

# Roots and Shoots

Monroe County Master Gardener Association Newsletter

Volume 27, Issue 1



## January general meeting features two speakers

Please plan to join us on January 25 at 6:30 p.m. for our general meeting at the still-new Extension Office Meeting Room, 3400 S. Walnut. This will be an information-packed evening for gardeners and guests to learn from two speakers. Be prepared to take notes! Alan Paton, owner of Meadowhead Nursery, will present *Planting and Pruning of Flowering Shrubs*, to get us thinking about the upcoming growing season, uses of flowering shrubs in our landscaping, and care of shrubs.

With the growing season and the prospect of beautiful flowers, we also will turn our thoughts to coping with uninvited garden pests, bad bugs. Amy Thompson, Extension Educator, will present *Neighbors Against Bad Bugs*. In addition to filling your notebooks with good advice, you'll earn two education hours—a great way to start the year. The 2011 edition of our membership guide, *Folia and Flora*, will be distributed and refreshments will be served. Refreshment committee members are Barb Cappy, Dale Wilkins, Donna Terry, and Charlotte Griffin.



By Evelyn Harrell

## Spruce or Fir?

Need help telling a spruce from a fir? Look at the needles closely. Spruce needles are attached individually to the stem, are generally sharp pointed at the tip, and four-sided (angular) which you can feel as you roll the needle between your fingers. Fir needles are also attached individually to the stem but on a circular pad and are generally flattened and rounded or blunt pointed at the tip.



By Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulturist

### Inside this issue:

<i>Member News</i>	2
<i>Tree manual available</i>	3
<i>Earn education hours</i>	3
<i>Web Castings</i>	4
<i>Book Review</i>	5
<i>Weeds &amp; vinegar</i>	6
<i>In the Grow</i>	6
<i>Deicing salts &amp; plants</i>	7
<i>Bulb hints</i>	7
<i>Poinsettia care</i>	7

### Special points of interest:

- Two hours of education credit are yours for attending January 25 meeting*
- Learn helpful poinsettia Do/Don'ts*
- Superb tree manual is available for downloading*
- Grasses are excellent design plants for your yard*
- Vinegar belongs in the garden*
- Read about varieties of hollies that survive in Indiana clay*
- Education opportunities are abundant at this time of the year*
- Explore a year of web sites to support your gardening needs*

## Member News

We send a hearty welcome to our 2011 MCMGA Board members who took office on January 1. New board members were elected by consensus at our holiday dinner, and the board meets the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Extension Office. Members are always welcome to attend board meetings. If you have business to discuss and would like time on the agenda, please notify Nancy White.



By  
Nancy  
White

### **Plan to attend our January 25 meeting**

*Folia and Flora*, our yearly handbook, will be completed and printed this month and will be given to members at the January general meeting. If you did not return your membership application and dues to the extension office, you have until February 1 to do so to keep your membership current. Although late memberships will be accepted, these names will be listed in an addendum to the membership list which will be printed and distributed sometime later in the winter. To remain current, dues of \$10 will be accepted until February 1.

### **Master Gardeners are excellent cooks!**

Attention all MG cooks—contact Evelyn Harrell if you would like to volunteer to provide refreshments for any of our general meetings. This activity qualifies for volunteer hours.

### **Contact information is essential**

Please remember to keep your contact information current by letting Barb Hays and the Extension Office know of any changes in phone numbers, email addresses and residence changes.

### **You may help an organization apply for a Master Gardener grant**

This year we will reinstate our grant opportunity which is open to all Master Gardener members and community groups. Grant requests should focus on community beautification and/or environmental improvement. Applications are available on our website and should be returned to the extension office by March 1 for consideration. Announcement of grant awards will be made in April. Proceeds from our annual Garden Fair help to support these community grants.

### **Join a committee for our April 23 Garden Fair**

Committees for our April 23 annual Garden Fair are beginning their work and could use your help. If you have not already volunteered to be on a committee, contact one of the GF coordinators, David Dunatchik, Dian Lock, Jeff Schafer, or Nancy White. Your talents will be used to help us host a successful Garden Fair.

Vendor committee members are contacting local commercial vendors of garden related products and services about participating in our Fair. If you know of a vendor who might like information on how to apply for a booth space, send names and vendor information to Peggy Reis-Krebs.

The Garden Fair program will include advertisements from community members and vendors who want to show their support. If you know of someone who might want information on buying an ad, forward this to Peggy Reis-Krebs. (continued on page 3)

## Tree manual available

*"Trees are the best monuments that a man can erect to his own memory. They speak his praises without flattery, and they are blessings to children yet unborn." -Lord Orrery, 1749*



Submitted  
by Amy  
Thompson,  
Extension  
Educator

The Bloomington Tree Commission and Bloomington Urban Forester Lee Huss have collaborated to create a tree care manual which not only provides guidelines for tree care within the city of Bloomington but also is a valuable resource for anyone who cares about or cares for trees. The manual can be downloaded from the City of Bloomington website at <http://bloomington.in.gov/media/media/application/pdf/7165.pdf> .

## Earn education hours this winter

Winter months are perfect for gaining some education hours. Here are some opportunities that might be of interest.

By  
Nancy  
White

**Saturday, January 22**, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., *8<sup>th</sup> Annual Gardening Show* by Porter County Master Gardeners, includes commercial vendors and workshops. Cost: \$10. Contact Porter County Extension Office (219-465-3555) or log onto [www.pcgarden.info](http://www.pcgarden.info) .

**Thursday, February 10**, 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., *Passion and Pursuit, The Search for the Perfect Perennial*, presented IMA and the Perennial Plant Association, Tobias Theater at IMA. Cost: \$ 119, includes breakfast and lunch. Topics: *Who Does Your Garden? , From Passion to Profession—Terra Nove Nurseries, The Company of Plantsmen, Goosebump Plants and How They Are Made, Great Garden Plants, and When Pretty Isn't Enough*. Call 1 -877-462-8497 or log onto [www.imamuseum.org](http://www.imamuseum.org) .

**Saturday, February 19**, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. [CST], *Once Upon a Garden*, presented by Gibson County Master Gardeners at Princeton High School, Princeton, Indiana. Cost: \$40. Call 812-385-3491.

**Saturday, March 5**, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Master Gardener Training presented by the Madison Co. Master Gardeners at the Madison County Fairgrounds in Alexandria, Indiana. Cost: \$35, includes breakfast and lunch. Topics: *The Magnolia Principle, Midwest Meadows, Antique Gardens, Bats in the Landscape, and Pests and Pollinators*. Contact John Orick at 765-641-9514 or log onto [orick@purdue.edu](mailto:orick@purdue.edu) .

## Member News (continued from page 2)

The Garden Fair program will include advertisements from community members and vendors who want to show their support. If you know of someone who might want information on buying an ad, forward this to Peggy Reis-Krebs.

Free trees from the Vallonia State Nursery will be given away this year at the Fair. David Durnatchik is helping prepare these trees for the giveaway and is requesting that we save the plastic newspaper wrap bags that protect newspapers when it rains (or snows). These bags make perfect individual wrappers for the trees. Please bring plastic bags to any board or general meeting or call David, and he will pick them up.

## Web Castings

Some 'pre-digested' web offerings provided by local Master Gardeners and their friends.

It's that time of year. We gardeners are looking back and looking ahead as well. Looking back, it might be nice to have a short list of all the sites we've poked at, sort of a year-end or year-ahead list. We just have a couple of new ones, followed by the summary list below. Contact me with your ideas too. Oh, and have a happy New Year!



By  
Karen  
Sparks

**Links for right now, this winter...** here is Purdue's Rosie Lerner's Winter Garden Calendar pdf link: <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-90.pdf> Indoor maintenance, glimmers of outside; be patient.

**Garden Travels: Plan ahead, already.** This site, out of England and Wales, covers all kinds of worldly garden travels, whether one-day trips or major adventures. A good winter glance! Check out [www.gardenvisit.com](http://www.gardenvisit.com).

Now for our summary ('Summery'? Sigh...). Hope this collected brief reference list will be useful.

The Big Momma is the starting point for us all, Purdue Extension: [www.ag.purdue.edu/extension/pages/ConsumerHorticulture.aspx](http://www.ag.purdue.edu/extension/pages/ConsumerHorticulture.aspx)

Those DEER!! For deer resistant plants, see the Rutgers site: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/deerresistance>

Get Busy... Rosie Lerner, Purdue Autumn Activities Garden Calendar:

[www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/ho-93.pdf](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/ho-93.pdf) (Then, nap time, remember? See her winter calendar above!)

Farmers Almanac can be a hoot: [www.farmersalmanac.com/calendar/best-days](http://www.farmersalmanac.com/calendar/best-days)

Plant Daffs! American Daffodil Society site: [www.daffodilusa.org](http://www.daffodilusa.org)

Musical Perennials? Excellent site for planning ahead, best way to spend any January: <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/gardendesign>

Did you bring it in? Over-wintering plants indoors, and a good February 'listen:'

[www.why.org/91FM/ybyg/overwinteringplants.html](http://www.why.org/91FM/ybyg/overwinteringplants.html)

Pile it on! Layered or lasagna gardening:

[www.no-dig-vegetablegarden.com/lasagna-gardening.html](http://www.no-dig-vegetablegarden.com/lasagna-gardening.html)

and [www.motherearthnews.com/Organic-Gardening/1999-04-01/Lasagna-Gardening.aspx](http://www.motherearthnews.com/Organic-Gardening/1999-04-01/Lasagna-Gardening.aspx)

Got Gourds? The Kemper Center might have something for Easter, too:

[www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/gourdindex.shtml](http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/gourdindex.shtml) Very clever!

The Garden Diary. Still planning to try this one: [www.plantjotter.com](http://www.plantjotter.com)

The 'Perfessers' are in... Gardening mysteries:

<https://sharepoint.cahnrs.wsu.edu/blogs/urbanhort/default.aspx>

## Book Review: Grasses, grasses everywhere

*Grasses: versatile partners for uncommon garden design* by Nancy J Ondra. Photography by Saxon Holt. Storey Publishing, 2002.



By  
M Susan  
Osborne

“What would you give for a plant that boasts not only handsome foliage and charming flowers, but also eye-catching fall color and showy seed heads?” begins this wonderful *Grasses* book. What a great opening question as you segue into a book on ornamental grasses. The popularity of ornamental grasses has steadily grown; you see them in public landscaping areas as well as in home gardens, and their low maintenance, high resistance to disease make them even more attractive to the consumer.

And, of course, the variety in grasses is astounding—so many choices! There are hundreds of ornamental grasses for all types of gardens. I’m always looking for something new and different for my gardens, and with the popularity of ornamental grasses, I decided I’d better read and learn before I purchased and planted, thus my mission to find an excellent book to assist me. I believe I found it with *Grasses*.

*Grasses* consists primarily of four chapters with sub-topics. For example, Chapter 2 discusses color palettes and is broken down into sub categories such as cool blues, darkly dramatic, and color surprises. Chapter 4 outlines problem solvers and sub-topics such as celebrating hot, dry sites; made for shade; and covering the ground highlight the chapter. At the end of each sub-topic section, Ondra offers a *Designers Choice* section where she recommends specific grasses with details of that particular grass for specific areas. A US Hardiness Zone Map, a listing of *Great Grasses for Every Need*, a page on *Garden, Location, and Design Credits* are provided plus an index and a book list of *Other Storey Titles*, all within 144 pages. Dynamic photography by Saxon Holt means every page shimmers with colorful, stunning photos of grasses as well as other complimentary plants.

*Grasses* emphasizes how ornamental grasses offer a softer, more natural form that artfully conceals and blends hard edges of your home garden into the surrounding landscape. Experience and observation tells us that most ornamental grasses thrive in the sun; however, by selecting your plants well, you can enjoy grasses in a shady area. Ornamental grasses have become a practical problem solver to the less-than-ideal site by bringing beauty to a defiant area. Many gardeners view slopes as a tough landscaping challenge, but ornamental grasses, when used correctly, can control erosion and eliminate the dreaded mowing of banks and slopes.

*Grasses* is a concise, well-written book that illustrates the beauty of ornamental grasses. In the section *Great Grasses for Every Need*, the author offers lists of grasses that are especially useful for specific purposes (e.g., color combinations, particular landscape sites, and problem solving). *Grasses* meets gardeners’ needs for recommendations for excellent ornamental grasses.

## Conquer weeds with vinegar?

If fighting weeds in your garden has you in a pickle, you'll be interested in a USDA research report about using acetic acid (vinegar) as an herbicide.

USDA researchers confirmed that acetic acid is effective at killing some common weed species, including Canada thistle, lamb's-quarters, giant foxtail, velvetleaf and smooth pigweed.

Weeds were hand-sprayed with various solutions of vinegar, uniformly coating the leaves. The researchers found that 5- and 10-percent concentrations killed the weeds during the first two weeks after emergence from the soil. Older plants required higher concentrations of vinegar to kill them. At the higher concentrations, vinegar had an 85- to 100-percent kill rate at all growth stages. However, perennial weeds, such as Canada thistle, were only temporarily knocked back; the roots survived to sprout new shoots.

Even though vinegar is an acid, it breaks down quickly in the soil and, therefore, is not likely to accumulate enough to affect soil pH for more than a few days.

Ordinary household vinegar is about a 5-percent concentration. Stronger solutions that are labeled for use as herbicides are now available from some retailers, including [http://www.sumrset.com/new\\_herbibide.htm](http://www.sumrset.com/new_herbibide.htm), <http://www.greensense.net/>, <http://www.bradfieldind.com/> and <http://www.biconet.com/lawn/burnout.html>.

Note that vinegar with acetic acid concentrations greater than 5 percent may be hazardous and should be handled with appropriate precautions. Vinegar solutions of 11-percent strength can cause skin burns and eye injury. Also note that the use of a vinegar product for killing weeds, unless the material is specifically labeled as a herbicide, is illegal and a violation of federal pesticide laws. Always read and follow all pesticide label directions.

More information about the USDA study is available online at <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2002/020515.htm>.

## In the Grow

**Q. A friend of mine covers his tomato garden with a large amount of grass clippings. Does this create a fungus? By mid summer, his vines turn black and die. When I used to raise tomatoes, I would have green vines and green tomatoes until frost.**

**A.** Grass clippings don't directly cause fungal disease of tomato plants. However, any mulch that is applied too thickly can keep the soil overly wet, leading to conditions that favor the development of fungal infection. Several common tomato diseases can cause blackened foliage, including late blight, which was a problem in Indiana in 2009. There is information about this disease available from Purdue's department of Plant Pathology at <http://www.ppdl.purdue.edu/PPDL/hot09/8-6.html>. If your friend continues to have this trouble in next year's garden, you might suggest that he contact the Purdue Extension office in his county to get help diagnosing the problem. You'll find contact information for your county at <http://www.ag.purdue.edu/extension/Pages/Counties.aspx>.

By Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Purdue University

By Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Purdue University

## Deicing salts helpful for people but not landscape plants

Deicing salts can save your neck this winter, but they can spell disaster for landscape plants. Whether the salt is sprayed on the plants from passing traffic near the road or is shoveled onto plants near the sidewalk, the salt can cause damage.

Salts can adversely affect plants in several ways. Salts deposited on the surface of twigs, branches and evergreen leaves can cause excessive drying of foliage and roots. They can be taken up by plants and accumulate to toxic levels. Sodium salts in particular can also cause a nutritional imbalance by changing the chemistry of the soil and harm soil structure.

By Rosie  
Lerner,  
Extension  
Consumer  
Horticulturist,  
Purdue  
University

The most apparent damage is death of buds and twig tips as a result of salt spray. As the tips of the plants die, the plant responds by growing an excessive number of side branches. However, accumulation damage is more slowly manifested and may not be noticeable for many months. Affected plants might show stunting, poor vigor, die back of growing tips, and leaf burn or leaf drop.

The best way to deal with salt damage is to prevent it in the first place. Sodium salts are the most common type used for deicing, since they're inexpensive and most readily available. Unfortunately, sodium salts are the most likely to cause plant damage. When possible, use alternatives to sodium products, such as calcium chloride or calcium magnesium acetate (CMA).

Protect roadside plants by constructing burlap or durable plastic screens to shield them from traffic splash. If screening from traffic is not practical, try to use salt-tolerant plants such as Juniper, Siberian pea shrub, poplar and honey locust. Avoid throwing salted sidewalk residue on nearby plants, including shrubs and ground cover. Use alternatives, such as clean cat litter, sand or sawdust, to help improve traction on ice.

For more information on salt damage to landscape plants, see Purdue Extension bulletin ID-412-W <http://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID-412-W.pdf>

## A few more words on bulbs

Have you had problems with critters eating your bulbs? Try this. Make small cages using mesh with half inch holes. Poultry fencing will work for this and is available in small rolls at Menards and Lowes. Place the bulbs inside cages and bury the cages. Rodents can't chew through the mesh to get to the bulbs. For mass plantings, line the bottom and sides of the hole with mesh. Coarse gravel can also be used to line bulb holes. Gravel discourages burrowing rodents. We know that deer will usually leave our daffodils alone but did you know that there are some other bulbs that contain lycorine, the bitter tasting poisonous substance that repels animals? In addition to daffodils, try planting fritillaries, allium, squill, and glory-of-the-snow to increase your deer repelling repertoire.

Source: *Horticulture Magazine*

## Poinsettia Care Twelve Months a Year

**DO** give your poinsettia at least six hours of bright sunlight during the holidays.

**DO** try to keep your poinsettia away from drafts, fluctuating air temperatures, excess heat and dry air from appliances, fireplaces or ventilation ducts. Poinsettias appreciate high humidity, so place them over a pebble tray or keep pans of water nearby.

**DON'T** expose your poinsettia to temperatures less than 50°F. Poinsettias are very sensitive to cold wind and temperatures. Keep plants covered when moving them from the store to a warm car and then to your house.

**DO** try to keep the temperature between 60° and 70°F, the cooler temperature at night. Keeping the plant at temperatures less than 60°F or greater than 70°F will encourage disease and shorten the life of the poinsettia.

**DO** keep the soil of your poinsettia plant moist. Water when soil feels dry to the touch or appears lighter in color. Add enough water so that the excess drains freely from the holes in the bottom of the pot.

**DON'T** let your poinsettia sit in water -- it may cause permanent root-rot damage. Remove the foil pot covering when watering so that excess water is not held under the pot.

**DO** keep your poinsettia after the holidays -- they make an excellent foliage plant.

**DO** let the plants rest for a few months after the holidays. Reduce watering and move to a dark location at 50°F. Water only enough to keep the wood from shriveling.

**DO** cut the branches back to 6" after growth resumes in May. The poinsettia may be grown in a south-facing window indoors (70-75°F) or outdoors, once night temperatures routinely exceed 50°F. Pinch to encourage a bushy habit, but not after mid-August.

**DO** fertilize every two to three weeks during this growing period (not while in bloom) with a balanced analysis fertilizer such as 10:10:10.

**DO**, if you have placed the poinsettia outside for the summer, move plants indoors when the weather starts its annual fall temperature fluctuations, usually by late August.

**DO** provide at least 14 hours of darkness starting October 1st.. Poinsettias must experience long nights in order to form flower buds. Place in an environment where the dark will not be interrupted, even briefly, by turning on a room light or by a streetlight. If this happens, the plant will experience two short nights, instead of one long one, and flowers will not form. Continue this schedule for approximately ten weeks to get the plant blooming for the holidays.

**DO** keep the plants in a room where the temperature is less than 70°F at night when exposing them to the short day/long night treatment.

**DO** keep poinsettias away from animals and children. Contrary to popular belief, they are not poisonous but like most ornamental plants, they should not be eaten.

By Mary  
Welch-  
Keeseey,  
Consumer  
Horticulture  
Specialist,  
White River  
Gardens

## Volunteer opportunities compiled by Nancy White

Location	Time	Jobs	Contact
Hilltop Garden and Nature Center	year around	various	
MG Demonstration Garden	seasonal	various	Bethany Murray, 339-8876, bethany.murray@gmail.com
Bloomington Community Orchard	seasonal	various	Amy Countryman
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 2010/2011 hours only at <http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/mg/>.**

**January 2011**

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**General Meeting**

Tuesday, January 25, 2011

6:30 p.m.

Extension Office, 3400 S. Walnut Street

**2011 MCMGA Board**

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

**2011 Master Gardener Calendar**

**Saturday, January 22,** 8:00—4:00 CST,  
*The Show for Gardeners by Gardeners*, Por-  
ter County Expo Center, Valparaiso  
**Tuesday, January 25,** 6:30 p.m. General  
Meeting, Extension Office, 3400 S. Walnut  
**Thursday, February 10,** 8:15 a.m. to 5:00  
p.m., *Passion and Pursuit, The Search for the  
Perfect Perennial*, Tobias Theater at IMA  
**Saturday, February 19,** 8:30—2:30; *Once  
Upon a Garden*, Princeton Community High  
School, Princeton  
**Saturday, March 5,** 8:00—3:30, Advanced  
Training, Madison County 4-H Fairgrounds,  
Alexandria