learning with me the "hard way" not to add sand to clay soil unless you intend to make concrete, and not to prune an Anabelle hydrangea in the spring unless you prefer a bloom-free shrub! Dr. Bennett, like Steve Foltz, offered an information-rich and entertaining presentation that was practical, relevant, and shovel-ready for application to my gardens!

It was a pleasure to learn more about gardening in the Midwest in the company of expert presenters and participants who eagerly shared their experiences through formal presentations, casual conversations before and after sessions, and around the table at mealtimes. I look forward to participating in another MG state conference again soon and highly recommend it to others!

- Ada Simmons

The Myth of Organic Superiority

"Organic products are safer than chemicals."

The Myth

Recently, I received an email from an internet reader who took issue with my column on compost tea. Among his comments was the following statement:

"...You talk about groundwater pollution and eutrophication of the watershed from overuse [of compost tea]. Yet, I don't know of any farmers that could afford to overuse the stuff. You don't mention that this kind of pollution results almost every time someone uses petrochemical salt fertilizers. It almost never happens when someone uses compost tea."

This exemplifies a popular belief that "natural" or "organic" products are superior to and safer than, "chemical" products. We are bombarded with the message that chemicals are bad and organic products are natural and safe.

The Reality

Before we can understand the "organic vs. chemical" controversy we need to clarify a few terms:

- **Chemical:** General dictionaries aren't really helpful with this definition. What is important to realize is that everything on earth, natural or otherwise, is composed of chemicals.
- **Organic:** In chemistry, this refers to any chemical compound, natural or synthetic, that contains carbon.
- **Organic farming:** Organic farming is partially defined as using only naturally occurring, rather than synthetic, chemicals. Therefore, chemical-free and organic are oxymorons, whether in a chemical context or in relation to organic farming.
- **Pesticide:** Any chemical, natural or synthetic, with the ability to kill a pest organism. Herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides kill plants, insects, and fungi, respectively. The terms "chemical free" and "non-chemical" in reference to any pesticide is illogical.

The perception of organic superiority is also common in health food literature; "organic" or "natural" sources of sugar (like fruit juice or honey) are promoted as being healthier than refined sugar. In fact, your body's enzymes don't recognize the difference between processed or unprocessed sucrose or fructose. Any health benefits of trace substances associated with "natural" sugars are unsubstantiated.

Living organisms in a landscape do not distinguish between nitrates in compost from that in a bag of conventional fertilizer. The other components of nutritional amendments

might be beneficial, or neutral, or even harmful. All components of conventional fertilizers are listed on the bag; we have no such information on compost content. Furthermore, if too much of either nutrient source is added to a landscape, then excess nutrients will leach away from the site and increase the nutrient load elsewhere. (My correspondent also wrote: "...home gardeners...don't farm enough land to pollute the water." Home owners use approximately 10 times more chemicals per unit area of land than farmers do [EPA figure]).



While I avoid using any chemical in the landscape unless absolutely necessary, I fertilize my landscape plants when they show signs of nitrogen deficiency (the most common nutrient deficiency), and I sparingly use Roundup to reduce massive weed problems to a more manageable size.

So why do we think that "organic" is synonymous with "safe?" It's true that naturally-derived, organic products have low environmental persistence; however, nature is not benign. Many organisms manufacture toxins, mutagens, and carcinogens as defensive strategies. To assume that products of traditional biological sources can never pose a threat to human or ecosystem health is misguided and dangerous.

The Bottom Line

- Be conservative in what chemicals you add to a landscape, regardless of their source.
- Any organic substance, natural or synthetic, can cause environmental problems when added in excess of what a landscape system can absorb and utilize.
- It's not important whether a chemical is natural or synthetic.

What is important, is knowing the properties (like toxicity and environmental persistence) of chemicals applied to landscapes.

For more information, please visit Dr. Chalker-Scott's web page at <http://www.theinformedgardener.com>

- Linda Chalker-Scott, Ph.D.
Extension Horticulturist and Associate Professor
Puyallup Research and Extension Center
Washington State University

Nature's Surprises

Nature provides us with much for sustainability. As Master Gardeners, we tend to think, largely, about how to best cultivate and nourish our home gardens, our demonstration gardens, our community gardens. And while we toil in the heat, worry about the rains (either a blessing or a curse!), and try to figure out what is attacking our veggies, which we so lovingly nurtured as seedlings, nature is quietly providing us with a bounty ready for the picking – asking nothing in return. These past days of hot and humid weather, along with the abundance of rains have been difficult times for gardening! Too wet to work the soil, too hot to have a good time, and ALL those volunteer weeds suddenly springing up everywhere! What's a gardener to do?



Time to take a walk - out beyond our yards, beyond our beautifully landscaped environments, to see what is going on. And what is happening in the natural world is beyond amazement. These past few weeks the surrounding woods have created a botanical garden of wild mushrooms! On a recent walk of just ½ hour, over 30 varieties were seen growing. Some small, some quite large (bigger than our hands), different colors; reds, browns, yellows, whites and even blue, different shapes, and different growing locations! Most are not edible but simply delicious candy for our eyes and spirits! BUT – there, in the distance, we see a field of yellow and orange and discover a plethora of Chanterelles – one of the finest mushrooms and culinary delights to be harvested. Bags later, (after of course making very positive identification!) our meals have been scrumptious chanterelle soups, cutlets, garlic sautéed, risotto and then freezing some for winter consumption.

Thank you Mother Nature for your bounty!! In return, I will share your wealth, promote your sustainability, and do my best, as a gardener, to support all the natural processes which you send my way!



- Mary Cusack

August Grow Calendar

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

Take cuttings from plants such as impatiens, coleus, geraniums, and wax begonias to overwinter indoors. Root cuttings in media such as moist vermiculite, perlite, peat moss, or soil, rather than water.

Order spring-flowering bulbs for fall planting.

Cut flowers from the garden to bring a little color indoors

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

Check trees and shrubs that have been planted in recent years for girdling damage by guy wires, burlap or ropes.

Don't fertilize woody plants now. It stimulates late growth that will not have time to harden off properly before winter.

Hand-prune and destroy bagworms, fall webworms and tent caterpillars.

Pears are best ripened off the tree, Harvest pears when color of fruit changes to a lighter green

Prune out and destroy the raspberry and blackberry canes that bore fruits this year. They will not produce fruit again next year, but they may harbor insect and disease organisms.

New plants should receive 1-1.5 inches of water every week-10 days.

Begin seeding new lawns or bare spots in established lawns

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

Complete fall garden planting by direct-seeding carrots, beets, kohlrabi, kale, and snap beans Lettuce, spinach, radishes and green onions can be planted late in August.

Harvest onions after the tops yellow and fall, then cure them in a warm, dry, well-ventilated area. The necks should be free of moisture when fully cured in about a week's time.

Harvest potatoes after the tops yellow and die. Cure before storage.

Pick beans, tomatoes, peppers, and squash often to encourage further production.

Harvest watermelon when the underside ground spot turns from whitish to creamy yellow, or when the tendril closest to the melon turns brown and shrivels; the rind loses its gloss.

Harvest sweet corn when kernels are plump and ooze a milky juice when punctured with your fingernail. If the liquid is watery, you're too early; if the kernels are doughy, you're too late.

Keep faded flowers pinched off bedding plants to promote further flowering and improve plant appearance.

Spade or till soil for fall bulb planting, and add a moderate amount of fertilizer.

- B. Rosie Lerner
Extension Consumer Horticulturist

Board Member Spotlight:



R&S: Tell us a little about yourself.

Evelyn: My name is Evelyn Harrell. I have had the privilege of serving as president of the association for two terms and am preparing to turn that honor over to new leadership. I retired as director of the local office of Adult Protective Services seven years ago, and still work part time as a guardian ad litem for a Monroe Circuit Court. I've enjoyed working with several organizations over the years, and now focus my volunteer energies on the Master Gardener association, and on the board of the Monroe County Parks and Rec Dept. where I've served as president for several years.

I have had a contentious relationship with deer ever since we built our house on top of a deer path. Consequently, I could write a small book about "alleged" deer-resistant plants. Living in the woods with inadequate sunlight for vegetables, and my own herd of deer, it seems I can't grow vegetables anymore, so I have concentrated on planting for pollinators, especially the butterflies. I love to count the butterflies and bees in the garden on a late summer afternoon.

R&S: When did you join the MCMGA?

Evelyn: Retirement was fast approaching when I saw a notice about the upcoming 2009 MG intern class. Perfect timing.

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

Evelyn: A fellow member of Altrusa Int'l demonstrated something that was covered in her MG intern class and talked about how much she had learned. Her enthusiasm struck a chord with me because learning is my very most favorite hobby. I had a little experience growing a few fruits and vegetables and flowers, but I had no idea how little I really knew about growing much of anything.

R&S: Where are you from originally?

Evelyn: I grew up in Shelbyville, IN and started college at

Evelyn Harrell

Denison University in Ohio, then later transferred to IU. Like so many others, I found Bloomington to be an interesting and diverse community, and cannot imagine living anywhere else now.

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

Evelyn: With such a breadth of opportunities to be involved, it's easy to volunteer. I've enjoyed the Purdue Master Gardener booths at the Indiana Flower & Patio Show and the Indiana State Fair, the intake of flowers and vegetables at the County Fair, the Bloomington in Bloom contest, Program Director on the board, then President on the board, chairing the Spring Thyme Café at the Garden Fair, and several other opportunities.

R&S: Why do you continue your membership?

Evelyn: There is no end to the opportunities to learn something about gardening from the many speakers at general meetings and Garden Fair classes, and to share that knowledge with the public. Those learning opportunities also include spending time with our experienced gardeners, listening and asking questions. But most importantly, I like to spend time with members of the organization who enjoy working together on a shared mission. At the State Fair booth one year, a woman told me she wanted to become a Master Gardener because she'd never met a gardener she didn't like. I agreed with her then, and I agree with her now.

5th Annual Bloomington Garlic Festival

Labor Day Weekend, September 3-4th

*Volunteers are needed to assist with
garlic education*

For more information, please contact:

Heather Daley: daleyheather7@gmail.com

David Cox: davidcox@bloomingtongarlicfestival.org

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Opportunities

Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard is looking for cut flower donations for their Garden Gala

If you happen to have an abundance of flowers in your garden in late September, consider donating some to Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard for their Garden Gala!

It’s easy to help out; just drop your beauties by the pantry at 1100 W. Allen in Bloomington on **Friday, September 23rd between 11a.m. and 6p.m.** No amount is too small, just make sure they are in water or wrapped in a damp paper towel.

If you have questions, please contact kayte@mhcfoodpantry.org, 812-355-6843.

Garden helpers

Many people who are older or who have physical limitations just can't garden like they used to, and miss it. With occasional help, they could enjoy their gardens again. Would anyone be interested in joining me over a cup of coffee and talking about ways to address this issue? This is an idea-gathering conversation, and does not commit you beyond this session.

If you would like to meet to share ideas, please let me know and I will find a time that everyone interested could meet. Please contact Barbara Coffman, barbara.coffman@ymail.com.

About MCMGA ...

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