

March 1, 2004

Dear Master Gardeners:

Greetings! Thanks to all of you for your hard work and enthusiasm at last month's Home and Garden Show and the "Stuck on Gardening" Conference. Wasn't Allan Armitage terrific?

With spring almost upon us, the MSU Extension Horticulture Team is gearing up for 2004's workshops, classes, trips and fundraising. Oh – did I mention fundraising? Yes, believe it or not, the fundraising wheels are turning again and with good cause. At our recent "***Stuck on Gardening***" Conference, we introduced the beginnings of a new project that has long been a dream of Kent County MSU Master Gardeners. With the recent move to 775 Ball, the dream continues to grow into reality.

Earlier in 2003, we approached the Kent County Board of Commissioners with a request to use the empty lot adjacent to our new building as a trial and demonstration site. The thought would be to incorporate dozens of new perennials, annuals, woody plants and vines in a pleasing, manageable "back yard" setting. The Idea Garden will act as an outdoor laboratory for gardeners and become a pocket park for the neighborhood. Approval has been given and a team of volunteers is creating a design.

While building the dream will take loads of plant donations and physical labor, just like the Monet Garden in Muskegon County, building the infrastructure still requires cash donations. For this reason, we have launched a campaign to sell bricks, benches, trees and tables to help raise the money to start building. We hope to have a brochure in your mailbox in the next month to put your name on a brick or buy one for a beloved family member. We are also actively seeking corporate "Founding Partners" and would appreciate suggestions from any of you who know of someone who should be approached. In this economy, and with as many opportunities to give in this growing community, this may be a challenging task, but I think it is one we will all benefit from and enjoy for many years to come!

With summer vacation looming, your thoughts may be turning to travel. The 2004 Annual Study Trip is a BIGGY this year – ENGLAND AND IRELAND! Because of the complexity of this trip, we are using a travel company who has done many like it. You will be receiving a brochure directly from them in a few days, but I have detailed color itineraries that you may want to have also. Please contact me if you're interested.

Lastly, with all these study opportunities and growing numbers of active MSU Master Gardeners, Gordon's workload continues to escalate. I have noticed that some of your volunteer hours are coming in on everything from personal stationary to napkins. This creates "mega-work" for him and he is quietly, but painstakingly digesting them before they can be put into the computer. PLEASE-PLEASE-PLEASE use the form for reporting your hours and designate each time so they can be appropriately accounted for. It will help Gordon immensely and will save us money too! Thanks and keep up the good volunteering!

Sincerely,

Rebecca Finneran
Extension Horticulture Educator