

The Grapevine

Bulletin of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association

November 2003 Volume 7, Issue 11

Martin advises moisture, mulch for fall plantings

MIDLAND – Fall offers another opportunity to plant and local nurseries make it economically sound, says Chuck Martin, curator of woody plants at Dow Gardens.

The longtime gardening expert will discuss “Winter Preparation: Putting the Garden to Bed” at this month’s meeting of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association.

“I’ll talk more about the physiology of plants, rather than the practical, because I think master gardeners know about that. You folks are more interested in plants so we’ll look at what happens when they’re going through the hardening off stage. I promise, I’ll make it interesting.”

Until then, Martin offered to share practical information on fall planting and cleanup.

“Economically it’s very cheap to plant in the fall because local nurseries don’t want to overwinter plants and trees,” he explained. “Plus, when the trees are dormant, they don’t need a lot of moisture.”

However, fall is not a good time to transplant magnolia trees because they have a succulent root system or nut trees that have a slow root initiative.

“I’m also not a big fan of planting evergreen trees now, but if you do, you have to

make sure they get enough water and that you protect them.

“When I think of winter, number one, I think of how winter can dry out a plant. Newly planted material must be watered sufficiently.

“I have to say the rains we’re having now are very timely. I was out planting today and I dug down six inches and it was dry the whole way,” Martin said.

“You also have to protect that newly planted material from the southwest sun and wind, otherwise you can get wind burn and maybe sun scald on the bark of trees.”

He said that’s why many gardeners erect barriers around rhodo-

dendrons in the fall.

“Another way to prevent winter loss is by mulching. The roots stop growing when the soil drops below 45 to 50 degrees depending on the species.”

“If you can keep the soil from freezing so soon, the roots will keep on growing and help that new plant or tree establish itself. Some 99 percent of roots continue to grow even after leaves drop off. It’s also why we plant bulbs in the fall, to get that root growth going.”

While many gardeners prefer to clean



Next meeting

- 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, **Nov. 19** – NOTE DATE CHANGE – at Andersen Enrichment Center, Ezra Rust Drive.
- 7 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Meeting
- 7:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. Refreshments
- 8 p.m. – 9 p.m. Chuck Martin, Dow Gardens curator of woody plants, discusses “Winter Preparation: Putting the Garden to Bed.”
- One-hour education credit earned

outdoor beds before the snow flies, Martin doesn’t see a benefit because there still will be cleanup in the spring.

“On the plus side, you’re getting rid of potential disease by removing dead material, as well as providing pest sanitation, but I think there’s an aesthetic that has to

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Sign up now for annual Christmas potluck Dec. 3

Sign up for the annual Christmas party at the Nov. 19 meeting by adding your name to the potluck dinner sheet.

The event is from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 3, at the Andersen Enrichment Center, Ezra Rust Drive with dinner at 7 p.m. and “surprise” entertainment at 8 p.m.

If you can’t make the meeting, email or call in your reservation by Nov. 19 to Shirley Oryczak at tmoakley@power-net.net or (989) 661-2619 or Joe and Kathy Leach at leachjo@svol.org or 781-3959. Seating is limited.

Those attending may choose to bring a main dish, salad, vegetable or dessert. The association provides coffee and punch, along

with cups, plates and plastic ware.

Members also are asked to bring a donation for Hidden Harvest – non-perishable food items, toiletries, paper products (napkins, toilet paper, paper towels, etc.) or checks, payable to Hidden Harvest.

Those who want to donate a door prize may bring it to the Nov. 19 meeting. Please include your name on your donation.

A centerpiece work session is planned for 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 2, at the Leach home, 1569 Thunderbird Drive. To help with centerpieces or donate materials, contact Kathy or Joe Leach.

Minutes of the October 22 meeting

The October meeting was called to order by President Judy Henning at 7 p.m. Oct. 22 at the Andersen Enrichment Center.

Gail Caird moved that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as published; Nancy Cotcamp seconded the motion.

Deb Keller read the treasurer's report:

Opening balance	\$4,992.55
Deposits	99.00
Expenses	0.00
Closing balance	\$5,091.55

As of 10/22/03, we have 163 paid members.

The November meeting was changed to Nov. 19 due to Thanksgiving. The newsletter deadline is Nov. 3

Angela Irwin, MG coordinator, sent her thanks to all who submitted their volunteer hours on time.

There are still two canvas tote bags

missing from the meeting at Darlene Damp's house in July.

Beth Bedtelyon has offered to come to the home of any member having trouble receiving the email version of the newsletter. Give her a call if you need help.

Lapeer County is offering a Gardening Education Seminar Nov. 1.

There will be a free Environmental Education Workshop Thursday, Nov. 13, at the Lapeer County Annex Building. (Registration deadline has passed.)

The by-laws were approved with just a few minor changes.

Henning extended a warm welcome to a visitor from Iosco County where they are forming a Master Gardener group and wanted to see how we run our meetings.

Irwin sent sign-up sheets for cleaning the atrium of the office and for the fall cleanup of the display garden.

Joe Leach announced there would be a

Christmas potluck planning session Wednesday, Oct. 29, at his home.

Gail Caird extended her thanks to the volunteers that made Make A Difference Day a success.

Ben Pawlik called for volunteers to help close the rose garden at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 22. It will take about three hours.

The Farm and Garden Association plans its annual greens sale for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, Nov. 24 at the Germania of Saginaw. It also includes peanut brittle for \$5 a pound.

Grey Gitzen said there will be a Junior Master Gardener class in Saginaw Township.

Following refreshments, speaker Pam Palechek discussed "Doubling Up Perennials," focusing on blending different textures and extending bloom time by careful selection of plants.

Submitted by Ellie Robertson, secretary

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Shade perennials topic of new book

"An Encyclopedia of Shade Perennials," by W. George Schmid, Timber Press, 2002, (374 pages, 120 additional photo pages).

The first 50 pages (Part 1) are the author's opinions and definition of shade.

Dirt, water, bugs, hardiness, plant use and garden design are worked in, so we know how to use the book.

Part 2 features "Perennials for the Shady Garden A-Z." Actually, there are no Ys or Zs.

Each genus begins with an introductory section, followed by species.

Schmid writes as if he is talking to the reader.

He notes what kind of soils each plant likes, the plant's habits, specific diseases it may incur along with how to recognize which bugs may infest it.

This information is the heart of the

book and contains personal experience and the kind of information you usually wish for but never find on nursery tags.

Finally, the book finishes with a list of 37 U. S. mail-order sources – one in Michigan, three in Wisconsin and two in Illinois plus an index.

The pictures and the text are not well coordinated, but I can forgive this because of the author's comments on plant habit nuances from 50 years experience.

Comments range from 7,000 species and 184 genera.

What clinched me on this book was the author's comments on Violets, with which I concur.

The book is a gem of practical plant information.

J. E. Fulkerson, Advanced Master Gardener

Book review

Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association mission statement

"Joining together as Master Gardeners, our mission is to promote our enthusiasm and knowledge of gardening by a wide variety of educational and volunteer activities in a spirit of fun and friendship."

Letter from the President

The fall cleanup of my garden is as good as it's going to get (maybe I should have waited to do my cleanup until after I heard this month's speaker).

There are a few things I failed to get done, but they are not crucial. I harvested a variety of seeds from my garden and I am looking forward to seed starting time.

I attended a meeting of a committee called the MSUE AoE (Area of Expertise) Advisory Group. The mission of the Ornamentals AoE is to provide leadership in research and education to foster the growth, economic viability and environmental stewardship of the Ornamental Plant Industries and to provide leadership and knowledge to Michigan citizens to improve the quality of life in their homes and communities.

Members of this group include people

from floriculture, turf, consumer horticulture and nursery/landscape.

I attended this meeting as a representative of the Master Gardener Program and Consumer Hort. I hope to give you a short report of this group at our Nov. 19 meeting.

Our By-Laws were approved at the October meeting. Thanks to all who took the time to read them and to come to the meeting and vote on them. I will have copies at the November meeting for those of you who did not get one.

Pam Palechek's presentation, "Doubling Up Perennials," was great. I was able to



gather some useful information from her presentation.

Our November speaker is Chuck Martin from Dow Gardens. Chuck will talk to us about "Putting Our Garden to Bed." Those of you who attended the MG Banquet will remember Chuck as our speaker. He is very knowledgeable and humorous.

The following was printed on the back of the State MG newsletter. Please keep this in mind when doing your volunteering:

"The 'master' in master gardener, doesn't mean you know everything about gardening, it means you volunteer your time, helping others grow.

Take care, get those gardens cleaned up, and Happy Thanksgiving.

Judy

Odds and Ends

You Made a Difference

Heartfelt thanks to the following Master Gardeners who volunteered for the Make A Difference Day project sponsored by the United Way and Saginaw County's Promise: Darlene Damp, Janet Martineau, Ben Pawlik, Nancy Cotcamp, Mary Ann Malek, Raeann Krauss, Debbie Keller and Dolores Hignite.

Thanks to you, we had a MG at every house. The response from the recipients was universal...they were overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of spirit from the teens and adults who gave their knowledge, time, and yes, plants, to truly make a difference in the lives of seniors in the community.

Thanks, *Gail Caird*

Notice from MG Coordinator

For the following reporting year I will no longer be able to accept hours you get from any other garden organization (Woman's Farm and Garden, Hosta Society, etc.)

I will accept hours from anyone who has already turned in hours, but they will not be accepted in the future.

I am sorry for the confusion.

Angela Irwin

A Big Thank You

I wish to thank Aileen Cowan and Dolores Hignite for helping me with the cleanup of the MSUE Display Garden.

They did not hesitate when asked to help.
Judy A. Henning

Volunteers needed for roses

Rosebeds will be covered at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 22, at Andersen Enrichment Center. Please bring a rake and shovel. We will also need a few wheelbarrows. Please call Ben Pawlik at 793-4238.

Get your pond winterized

"Getting Your Pond Ready for Winter" by Sue Speichert provides a handy list of how to proceed.

The information is on the Web at www.aquarticles.com/articles/ponds/Speichert_Winter.html.

Dow Gardens sponsors perennial, ash borer sessions

MIDLAND — A seminar Saturday, Feb. 28, focuses on perennial plants.

Topics include ornamental grasses; growing/maintaining perennials; new and under-used perennials; and perennials that have stood the test of time.

It is from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Mid-

land Center for the Arts, Garden Room.

Cost is \$40 for early registration. MGs receive four hours of MSUE education credit.

March 8, two Michigan State University experts discuss the emerald ash borer from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Center for the Arts.

The experts are Deborah McCullough, biology and research, and Ken Rauscher, tree identification.

To register, call (800) 362-4874.

**Next board meeting:
Tuesday, Dec. 2**

**Newsletter deadline:
Monday, Jan. 12**
Send submissions to
Darlene Damp, Editor
shrew@att.net

To view the monthly newsletter on the Web site, please go to:
www.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/saginaw

Please wear your name tag at the monthly meetings.

Saginaw Township offers Junior Master Gardener class in '04

A second Junior Master Gardener class begins early next year, through Saginaw Township Community Education.

Geared for 8- to 10-year-olds, the program includes eight two-hour sessions using a curriculum developed by Texas A & M University, said Grey Gitzen, advanced master gardener.

It focuses on teaching horticulture and helping youngsters develop an interest in gardening, while promoting volunteerism.

Sessions cover Plant Growth and Development; Soils and Water; Insects and Diseases; Landscape and Horticulture; Ecology and Environmental Horticulture; Fruits and Nuts; Vegetables and Herbs; and Life Skills/ Career Exploration/Volunteerism.

"We hope it piques their interest in gardening," said Gitzen, who is still seeking instructors for the upcoming sessions.

"In the first class the students were children or grandchildren of master gardeners. We're hoping this next class will not only be interested at this level, but to learn more later when the next course comes out for high school students. Later they could become master gardeners."

Besides reading the handbook and an-

swering questions, students spend most of the class period learning by doing.

"Like in the Soils and Water class, they built a volcano," Gitzen explained.

"And in the Insects and Diseases session, each was given a jar with a different scent and they had to find like species. It demonstrated how certain insects are attracted by different pheromones."

Advanced Master Gardner Elaine Rapley brought potted shrubs to the Landscape and Horticulture class and taught youngsters how to prune.

"With the Vegetable and Herb section, we taped off the floor and each one was a different plant. We demonstrated how you have to be careful where you plant things, like corn, so it doesn't shade the plants around it.

"With the Plant Growth and Development section, we planted beans in paper towels and had the kids take them home. Three weeks later they brought them back



and they had little tall, skinny bean plants growing in the paper towel."

The class will include up to 12 students, who are required to perform 10 hours of volunteer work.

The first class planted at Interlink, the runaway teen shelter.

"That was probably the neatest experience because here were these young kids, showing the high school kids who were staying there, how to plant. It was a revelation for the older kids who had never done that before and for the younger kids who couldn't understand how some of the girls could plant with those really long fingernails, all decorated up. Fortunately, we found some gloves."

The group also worked on the gazebo at Court and Michigan, the Saginaw Township playscape off Lawndale and planted the Master Gardener garden at the MSU Extension office downtown.

"There is a tie-in with 4-H and if we can get enough kids trained, they could have their own club," Gitzen said.

Those interested in volunteering may call Gitzen at 792-0615.

Saginaw Township Community Education is expected to designate a specific start-up date soon, he said.

Story by Darlene B. Damp

November speaker Chuck Martin continued...

(Continued from page 1)

be considered. Some plants have seed heads that make a wonderful winter show, like rudbeckia and the ornamental grasses.

"But that's what makes gardening so much fun, everyone does it differently."

At Dow Gardens, staffers clean up visible plant beds, "but plants survived many years before man's intervention – man just likes to have a hand in it."

For roses, Martin builds two-foot-tall cold frames with 2 by 4s and two-inch Styrofoam.

"I would rather not cut roses back until spring, but they have to fit in the frames," Martin said. "I tried to use one-inch Styrofoam, but we found they broke with heavy snows."

In Minnesota, rose growers dig up one side of the rose bush and then dig a trench on the other side. They tip the plant over and bury it with a carefully crafted formula of sand and soil.

"There are many ways to overwinter roses. My father puts a tomato cage around his and then packs straw inside. It works for him and he lives on Lake Michigan where they get lots of snow, although snow is a good insulator," Martin said.

"You just want to make sure they get air circulation and that they don't warm up so much on a sunny day that they start to bud.

"That's the problem with using those cones, not enough air circulation which could promote disease and the plants can get too warm."

Those who do choose foam rose cones

should cut 50-cent piece size holes in them to promote circulation and prevent overheating.

"Roses, because they come from the South, aren't like other Michigan plants. They don't really go into dormancy; they don't have to go through a certain amount of cold to start a new cycle."

Each year, Martin uses several volunteers to maintain the rose garden at Dow Gardens. SVMGA member Peggy Shaver has served as his right-hand for many years.

Next year, he plans to increase the number in the mentoring program.

For information, call Dow Gardens at (800) 362-4874.

Story by Darlene B. Damp, co-editor