

THE GREEN SCENE

Newsletter of the
MIDLAND COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION



Next meeting: Tuesday, June 15, 2006, 6:30PM. **!!!NOTE!!! NURSERY VISIT**
Location: Begick's Nursery, 5993 Westside Bay Road, Bay City

On June 13th we will be visiting Begick's, a family-owned nursery in the tri-city area that is a must-visit place for gardeners. They have a wonderful selection of plants, bushes and trees and like to think of themselves as cutting edge in their offerings, so our tour will include "what's new in 2006." When I needed a climber that would grow in the shade, I found my climbing hydrangea at Begick's. Lest you think they fold up in the winter, they have a pretty amazing gift shop with thematic Christmas ornaments and a section devoted to home-made wine and beer making supplies. We will be carpooling from the County building at 6 PM in order to get there at 6:30.

Driving directions from Midland: Turn south on to I-75 from U.S. 10 and get off at the Bay Road exit (the "Bay Valley exit.") At the top of the exit ramp turn left, cross back over the expressway and continue on toward Bay City, not the mall. On that side it's called Saginaw Road or M-84. Begick's is about a mile or two down the road on the right side.

Dear Friends

Enough already with the rain and cold - at least it is starting to warm up.

The Weed-a-thon at the Dow Gardens was fun - Lynda, Connie, Ginny (a trainee MG) and I had a good time pulling the Wild Garlic. There was so much - they need to have a few more of the weeding parties.

Joe Laforest is leaving the Gardens the first of June; he is moving to Georgia, we will miss his enthusiasm, knowledge and sense of humor. We wish him well.

Our visit to Ben's garden was fun, what a beautiful yard - Thank You Ben.

The June meeting is at Begicks - I'm sure we will all find something that our yard needs. Hope to see you there.

Sue Wilber, President

The Executive Committee meeting took place on June 6, 2006, 6:30pm, in the Extension Office.
All board meetings are open to members.

Midland County Master Gardener Association, Executive Committee:

Sue Wilber, President, 832-2792, e-mail: cswilber@yahoo.com

Cheryl Weeks-Rosten, Vice-President Programs, 631-5126, e-mail: jrosten@sbcglobal.net

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TERMITES IN THE MULCH; A New Urban Legend

The Mulch & Soil Council, (MSC) a nonprofit trade group of horticultural mulches, consumer potting soils, and commercial growing media producers, has released the following information about the subject:

An anonymous Internet message has appeared warning consumers about potentially termite-infested mulch from the cleanup after Hurricane Katrina. ...The council has been working for several years to create product certification standards for both mulch and soil. One of the conditions of certification is that not treated wood from construction and demolition can be ground for use as mulch. Only those products that meet this and other standards can use the official MSC Certification on their bags. Information on The MSC Certification program and a list of over 200 certified products is available on the MSC web site, www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org.

As for the possible infestation of mulch with Formosan subterranean termites, termite expert Dr. Dennis Ring of Louisiana State University explained that this termite was introduced into this country after WWII. The termite prefers a moist environment at approx. 57° (14C). According to experts, the practical survivability of a soft-bodied insect withstanding the violent environment inside the mulch grinding process or the high temperatures (130-160°) of mulch packages and pallet stacks is extremely unlikely.

Excerpt from an article published in Fine Gardening, July 2006.

BOTANICAL LATIN Pronunciation guide

Do you ever hesitate using botanical Latin because you aren't sure how names are pronounced? A good place to find guidance is the Fine Gardening magazine website. Located at: <http://www.taunton.com/finegardening/pages/spg017.asp>; a long list of botanical plant names and their pronunciation. Remember, most gardeners find their own way of pronouncing the sometimes difficult names, and no one (almost) will challenge your version.

REECE GARDEN WALK VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Master Gardener Volunteers are needed to assist with this upcoming event.

Two shifts available: 1 until 4 and 4 until 7 pm

Contact: Bvanslyck@chartermi.net to sign up.

All volunteers will receive a complimentary ticket to the event!

Stroll through some of Midland's finest gardens.

The Reece Endeavor Garden Walk is scheduled for Wednesday, July 19, 2006,

2 until 7 PM. Rain or Shine

Tickets: \$10.00 in advance, \$15.00 at the door

Sandy Clark
615 W. Main Street

Sandi Mohlmann
2911 Valley Drive

Margi and Scott Noesen
2006 Eastman Avenue

Ann and Gary Pasek
4305 Brambleridge

Ted Rezmer
3565 Julie Ann

Dow Gardens

Ticket locations: Dow Gardens

Coffee Chaos, Quick Reliable, Printing, Personal Expressions, Glover's Rexall Pharmacy, Village Green, Smith's Flowers

The Reece Community Living Endeavor is a non-profit organization

dedicated to providing housing for individuals with disabilities in

Midland County.

Additional information can be provided at 989.835.9700

See you in the gardens

Bernadette Van Slyck

PLANTS THAT CAUGHT MY EYE IN GUATEMALA

Due to an opportunity I have to go to Guatemala twice a year to help conduct teacher in-services for Mayan elementary teachers, I have spent a lot of time also taking note of what grows there. After all, when you plunk a gardener down in any new place, curiosity takes over. It's fun to see new-to-you plant life and intriguing to recognize familiar plant families in a new setting - in this case, right below Mexico.

Most of the flowering plants that have caught my eye in Guatemala grow wild. I see them out of a third world bus window, along the road out of Guatemala City that climbs up into the Highlands. In fact, when I brought along an old calendar showing formal gardens, to use as writing prompt to have them describe what they saw, my interpreter pointed out that plants arranged for balance, or variety of color or texture, was not a concept they could relate to. Plants just grow where the seeds fall. In the villages of rural Guatemala, nursery stock is unknown.

In a country that prides itself in having "eternal Spring," a year-round average temperature in the 70's, something is always in bloom. Impatiens are everywhere along the roadsides, like cornflowers here along the edges of our country roads. The poorest homes are often graced with the most beautiful bougainvillea vines and I never could get used to poinsettia trees.

The street-market flower sold most often in bouquets is the calla lily; a dozen velvety-white calla lilies make you stop and take notice.

Of course, other plants are cultivated as cash crops. I've seen fields of leatherleaf, the tough fern sprig you get in American bouquets, which grows in fields of shade induced by black netting "ceilings." The volcanic soil is also perfect for coffee production on large plantations. The red "cherries" that eventually are dried for the coffee bean within, grow on bushes that take about 7-10 years to mature. They too are shade loving and flourish under lacey-leafed trees imported from Australia. On the south coast, closer to sea level, fields of 8 foot sugar cane plants wave their tassels in the open sun.

Have you traveled somewhere where noticing the vegetation was part of the fun of the trip? Tell us about it in a future edition of "The Green Scene."

Cheryl Weeks-Rosten

NURSERIES WORTH A VISIT

Gina Pederson suggested it might be helpful to list a few of our favorite local nurseries. If your favorite place isn't mentioned, please let me know, and we'll post it next month. Don't forget to mention what you like about them, and what they sell.

Boehler's, Center Rd (at the very south end), Saginaw. Good selection in the greenhouse, good sized perennials at decent prices.

Abele Greenhouse, 3500 Wadsworth, Saginaw (close to M46 exit off I75). Tender perennials, bedding plants, great selection, great quality, prices average.

Van Ooteghem's, Center Rd, Essexville (a couple of miles past the Essexville shopping area). Bedding plants, tender perennials, lots of choice, good quality, good prices.

Kutchey's Greenhouse, Eastman Rd, north of the mall. Good selection of bedding plants, well-grown plants, excellent service.

Keit's Greenhouse, 1717 Euclid, Bay City. Well-grown plants, lots of choice. They carry annuals and perennials, a good selection of both.

And if you're prepared to spend a little more time on your plant shopping, a couple of places south are worth mentioning.

Telly's Nursery, Troy. Lots and lots of interesting annuals and tender perennials, good prices.

Bordine's, several locations in Detroit area, good choice of perennials, well-grown plants, but quite pricey.

Arrowhead Alpines, Fowlerville (east of East Lansing, off I96). Enormous mail order operation, nice demonstration garden, open to public on certain weekdays. Lots of alpines, lots of shrubs, lots of trees, a fair selection of more or less unusual evergreens, lots and lots of perennials. No pictures and no zones listed, ask for assistance when needed.

Finally, I went to the Cranbrook plant sale on May 15. It was well worth it, although we had to wait in line to get into the wildflower sales area. Very nice plants, reasonable prices, lots of choice, and lots of volunteers to help. They sell woodland wildflowers that have been rescued, as well as tropicals and garden perennials.

Britt

MULCHING

Several of our Extension educators report getting a number of calls and questions regarding landscape mulch; How much? What's the best mulch? And so on.

Over the past few years we've conducted a trial on several mulch types in replicated mini-landscapes at the MSU Horticulture Teaching and Research Center. The mulches we used were ground pine bark, hardwood bark, cypress mulch and ground pallets (the ubiquitous red mulch). We also included two treatments without mulch; either with or without weed control. The take-home message from the research is the properly applied mulch consistently improves soil moisture availability, weed control and plant growth compared to plots without mulch, even if the plots were kept weed free. Most of the mulches worked equally well. Plants in the cypress bark plots grew a little slower and had lower rates of photosynthesis than the other mulches, but were still ahead of the mulch-free plots. So the final decision on the choice of mulch for most homeowners and landscapers will come down to a matter of cost and aesthetics.

The advantages of organic mulches (improved soil properties, ease of application) usually outweigh the advantages of inorganic mulches such as river rock or white rock.

Two to three inches of mulch is adequate - more is not better.

Don't pile mulch around the base of trees (the dreaded mulch volcano) - keep a 6-inch mulch-free ring around trees.

Don't use uncomposted grass clippings or leaves as mulch - they will form a thick, smelly, unsightly mat that inhibits moisture and oxygen movement to plant roots.

Landscape Alert, May 2006, 2006

Quote of the Month:

Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity.

-Lindley Karstens, noproblemgarden.com

PLANTS TO SHARE

I am going to remove some wood poppies this summer, both the native *Stylophorum diphyllum* and the Asian counterpart, *S. lasiocarpum*. Both will reseed, so are best planted in a natural area. Both do well in dry shade, but the Asian wood poppy is probably the best choice for very dry conditions. This wood poppy is shorter, blooms later, and will keep flowering off and on through the summer. Let me know if you're interested, I'll pot them up and make them available for pickup.

Britt, 837-1644, blundbloom@hotmail.com

EDITOR'S NOTE

The second part of May turned into a mad scramble to get everything ready for planting. At first, too cold and too wet for too long, then, glorious spring came and went all too quickly. While I've been pondering my container plantings, the weeds grew in my garden, lush and strong, as if they knew I wouldn't notice. It's been a good year for ash seedlings; they're obviously planning to reforest this place all on their own.

Fellow Master Gardeners, Cheryl Weeks-Rosten went to Guatemala and came back with a story to share. I am inviting all of you to share your stories, of gardens, of plants, and of the people that grow them.

Britt

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Gina Pederson,

The deadline for articles for the next newsletter is June 18, 2006.

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