

MASTER GARDENER Communicator

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION
KALAMAZOO
COUNTY

December 2005



County to Review Role of Consumer Horticulture Program in 2006

by Ann Nieuwenhuis, County Extension Director

Five years ago MSU Extension had a dream to grow Consumer Horticulture Programming in Southwest Michigan. Michigan State University Extension agreed to fund the concept to take our half-time position in Kalamazoo and build it into a full time position enhancing programming in Van Buren and Kalamazoo County and establishing programming in Cass and St. Joseph Counties. The plan was to build a solid foundation of Master Gardeners and a financial base in each county by 2005 to sustain this programming. The foundation of dedicated Master Gardeners did occur. Unfortunately, a down turn in local and state economy negatively impacted the creation of the necessary financial support base from the other counties. Plus the pilot project monies from the University end 12/31/05.

Because of this lack of funding, effective December 31, 2005 the current MSUE Consumer Horticulture position for Emelee Rajzer will end. Each of the counties will need to decide how to continue Consumer Horticulture programming plus support their volunteer base.

Kalamazoo County will revert to a county funded Consumer Horticulture staff position effective 1/1/06. The roles and responsibilities

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FROM THE HOME OFFICE

Reporting Volunteer and Education Hours for 2005

Hours are due in the office by December 31, 2005. This is vitally important to ensure that your hours are reported to the State office in time to maintain your certification.

Please try to use the on-line reporting system. You may access it by going to <http://mmg.comtechlab.msu.edu>

If you can't remember your login ID and password, please contact the office at 384-8197 to receive this information.

If you can't access the Internet and the on-line reporting system, you may call the office at 384-8197 to obtain reporting forms.

KALAMAZOO'S MSU EXTENSION HAS MOVED

We are now officially at our new location. You may visit the office at 3299 Gull Rd. (Nazareth Complex), 2nd wing, 4th floor, room 410.

If you are mailing information to the office, please use the following address:

MSU Extension-Kalamazoo County
Master Gardener Program
PO Box 42
Nazareth, MI 49074-0042

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NOTE OF THANKS

Thank you to all who sent cards and well-wishes to me while I was out in October. I missed all of you and was grateful to receive your cards; they were very uplifting. I'm glad to be back at work and look forward to hearing from you.

~Karen Smeltzer, Support Staff

WINTER PREPPING

As of Thanksgiving, winter is officially upon us. Gardens have been put to bed, but mums may still need to be deadheaded. Now is a great time to check your tools to make sure they are cleaned, dry, and oiled so in the spring they will be ready to use again.

Winter is also a great time to review your Master Gardener manual for problem-solving tips to ready yourself for the spring and summer gardening questions that inevitably occur.

You might want to visit the MSU web site <http://www.ipm.msu.edu/aboutcat.htm> to review CAT Alerts. CAT Alerts are articles written by MSU Extension staff specialists regarding problems in the landscape, vegetable gardens, and fruit crops that occur during the growing season and make recommendations for treatment.

CAT Alert articles are a good educational tool and provide thought-provoking reading.

AG ACTION 2006

The first volunteer opportunity of the year will occur at Ag Action Day! This event is held every year at KVCC and features programming by MSU specialists and local persons with expertise in horticulture and agriculture. This year Ag Action will be held on January 27 at Kalamazoo Valley Community College at the Texas Township Campus, O Ave., Oshtemo Township.

There are two opportunities available: Hall Guide and Room Host

Hall Guides direct people to the classrooms

Room Hosts assist the instructor by passing out and collecting papers to class participants, etc.

These volunteer hours are in the "required" category. You may also count education hours if you are a room host and listen to the presentation in your room.

If you would like to sign up for either of these duties, please call Beth Clawson in the Van Buren County MSU Extension office. Beth has been designated as the contact for this volunteer event. Call her at (269) 657-7745 no later than January 10 – volunteer positions are limited, so sign up now.

Decorating for "The Season"

Winter-like weather has arrived across Southwest Michigan. As gardeners, we have finished up most of the outdoor activities. For me, I have finally trimmed down the Echinacea 'Sunset' that was just starting to bloom again.

Along with the weather, the arrival of the holiday season has arrived as well. Many have begun to decorate both indoors and out. Remember, if you are decorating with lights, inspect them prior to putting them up. Over time, the wires can become frayed posing both a fire hazard and a risk for electric shock.

Along with the popular use of lights comes the wonderful selection of holiday plants for decorating. The most popular plant has to be the poinsettia. This wonderful holiday plant comes in many colors including: red, pink, white, bi-color, etc.

When caring for poinsettia, please be reminded to keep them away from cold and warm drafts. Avoid placing the plant near registers, fireplaces, doors and drafty windows.

Poinsettias are sometimes difficult to water correctly. If one waters too little the plant can wilt and potentially lose its lower leaves. If one waters too much the plant can also lose its lower leaves. The best thing to do is to keep the soil slightly damp to the touch and not allow the plant to sit with water in the saucer too long.

THE LATEST ON EMERALD ASH BORER

The Michigan Department of Agriculture issued a press release on November 2, 2005, with the following information about action taken against the Emerald Ash Borer in Michigan:

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Mitch Irwin today announced an amendment of the state's Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) quarantine to prevent the further spread of the pest. Effective immediately, Michigan's EAB quarantine has been revised to include the recent discovery of an infestation in the Upper Peninsula, the county of Sanilac, and other outlying areas.

"Michigan continues to implement an approach within available resources to respond to this devastating pest," said Irwin. "Curbing the spread of EAB and protecting the ash resource in Michigan hinges on a stable federal funding commitment."

The revised quarantine also provides MDA increased control over the movement of commercial firewood within the EAB regulated area of the Lower Peninsula. Any firewood intended for commercial sale must be accompanied by have a bill of lading or other shipping document indicating the origin and destination of the firewood.

"Our ability to regulate the movement of firewood in the Lower Peninsula is crucial to preventing the artificial spread of EAB into other areas of Michigan and surrounding states," said Patricia Lockwood, EAB policy director for Governor Jennifer Granholm. "It's imperative citizens comply with the state's quarantine and stop transporting firewood if we are to be successful in this battle against the beetle."

Individuals or businesses found violating the state's EAB quarantine (21 counties in Southeast Michigan and 31 outlying infestations) are subject to fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$250,000 and jail time of up to five years for moving regulated ash materials, including firewood.

Portions of the following townships and cities are now part of the state's EAB quarantine. Exact quarantine boundaries will be available on-line at www.michigan.gov/eab.

Barry County – Carlton, Woodland, and Irving Townships
Berrien County – parts of the cities of Benton Harbor, Bridgman and St. Joseph, Chickaming,

Lincoln, Royalton, St. Joseph, Benton and Weesaw Townships
Kalamazoo County - Wakeshma Township
Kent County - Bowne Township
St. Joseph County - Leonidas Township
Van Buren County - all of the City of Hartford and City of Watervliet and Bangor, Covert, and Hartford and Watervliet Townships

EAB is an exotic, aggressive beetle putting state's 700 million ash trees at risk of extinction and has already been responsible for the death of approximately 15 million of Michigan's ash trees. For more information about EAB, please visit one of these Web sites: www.michigan.gov/eab or www.emeraldashborer.info. You may also contact your regional MDA office, or your local Michigan State University Extension or conservation district office.

Education Credit for December 2005

Name: _____

Instead of a quiz, I thought you would enjoy sharing some of your thoughts. You will receive 1 education credit when you turn in this survey, just as if it was a quiz. You may automatically give yourself 100% as all answers you provide are correct.

1. What is your opinion of the new on-line reporting system?
2. What was you most challenging gardening issue this past season?
3. How did you resolve your problem in your garden?
4. Do you refer to the MSU CAT Alerts for help?
5. What kinds of workshops would you like to se offered in 2006?
6. What was your most meaningful volunteer project in 2005?
7. What is the new mailing address for MSU Extension?

Rhododendrons

Rhododendrons are a popular plant that many gardeners add to their landscape. Advance research is recommended as first as these plants have special requirements for optimal growth.

Many times, gardeners have planted rhododendrons in heavy soil (clay) only to watch in vain the plant deteriorate over the course of a year or two.

I remember visiting one person's home who was having problems with their rhododendron. The rhododendron in question was planted on the south side of the home and also planted in clay.

Much to the person's dismay, I pulled the plant up and the smell from the roots just about knocked the two of us out. Obviously, the plant had some major root rot problems and was "knocking on death's door."

Rhododendrons do best when planted in well drained, slightly acidic soil. They do need quite a bit of moisture during the growing season as well as protection from harsh winter winds.

These wonderful plants also need protection from early morning sun in the winter, as desiccation or drying of the evergreen leaves can occur.

The best location for rhododendrons is near buildings on the north side. They can be planted on the east or west side; however the best is north, then east, then west.

Before preparing the planting area, have the soil tested to determine pH and existing levels of plant nutrients.

Taking extra time in preparation of the planting area can save a person quite a bit of work down the road.

Most shrubs and trees are planted by digging a hole and placing the plant material in the hole. Rhododendrons planted in this manner end up living in a "bathtub," especially if the soil surrounding the planting area does not have good drainage.

For rhododendrons, begin by digging an area at least 36 inches wide and 14 inches deep. Remove half of the soil and amend the remaining soil in the planting area with organic material.

Another option for planting is the use of raised or mounded beds. These raised beds should be at least 12-18 inches in height above the native soil. Pay special attention to watering in the summer months, as these raised beds can dry out more quickly in hot summer weather.

With proper site selection and planting, rhododendrons can reward you with year-long beauty for many years to come.

Happy Holidays!

We wish you a glorious holiday season, a safe winter, and a bountiful growing season for spring as we venture into the new year. Working with each of you is a great and joyous experience! Thank you for all your hard work and time devoted to the community and to the Master Gardener Volunteer program.



Emelee Rajzer, Coordinator
Karen Smeltzer, Support Staff
Bill Fritsch, Editor

County to Review Role

will be determined early in 2006 by a committee and presented to the Board of Commissioners for their approval. And Emelee will have the opportunity to apply for this new Kalamazoo County Consumer Horticulture Coordinator position.

Emelee joined MSU Extension on May 15, 2001. As you all know during her tenure with MSUE, the Consumer Horticulture volunteer base has grown and the depth and breadth of Consumer Horticulture workshops was expanded. Emelee has built an active pool of Master Gardener Volunteers and was very creative in implementing unique volunteer opportunities throughout the county. Emelee's strong organization skills enabled her to grow programming in all of the four counties and the media found her to be a reliable source for all types of Consumer Horticulture issues.

Before December 20, please take a few minutes and let Emelee know how much you appreciated her leadership and support of Consumer Horticulture programming and the Master Gardener Volunteers. She will be missed!