



Kent County Master Gardeners

“Green Pages”

September, 2003

Can you believe that we are already in September? How in the world could our summer be ebbing? I just got my garden the way I like it and now I have to think about putting it to sleep again? - NO WAY!

This year I'm going to plant some late Fall/Winter container gardens using some of those hardier plants—i.e. mums, but also tiarella, some of the artemesias, & I'm searching for more. Last fall I made the mistake of using Queen Anne's lace, thistle and other "attractive" fall foliage." This summer I've been constantly pulling up seedlings in driveway cracks and all over the yard. Seemed like a good idea at the time!

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By the way, did you know that you can view our newsletter on the Master Gardener website. You can also download it and run off a copy for yourself. If this seems attractive to you, please let us know and we'll take you off our "Green Pages" list—save money, you know. The website is www.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener. Choose Kent County from the Michigan map and you're on your way. Those who wish to receive it by e-mail may continue to do so and I'll gladly add you to our list. Some have had trouble downloading the newsletter. It does require that you have the Adobe Acrobat Reader which you can download for free on the web.

I'm still waiting for MANY of you to return those ever so brief questionnaires that we included in the July/August newsletter. If you've lost it, I basically want to know if you've changed address, phone number, or e-mail address. We are also attempting to update our list of those who are willing to do "One Shot" projects or have the ability to speak on a specific topic. Please call or e-mail me to fill me in! Thanks!

Just for your information, the January 2004 class is already full and I've begun filling the 2005 class. The **Fall, 2004** class is a daytime class running from late August to November. There are still openings in that class. The interest just doesn't seem to abate. Three classes? I think not.

Hope to see you all soon at the Plant Auction/ Open House.

Gardeningly yours,
Gordon Griffin, Kent/MSU Master Gardener Coordinator

BADGES!! - BTW, we have a veritable plethora of badges, both for those who achieved "basic" status and "advanced" status. Please come and pick them up.

Hotline News—September, 2003

Sharon Globig—Kent/MSU Extension Lawn & Garden Hotline Coordinator

A huge THANK YOU to all of you who have given Hotline hours so far this season. The battle still rages, and I see a lot of blank days on the calendar in September. Bugs are still flying and chewing, so are caterpillars. Disease is still attacking ornamentals. New lawns are being established, and veggie gardeners are still enjoying harvest.

In short, we are still busy on the hotline. Can you spare a few hours and answer some gardening questions for the public yet this fall? If you haven't worked in our new Hotline Headquarters, you will be amazed at the spacious facility we enjoy now with three computers and three phone lines, and even a printer!! It is a wonderfully pleasant working atmosphere. **We Need You! Please call me at 336-7734 to schedule a hotline shift soon!**

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

We were privileged to have Dr. Dave Smitley, from MSU with us on August 11 for an update on the EAB. About 75 Master Gardeners, city and county representatives and tree professionals attended his presentation. As you are no doubt aware, EAB has been confirmed in Grand Rapids and that site (Home Depot on 54th Street) and an area up to 1/2 mile around it are being inspected by MDA for signs of EAB. Unless you live in that area, there is nothing to worry about right now and no treatment is needed or will help at the present time. There is currently no way to eradicate this pest. It brings nearly 100% death rate to any ash tree it infects, which is any ash over 2" in diameter.

What You Need to Know

1. How to Identify Ash Trees. We have a new MSU bulletin (E-2892) to help you with that. Stop by the office and pick up a copy. For example, Mountain Ash is NOT an ash and therefore not susceptible to EAB.
2. There is no cause for panic or paranoia. Keep an eye on your ash trees and those in public places such as parks and along roadways. We do not believe anyone outside the above-mentioned area has EAB right now unless they perhaps brought in firewood from SE Michigan since 2000 or have a new ash tree originating in SE Michigan planted between 2000 and June of 2002.

We have a lot of information available to you and the general public at the office. If you want to know more, stop by and take a look, and be sure to read Rebecca's articles in the *Sunday Press*. We will be working closely with Ottawa County (where EAB has NOT been confirmed) to keep the public aware.

Incidentally, SE Michigan (and now more Michigan Counties) and an outbreak in Windsor are the only known places that this alien pest has been confirmed in the US. How the professionals (with the help of horticulture professionals, Master Gardeners and others) cooperate to eradicate, or at least slow down the advance of the EAB, will determine the future of our beautiful American Ash trees in much the same way as Dutch Elm Disease affected our American Elms.

Gardening with Perennials

Yes! We're presenting our educational Gardening with Perennials series again this fall!. The first class is on Monday, September 15 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Eberhard Center on GVSU's downtown Grand Rapids campus. The series will run for six consecutive Monday evenings. The cost is \$130.

We are offering you informative and entertaining speakers such as Janet Macunovich, Tim Wood, Win DeVries, and of course, our own Miss Becky, who has been working diligently on a brand new presentation on Perennial Garden Design. We are looking forward to a new speaker this year, Barbara Begoyen from Walters Gardens and formerly with Warba Crest Nurseries will speak on Gardening on the Sunny Side and include ornamental grasses in her talk. In addition, Win DeVries has added a short presentation on Art in the Garden to her usual shade gardening program. And . . . we will have some new and familiar books available for your shopping pleasure.

If you've never attended this program before, or if you have, it is an incredible opportunity to get yourself ready for next year's garden planning, gain some fresh insights into design and maintenance, see some new offerings from nurseries, and earn 18 advanced educational credits all at the same time! That's an offer no one who loves to garden with perennials should refuse!

You should have received a brochure and registration form in the mail by now. If you didn't, please call me at 336-7734 and I'll be sure you get one! This program is open to the public, so don't delay in getting your registration in. It always fills up quickly.

My Blue Garden by Esther Groninger, Advanced Master Gardener since 1997



neighbor walking past my garden remarked, “too many blue flowers.” She could have meant too much work as in deadheading annuals, but I am not sure. Next year it will be different anyway. Blue flowers in the garden always seemed to be hard to find and that made them very desirable in my mind. I had a few blue perennials but their impact was always of short duration and I was not very successful with the blue annuals offered at the local nurseries.

In my eagerness to add blue to my garden, I kept adding as many blue perennials as I could find. And then it happened! On a trip to Europe I saw what I thought to be the most exquisite blue flower in my brother-in-law’s garden. It was an annual, he explained and he called it Rittersporn. As this was during my pre-Master Gardener days, I did not recognize it but I now know it as Larkspur. I came home with a small amount of seeds. I planted some indoors and some directly outdoors in the spring. Both came up but I found that the outdoor ones were hardier and it was a lot less trouble than growing them in the house. I was elated. I had introduced a blue flower into my garden that would bloom all summer long.

The first season I collected as many seed as possible—just in case—and there were many of them. The following year, considerably more blue flowers beautified my garden without any of the seeds I had collected. Out of habit, I guess, I still collected seeds even though I realized that I would not need them. So I distributed them to fellow Master Gardeners, friends, and neighbors, because I wanted others to enjoy this blue bonanza.

It has now been several years of generating more blue flowers than I can possible use. For a time, I would give away the small seedlings in the spring to whoever showed the slightest interest, but after a while this became too tedious and I tired of that. This spring I did not give any away but used as many as my garden could possible contain (they were so little!). The rest I reluctantly pulled out as weeds. (Remember: a weed is any plant that grows where it is not wanted.) Now blue is no longer a rare color in my garden. Blue Balloon flowers, Jacob’s Ladder, Stokesia, Clematis, Echinops, etc., and, of course, Larkspur and, Bachelor buttons, which multiply at about the same rate as the Larkspur, dominate the landscape this year. So it finally happened: my garden is a BLUE garden. In my effort to add blue, I had gone overboard.

I am not too sorry though. I love the Larkspur and most people walking by do as well. I am faithfully deadheading, not because I want the seeds but because I don’t want all the seedlings. There is a local nursery that would like some Larkspur seeds so I’ll be collecting some for them. For the first time this year I have a resident rabbit in my yard. His favorite flower is Larkspur and he is helping me in my attempt to reduce seedlings. In the backyard where he does his work there is now a sad display of short stems where once grew graceful tall stems of delicate blue. Thankfully he has not yet found my front yard, or I would have to resort to drastic measures because **I love my blue garden.**



What is an “Active” MSU Master Gardener???

An “Active MSU Master Gardener” is a person who has either completed Basic Certification (40 volunteer hours), Advanced Certification (50 more volunteer hours + 25 educational hours within a 2 year period), or has re-certified (currently 10 volunteer hours + 3 educational hours). If this does not define you, you are not considered an active MSU Master Gardener, and we don’t want this to be your last “Green Pages” newsletter.

Our desire would be for you to return to active status if you possibly can. If you have not reported any hours for 3 years or more, we do ask you to re-take the class. If less than that, you can make up the years missed by performing 10 volunteer hours for each year not reported and 3 hours of educational credit for each year not reported—[next year, 2004, that is raised to 15 volunteer hours + 5 educational hours*]

*Note: This is still far below re-certification requirements for most other states.

The reason for this special notice is that I have met a few MSU Master Gardeners who have had special circumstances that have not allowed them to keep up with the required hours. If this is you, we will keep you on active status until your circumstances enable you to continue volunteering. Our concern is that you **stay in touch** as best you can so we know why we haven’t heard from you. You are an extremely important part of an invaluable asset to our county.

We need you among us! We are consistently receiving more and more requests for volunteers. However, in order to continue to receive the “Green Pages” and to be aware of those volunteer opportunities, you must be an “Active MSU Master Gardener.”

Reporting Hours

Should you be thinking “it doesn’t really matter if I report all of the hours I volunteer”, please think again! It does matter! With funding the way it is, we need to prove that our program is doing what we say it does. To quote our MG Manual-

“The goal of the MSU Master Gardener Volunteer Program is to bring about the use of research-based information to improve specific practices and technologies of home horticulture, urban pest management and resource conservation. Master Gardeners provide volunteer leadership and service to their community through a variety of gardening-related activities. They answer questions, diagnose plant/pest problems, and provide horticultural assistance by telephone, and in person. They work with youth gardening, create horticultural therapy programs, conduct demonstrations and help educate MSUE clients in a variety of other ways.”

If you are doing any of the above, we need for you to report your hours, even if they were years ago. Catch us up! It does make a difference to Michigan State University and to our Kent County Commissioners.

Plant a Row for the Hungry

Those of you who have been participating in the “Plant a Row for the Hungry” program, please keep track of the “poundage”; your nearest estimate. I would like for you to report your total to me at the end of the growing season. I trust you’re having no trouble finding the Second Harvest location on West River Drive; however, you may take your harvests to any local resource that is in need. Good continued growing!

E-Mail “hot-off-the-press” News

We are constantly receiving requests for volunteers at times that simply don’t work to get into our newsletter. We will be posting those opportunities on our “MSU MG Info-Station” outside the diagnostic center, but also will be sending those out via e-mail. There are occasionally other announcements that need to get to you in a timely manner. The most efficient way to at least disseminate the information is through that wonderful electronic medium—e-mail. So, if you haven’t received a “test message” from me within the past couple of weeks, send me your e-mail and you can also receive the notices. Those receiving the “Green Pages” via e-mail are already on the list.

A Question of Interest

One of our new MSU Master Gardeners came up with an interesting suggestion, and question regarding a new project. Recently, she and other friends helped a person suffering with cancer plant his spring garden. It was a joy to see him encouraged and joyful at seeing something done that he simply could no longer do for himself.

I'm thinking that this is a wonderful opportunity for MSU Master Gardeners to contribute to our community in a very meaningful way.

I will contact Gilda's House and our local Hospice Agencies to see if this is a service that might be needed

and that our MSU Master Gardeners could provide for this specific community.

The reason we would be working through another agency; hospice, or Gilda's House is that we would only want this to be done on a "referral" basis. Otherwise it could become an issue of simply providing "free labor" for anyone.

What we need to know is whether or not there is an interest in serving our community in this way. Please call Gordon 336-3283 if this is something you would be willing to do or if you

Gardening at the Voigt House, An Ongoing Master Gardening Project

Did your grandmother have a flower garden? Were there always bouquets of fresh flowers on her kitchen table? Do you remember her peonies, lilacs, iris, daffodils, roses, zinnias, marigolds, and asters? Well, some of these memories can be found growing at the Voigt House.

The Voigt House is located in the Heritage Hill area of Grand Rapids and was built in 1895. The Voigt family owned it until the early 1970's. Now part of the Public Museum of Grand Rapids, it is a living history of life at the turn of the last century. Volunteers staff the house and maintain the grounds and gardens and for at least ten years Master Gardeners have taken a major role in tending this lovely city garden.

The borders around the home are planted with shrubs and roses of varieties known to have existed in the early 1900's. Spirea, lilac, beauty bush and mock orange line the perimeters and require constant pruning, which is done each year. The annual beds change yearly and hold easy-care begonias, petunias, marigolds and other low maintenance plants. Although not heritage varieties, the plants represent what would have been available to gardeners in the 1900's. Ferns, daisies, asters, phlox and climbing roses along with peonies, bearded iris and poppies are in the perennial bed at the rear of the property. All these flowers are meant to enhance a visitor's tour of the Voigt House.

During the gardening season there are set sessions where Master Gardeners gather together to maintain this living museum. Each session lasts about two hours and occurs about every ten days on Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Sometimes Master Gardeners will work independently on specific projects. Spring and fall are when most of the intense work is done while general maintenance continues throughout the season.

We are always interested in new ideas and ways to enhance the role of the Voigt House garden as a testament to 1900's life in Grand Rapids. This is a rewarding way to give to our community in a lovely, peaceful setting. Please contact me if you would like more information on volunteering in the Voigt House garden or have ideas on turn-of-the-last-century gardening.

Marie Ambs
453-3098
marieambs@aol.com

[Marie has been working at the Voigt House since she took the MG class in 1994. She coordinates those who volunteer. We thank her for the article and for her many years of dedicated service to this worthwhile project.]

What is ploidy, you ask?

Written by our own, and very knowledgeable Jacki Kropf , Class of 1996

My interest in daylilies resulted in a rather large collection of plants and participation in regional and national events, often meeting with the hybridizers of these beauties. I decided to try my own hand at some backyard hybridizing and soon realized I needed some basic information on pollination and fertilization which included ploidy. We all garden without much thought to the chromosome count in the plants we are growing but the fertilization process can fail without such knowledge.

When you pollinate a flower you are taking the pollen or male genetic material from the anther and placing it on the stigma or female part of the flower. If fertilized, the pollen joins with the egg cells to ultimately result in an embryo or seed(s). Daylilies and other flowering plants come packaged with a genetic make up in their cells -a certain number of sets of chromosomes (the self replicating gene material) referred to as ploidy. There can be one set (haploid), two sets (diploid), three sets (triploid), four sets (tetraploid), and so on.

Chromosomes in a cell nucleus divide in half during sexual reproduction to form ova and pollen. When the set numbers of chromosomes in the egg and pollen are even, the sets match each other and fertilization can occur. Daylily chromosomes for instance come in sets of eleven. Cells of diploids contain twenty two chromosomes (two sets) and during the reproductive cycle the egg and pollen each contain eleven and join again to form the twenty two count organism. Species daylilies occur as diploids and triploids. The latter are generally sterile because with three sets of eleven, they divide unevenly and can't match up the genetic code. Tetraploids do not occur naturally but have been induced by a chemical process and many subsequently have been bred from these plants. New "tets" are frequently induced as well. They have four sets of chromosomes (forty four) and divide with twenty two in each egg and pollen cell. These counts don't match up with the diploid egg or pollen of eleven or the triploids, and are not compatible. The pollination will not result in fertilization. So you can see you need to know if your parent plants are dups, trips, or tets!

Plant characteristics such as color, size, height, bud count, fertility, etc are inherited through the genetic material. In tetraploids, because of the increased chromosome number, generally greater variation in characteristics is possible -larger size, larger leaves, flowers, and fruit, perhaps more vigorous growth and even resistance to environmental change. Regardless of which ploidy you work with, the fun comes in seeing the flowers and plants you have created. The fifty thousand or so registered daylilies to date all came about by people playing with pollen! Perhaps you would like to try your hand at creating never before seen flowers such as daylilies, iris, maybe even hosta or your other favorite. Generally the specific national plant society is a good place to start for basic information. Then your only problem will be where to plant all your beautiful seedlings!

Mystery Plant of the Month??



**My leaves are shiny green,
In the ditch or damp roadside I might be seen,
My flowers are spherical, and just for nutton
I'm cute as a button!**

The first two persons to identify this plant—species and common name-will win a set of our new note cards with photographs by our own Becky Finneran.

Call 336-3283 or e-mail griffing@msue.msu.edu.

2003 Garden Tour Report

from Judy Sink, MSU Jr. MG Coordinator

The 2003 Garden Tour Committee met for the first time on a cold, blustery day in February with hopes and dreams of a beautiful summer weekend for the tour. Over the next few months, we continued planning and working toward the weekend of August 9 and 10. Throughout an unusually cold and wet spring, we expressed our concerns for what summer would bring should it ever arrive and went forward with our plans.

When all was said and done the cold, wet spring worked in our favor. The gardens were lush and bursting with color. Some plants that would have been done blooming had the weather been "normal" were at their peak. The weather for the Tour could not have been more perfect even if we had been able to place a special order!

By 5:00 on Sunday afternoon the 11 tour gardens had welcomed almost 200 visitors, sharing with them the joys of gardening. Three of the sites had 200 or more visitors during the two days of the Tour. Several requested information on the Kent MSUE Master Gardener Program. Among the comments heard were "I can hardly wait until next year's tour"; "I have eight friends who just have to do the tour with me next year"; "I thought I learned a lot working for a local green industry family, but I learned more than ever before on this tour!" Other comments alluded to increasing the size or number of gardens at the homes of the visitors, or in some cases just beginning a flower garden for the first time! Visitors came from all over west Michigan, from Indiana, and from as far away as Arizona.

One couple from Kalamazoo was watching "Barnaby's World" on TV 8 on Saturday morning; and when the Tour "promo" came on looked at each other and said, "Let's go!" Unfortunately another couple came to the Extension Office to buy a ticket on Sunday only to find it closed. They waited for over an hour hoping someone would show up and sell them a ticket, but finally gave up and left. I spoke to them on Monday and assured them that we would take steps to ensure that this does not happen in the future.

We learned so much from this first Tour. There were aspects that are worth repeating another year, but also some problem areas that need to be changed or eliminated. It has truly been a successful learning experience for all, especially me! A big **THANK YOU** to all who helped with the 2003 Tour – the Committee (myself, Marilyn Goodson, Joyce Kebless, and Cindy McCoy), the hosts who so graciously opened their gardens, the volunteers who staffed the gardens, the volunteers who helped the hosts prepare the gardens, the photographers (watch for some of the photos at next year's awards and graduation dinner), and to all of you who bought tickets and brought your friends and family on the Tour!

Soon we will begin planning the Kent MSUE 2004 Master Gardener Garden Tour. If you would like to be involved, please call me at 336-2544. I will be happy to add your name to the list of those who are willing to help with next year's tour.

Coming Events

The R&R committee—"Retention & Recreation" or "Rest & Relaxation" - has come up with some monthly, well almost, activities to keep us busy. Just in case you're busy already, we'd just like to titilate you with some possibilities.

September 5—"Lunch & Learn" - Bring a dish and share a garden tip, book, or favorite garden tool. (RSVP please)

October—TBA— Fall Clean-up with Cindy Shell

October 10—All Day Willow Workshop with Bonnie Gale—We will create useful willow structures all day—More will be coming in your mail later this month. Cost will be about \$40 per session.

November—Becky & Marilyn will have an "English Tea" complete with tea and scones and share with us their trip to Ireland and England.

January—"Movie Night"

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Future Dates:

Lunch & Learn at MSUE offices	September 5
Niagara & Royal Botanic Gardens Trip	September 9-11
Gardening with Perennials	September 15—October 20
Backyard Habitat	September 20
Annual Kent/MSU Extension Plant Auction & Open House	September 23
October 10—Willow Workshop (More on that later)	October 10

Kent MSU Contacts—775 Ball N.E.—Grand Rapids, MI 49503

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