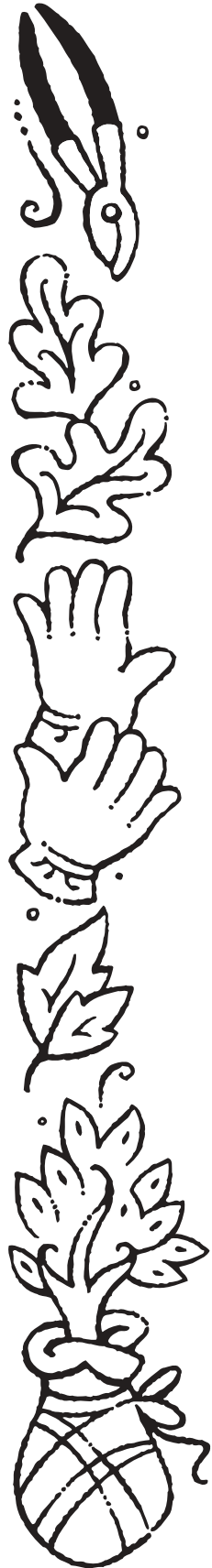


BUDS & BUGS

Volume 5, Issue 4

Huron County Master Gardener Newsletter



Chocolate Garden

By Denise Pattison, Master Gardener

A few years ago I received a most unusual gift. It was a 3 1/2" x 3" wooden box tied with a chocolate brown grosgrain ribbon. When opened it revealed six 3/4" cylinders filled with various seeds. It was called a "Chocolate Garden." I will name and describe the plants, the various methods recommended for planting and my end results.

Bittersweet William: This plant had small carnation-like flowers that were brown in color. The foliage was also dark. The seeds were to be barely covered but kept moist. It was listed as a perennial but never appeared the second year.

Chocolate Flower: This plant had yellow flowers and a maroon center. It smelled a bit like chocolate. The buds opened in the morning and sort of rested in the afternoon. Again, you were to plant the seeds, barely covering them and keeping them moist. This plant produced one year although it was listed otherwise.

Midnight Candy Phlox: This was an annual and appeared with burgundy buds that had white petals. The buds opened in early evening. This plant also had an unusual fragrance, much like almonds. The seeds were to be planted 1/8" deep.

Chocolate Soldiers Columbine: The seeds had to be refrigerated a few weeks before sowing. When planting, the seeds were not to be covered but misted. This plant was not to bloom until the second year and in my zest for early spring gardening, the following spring I pulled the plant up thinking it was a weed. Had I not destroyed it I might have had a flower in chocolate brown with yellow anthers.

Chocolate Nasturtium: The seeds had to be soaked for several hours before planting. The flowers were a mahogany color and the foliage sort of green-gold. it was an annual.

Chocolate Drop Rudbeckia: I have renamed this plant "Hershey's Kiss" and I still have it. The seeds were not to be covered but misted to keep them moist. This plant blooms in late summer in full sun and is most unusual. There are no petals. The green sepals which cover the bud unfold and you see a dark brown cone, like you had unwrapped a Hershey's kiss. You can use the stems in fresh or dried bouquets.

Am I a chocolate lover? You bet, and I prefer the milk chocolate variety.

May 2004

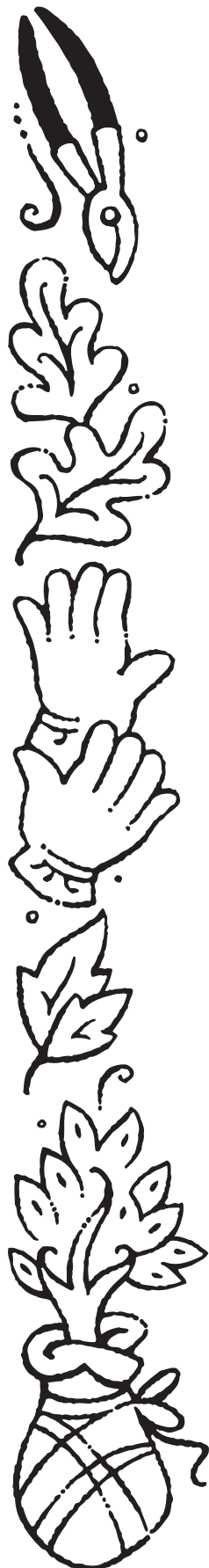
MSU EXTENSION HURON COUNTY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chocolate Garden.....	1
Save Those Milk Jugs	2
Seeds For Thought.....	2
Gardening in the Shade	3
Garden Tips for Spring.....	4
From Jim's Desk	5
Calendar of Events	6
"Pointe Aux Barques Lighthouse" Flyer Enclosed	





SAVE THOSE MILK JUGS!

Source: "The Rambling Rose"

It won't be long before we will be planting tomato plants outside. The trick of getting an earlier crop is to plant them early. The problem of planting early is that Mother Nature likes to surprise us with frosty nights just when we least expect it.

A standby for protecting our early tomato seedlings has been to purchase tomato caps. These are nothing more than fancy waxed paper that forms a cone. One problem is that too often the cap is a bit too small to contain the plant, especially if one has started their own from seed. Seeds started around mid-March should be of good stature when planted.

What do you look for? A long length (leggy) on the stem of the plant. When planting a tomato plant that is leggy, form a trench about 4-6" deep and lay the plant in it. Strip off the bottom leaves so that the plant will project about 4-6 inches above the ground. What happens is that new roots will quickly form along the length of the buried stem. If you plan ahead, it is a good idea to cover the area where your tomatoes will

be planted with a sheet of black plastic or any dark material. This allows the sun to warm the soil earlier than it would be warmed without the covering.

Once planted, protect the tender plants from cold nights. In years past, gardeners used half-gallon waxed cardboard milk cartons instead of paying for tomato caps (Plastic jugs weren't invented back then). Today gardeners can use the plastic gallon milk jug containers which are superior to the older materials. All you have to do is to cut the bottom off the jug. This will give you a tomato cap that has more space for the plant to grow while protected. Some gardening magazines offer glass cloches for \$5 or more but why spend the money when you can get almost the same thing for free?

You can keep an eye on the plant, and control the temperature within the container, by removing the cap when it is unusually warm. At night, place the cap back on top to keep the warm temperature inside. The milk jug acts as a miniature greenhouse.

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

-- Don't Forget -- Our Plant Sale is May 15!

Flyers are run off and ready to be hung in area stores, etc. Stop by to pick up a few for your community and get the promotion out for people to see!

Master Gardeners participating in the Perennial Plant Sale on Saturday, May 15, may stop by the MSUE office to pick up soil and pots we will be using for the sale. Theresa Woodward has them prepackaged to make them quick and easy to pick up. Your labeled plants should be in pots at least two weeks prior to the sale so plants are over their transplant shock and will look wonderful(!) for our customers.

Plants are to be brought to the Expo Center on Friday night, the 14th. This will give sale organizers time to arrange and price everything before the early shoppers arrive. The inspection by the MDA will take place on Saturday morning.

Also, call the MSUE office to let Carol know what plants you are planning/hoping to bring so information sheets can be prepared.

NEW MASTER GARDENER SERIES STARTING

A warm welcome to the new class members! Eight trainees attended the first night's class on April 14. Be sure to welcome them when you see them at MG activities! I'm sure they'll be joining us soon for fun and fellowship while racking up those volunteer hours!

The 2004 class members are:

Wilma Erskine, Bad Axe
Lisa Hagen, Caseville
Carol Holtrop, Bad Axe
Jim Holtrop, Bad Axe
Melvin Hoppe, Cass City
John Hunt, Port Austin
Laura Lalone, Oscoda
Peggy Miller, Port Austin
Cynthia Thompson, Sandusky
Carol Weber, Bad Axe

Gardening In The Shade

*Brighten Low-Light Areas with Texture and Color
By Dutch Gardens*

The frothy pink flowers of Spring Symphony Foamflower brighten the springtime garden, but its colored leaves add interest all season.

Gardeners usually consider shade a liability. It's true that a shady yard is not a good place for growing beefsteak tomatoes, roses and delphinium. But a shady garden can provide a type of pleasure no sunny garden can touch. Like the soothing comfort we feel beneath a shady tree on a hot summer day, a shade garden is restful to the eye and calls us to slow down and look more closely.

There are some other good reasons to be happy about gardening in the shade. Plants grow more slowly in shady conditions, reducing the need for dividing and pruning. Weeds also grow slower and are less of a problem. And a shady garden's combination of dense foliage, cooler soil and less wind, also keep watering chores to a minimum.

To be a successful shade gardener, there are three important factors to consider: amount of shade, soil conditions and plant choice.

Amount of Shade

First and most important, is to understand how much light your plants will actually be receiving. Knowing whether you have partial, light, full or dense shade will allow you to match the right plants to your growing conditions.

Partial Shade: This is sometimes also called semi-shade or half-shade. It means that the site receives full sun for several hours a day, but is in light or full shade for the rest of the day. If you have the choice, morning light, which comes when air and soil temperatures are cooler, is preferable to afternoon light, which can be hot and drying.

Light Shade: This might also be called dappled shade. It refers to a site that receives filtered light through a lacy covering of overhead leaves, or one that is lightly shaded by a high canopy of leaves. If your garden is in a tree-filled yard, one way to create this quality of light is to "limb up" selected trees, removing low branches and increasing the overall light levels.

Full Shade: Though not considered dark, this site is nearly always in shade. It is still open, with good air circulation, good soil and adequate moisture.

Dense Shade: When the ground is completely shaded by buildings or is under the thick shade of trees such as Norway maples and evergreens, little light reaches the soil surface. These are difficult growing conditions for all but a few types of plants.

Soil Conditions

In nature, most shade-loving plants grow in the forest understory where the soil is airy, moist and rich in organic matter from many years of falling leaves. As a general rule, shade-loving garden plants will be happiest if you can provide them with these same soil conditions.

Tree roots can present a significant challenge to the shade gardener. A mature tree can easily drink several hundred gallons of water a day. Most of this moisture is drawn up by a web of fibrous feeder roots that lie just inches below the soil surface, leaving little water for plants growing at their feet. Many shade gardeners find dry soil to be a greater problem than limited light.

Fortunately, even the driest, stoniest, most infertile soil can be improved over time by a diligent gardener. If you are starting a new garden in a shady location, it's well worth spending time to prepare the soil. If you have the patience, begin that work a full year before anything gets planted. Start by removing any sod, or cover the area with black plastic to kill the grass. Spread a 6-inch layer of shredded leaves and compost over the area and then either dig that organic matter into the soil or cover it with a water-permeable tarp and let the soil microbes do the mixing. It's a good idea to check the soil pH as well. Most shade-loving plants prefer a neutral to slightly acid pH.

Once your new garden has been planted, mulch around the plants with shredded leaves or bark, and water regularly until the plants are well established. This extra attention may be required for a year or two, but once the plants' roots are firmly anchored and their foliage is shading the soil surface, most shade gardens will happily coexist with all but the thirstiest of trees.

Choosing Plants

The yellow highlights on Illumination Vinca add color to shady sites.

Shade gardens are not about flashy colored flowers. Flowers are a bonus--not the main objective. A shade garden is all about the interplay of foliage in its various colors, forms and textures. As you become familiar with the vast palette of shade-loving plants, you will be amazed and inspired by the beautiful combinations you can create.

Foliage colors range from golden yellow through hundreds of different greens and into blues and even burgundy. Leaves may be smaller than your thumbnail, or bigger than a beach ball. Textures range from felted to shiny, smooth to ribbed. Add a few flowers, and the possibilities are simply endless.

At right, you'll find a list of some of the plants that will do well in a shady garden. All will thrive in partial shade, some will also be happy in light shade, and a few will even grow in full shade. To ensure that a plant's light requirements match the growing conditions you can offer, please refer to the more detailed cultural information that should be available from the nursery or supplier where you will purchase your plants.

GARDEN TIPS FOR SPRING

Source: *Lowe's Garden Club Magazine*

MAINTENANCE:

Trim your spring shrubs after they flower. Cut pussy willow back hard – leaving only 4 to 6 inches of stems – to make next year's fuzzy buds bigger.

Keep bird feeders stocked well into spring. As nights warm up, set out birdbaths. Hang houses to attract nesting pairs of birds.

Late frosts won't hurt shoots of bulbs poking through the soil. Remove mulch around bulbs when shoots are an inch tall. Don't apply new mulch to beds (for summer weed control and moisture conservation) until the soil has warmed up.

IN THE GARDEN:

Start heat-loving vegetable crops, such as tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers, indoors six to eight weeks before you area's last frost date. Use a hand rake to remove leaves

and mulch from around perennial crowns. Clip any stalks that remain from last year's growth; pulling them could damage new shoots.

Plant cool-season vegetables -- cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, and peas -- while the chance of frost lingers. Cover planting beds with black plastic to warm the soil, so that you can plant as soon as the danger of frost has passed.

LAWNS:

If you have bulbs (such as daffodils, scilla, or crocus) that you have naturalized in your lawn, don't mow until the foliage dies down naturally.

De-thatch warm-season grasses if thatch buildup is more than an inch. Aerate warm-season turf if the soil is compacted. Moss is a good indicator that soil compaction is a problem.

OF INTEREST TO MG'S

Four Star Greenhouse Inc.

is happy to announce it's 2004 New Varieties and Programs Open House!

Master Gardener Day is June 2, 2004
Where: 1015 Indian Trails Rd., Carleton, MI
(734) 654-6420
New Varieties for 2005 will be displayed.
Supernova Presentation.
Perennial Presentation.
Combination Planting trial display.
Retail Display Destination area.

....and much more!

RSVP by May 7 to: Kathy Smith at 734-654-6420
or email @ ksmith@fourstargh.com

New grape resource on-line at MSUE

Joy N. Landis

IPM Program Communications

A one-stop source for integrated vineyard management advice for Michigan juice and wine grape growers is now only a click-of-the-mouse away thanks to initial funding from Project GREEN. Log-on to: www.grapes.msu.edu

The site includes descriptions and photos of diseases, insects, vine disorders, herbicide injury and beneficial insects. Handy links to on-line weather, MSU's Fruit Management Guide and articles about cultural practices are ready for access.

More features are being added each month thanks to further collaboration between the National Grape Cooperative, the Michigan Grape and Wine Industry, MSU IPM Program, MSU Extension and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. Keep checking back for new information.

Denise Pattison reported that if you identify yourself as a Master Gardener (you might have to talk with a supervisor) Walmart will give you a 10% discount and Frank's Nursery will give you a 20% discount. (I'm assuming this would only apply to garden-related products.)

From Jim's Desk

Dear Huron County Master Gardeners,

Spring is here, can summer be far behind? We have many activities coming up in the very near future and plans need to be finalized soon for them so we can continue to deliver quality programming to the people of Huron County.

I'd be very remiss if I didn't say, "Congratulations!" on the successful Spring Into Gardening conference at Ugly Heights!! A group of MG's met for a 2004 wrap-up/2005 planning meeting and they are well on the way to having speakers lined up for next year's conference. The date is set – March 19 -- and one speaker is lined up. When all of the speakers are confirmed we will take it one step further and share the information with potential vendors so they can make plans to be at next year's trade show. Thank you to everyone who was and is involved with this. This conference is a real feather in each Master Gardeners' cap!

Our new Master Gardener series started off nicely and includes 8 new Master Gardener trainees. The orientation session was April 14. Our thanks to Anita Booms for facilitating and hosting the first session. We still have a few openings for volunteers who would like to facilitate/bring refreshments: May 26, June 2 and June 30. Please give Carol a call and she will put your name on the schedule. It's great fun to see the new faces and make new friends. Each one who volunteers helps to make the new trainees feel welcome and at home with their new organization.

Right around the corner is the Annual Huron Master Gardener Perennial Plant Sale! Theresa Woodward has a cache of potting supplies for those of you who can share some of your "exotic" or "semi-exotic" or, OK, even "not so exotic" perennials for the sale. Contact us or Theresa and we'll line you up with supplies to pot and liberate some of your shareable treasures!! I plan to see you all there!! One thought we discussed to enhance the Plant Sale was the addition of area vendors in 2005. With more plants for sale, we can get more people/foot traffic through our sale...a definite WIN-WIN situation for both Master Gardeners and outside vendors. Think about it and be prepared to share your thoughts at the next MG meeting.

Hats off to Denise Pattison and Patt Maurer for tackling the 2004 Garden Walk. I am always amazed at the quality gardens that are found for this Walk. No repeats either! Each MG will have the opportunity to work at one of the gardens.

Our rental fee has been paid for this year's fair booth and a theme has been selected "Container Gardening." Everyone can think of ideas for decorating (should be easy with a theme like that!) and can plan to work at the booth throughout the week. A schedule for workers will be drawn up as we get closer to the event.

A NOTE FOR THOSE OF YOU (Sandy? Anita?) who were involved with the Fair Booth bird house project last year (you KNOW the one I'm talking about!) – What do you think about hiring a sub-contractor to continue that project???? How many houses do you each want????

James E. Mantey
Extension Agricultural Agent
Master Gardener Advisor



Calendar of Events

Call the numbers listed for times, fees and a more detailed description of the event

Thumb Rose Society 989-269-7154
Monday, May 3 -- Plant Auction, complete with Auctioneer 7:00 p.m. Bad Axe Intermediate School Cafeteria, 404 Hatchet Drive, Bad Axe

Bloomers Garden Club 989-479-6347

Women's Farm & Garden 989-479-9075

MSU Extension, Bad Axe 989-269-9949
Tuesday, May 4, 2004 at 7 p.m.
Master Gardener Monthly Informational Meeting
MSUE Conference Room, 99 W. Soper Rd.
Suite B, Bad Axe

MG Perennial Plant Sale - Huron County
Friday, May 14: 7pm Set up/Bring in plants for MG Perennial Plant Sale, Huron Expo Center, fairgrounds, Bad Axe
Saturday, May 15 - 10am - 2 pm: Perennial Plant Sale, Huron Expo Center, fairgrounds, Bad Axe
Be there at 9:00 a.m. or earlier!

MSU Extension -- MG Series - Huron County
May 5: Small Fruits
May 12: Household Pests and Wildlife
May 19: Indoor Plants & Their Care (tentative)
May 26: Lawn Establishment & Care

Huron County Master Gardener Garden Walk
July 10, 2004 989-269-9949

Bay County Master Gardeners 989-895-4026
bay@msue.msu.edu

"Advanced Garden Design" May 15
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Delta College Planetarium, 100 Center Avenue, downtown Bay City. 6 hours of education credit. (You must have completed one of the following introductory programs: "Designing with Perennials" or "Designing the Mixed Garden") \$75, includes lunch.
May 7 deadline. Call for an application form.

Huron County Nature Center Wilderness Arboretum
Fourth Annual Lady's Slipper Festival
(Loosemore Road off Oak Beach Road)
Music, Fun, Food and Educational Displays for the Entire Family
Saturday, May 29: 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 30: 12:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. (or beyond)

Saturday Morning Gardener, MSU
May 8: Make a Container Garden (2 hours education time)
Cost \$30, call to see if there's still room.

Master Gardener Program
MSU Extension - Huron County
99 W. Soper Road, Suite B
Bad Axe, MI 48413-8272