

The Grapevine

Bulletin of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association

March 2004 Volume 8, Issue 3

Rock gardens rely on diversity for overall impact

ANN ARBOR — Tony Reznicek is responsible for 1.7 million plant specimens at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

But he doesn't have to worry about landscaping or watering the Herbarium collection — each specimen is dead, pressed and dried, used by researchers around the globe for study.

"The plant collection is the botanical equivalent of a zoological collection,"

explained the curator of vascular plants. He received an undergraduate degree in botany, then went on to study plant evolution and classification in graduate school at the University of Toronto.

While the care of the collection occupies his working hours, it is his hobby that members of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association will learn more about at the March meeting.

"Naturally, my gardening is done with a scientific background because I'm interested in more than just petal color and



Tony Reznicek, U-M Herbarium curator

appearance," Reznicek says.

"I'm interested in the evolutionary aspects of plants, in what makes hardy specimens, the bio-geographical aspects of plants. I have a lot of diversity in my garden."

While he collects Japanese and Chinese woody ornamentals, native Michigan species, understory plants and somewhat hardy succulents, his rock gardening provides the perfect setting for his urban home.

He and his wife became interested in rock gardens after she returned from the Arctic. She liked the types of plants suited for rock gardens, Reznicek says.

"Many years ago, rock gardening was very popular and continued to be very popular into the early 20th century, a hangover from Britain. They were frequently associated with large estates and botanical centers.

"But rock gardening waned during the Depression through World War II and then sort of got a bad name as those rocks were overgrown with creeping phlox and tall weeds."

However, today, rock gardening is highly adapted to small yards and gardeners with little time to spare on maintenance.

Next meeting:

- 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. Wednesday, March 24, at the Andersen Enrichment Center Ezra Rust Drive
- 7 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. business meeting
- 7:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. refreshments
- 8 p.m. – 9 p.m. Tony Reznicek, curator of the University of Michigan's Herbarium, will discuss "Rock Gardens."
- One-hour education credit earned

"I'm not saying they're no maintenance, but if done correctly, rock gardens can be less maintenance than other types of gardens," Reznicek says.

"I also think they're attractive for a much longer season.

"The impact, of course, depends on the setting."

Besides discussing how to get started, including basic principles and the types of plants to use, Reznicek will share where to obtain some of those plants. A slide show will accompany his talk, featuring many slides of his own garden, and plants that can be grown in Michigan.

"Rock gardens are about planting a lot of different plants," he explains.

(Continues on Page 2)

Upcoming programs for 2004

- 3/24 "Rock Gardening," by Tony Reznicek, U-M professor
- 4/28 "Longwood Gardens," Lynn Wiese, landscape designer
- 5/26 Garden tour and plant exchange at Grey Gitzen's home
- 6/23 Garden tour at Nancy Hales' Saginaw Township home
- 7/28 Garden tour at Janice Wazny's Merrill home
- 8/25 Garden tour at Ruth Sny's Saginaw Township home
- 9/22 "Native Landscaping Around Ponds," Matthew Dykstraw, MSU Extension
- 10/27 "Pruning," Jerry Somalski of Bay Landscaping, Essexville
- 11/17 "English Gardens" Peggy Shaver, AMG
- 12/8 Annual Christmas Potluck

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Minutes of the February 2004 meeting

President Judy Henning welcomed all Tuesday, Feb. 25, at the Andersen Enrichment Center.

Karen Tilden moved that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as published and Brian Ott seconded the motion.

Deb Keller gave the following Treasurer's report:

Balance:	\$4,480.19
Deposits through 2/25/04	1,586.00
Expenses through 2/25/04	256.78
Balance as of 2/25/04	\$5,809.41

As of 2/25/04, there were 94 paid members.

Shelly Beck of Habitat for Humanity discussed the possibility of Master Gardeners landscaping the homes volunteers will build in June.

Charles Severin, also of Habitat, told us of their ReStore Saginaw, which recycles cabinets, doors, windows and more for low-income restoration projects. For more information about the store, call 791-45981. For information about Habitat for Humanity, call 753-5200.

The 2004 budget was approved by unanimous vote.

Henning will head the Saginaw Children's Zoo Adopt-A-Garden project again this year and had a sign-up sheet for those who were interested.

Dorothy Bodeis placed order blanks for logo wear items on the table. She is seeking a replacement as chairman.

Michigan Gardener magazine will be available again this year, beginning in April. Only one copy is allowed per member. Leftover copies will go to Gardening for Gents.

Angela Irwin, MG Coordinator, discussed upcoming events:

Spring into Gardening - Saturday,

March 20, at Mount Pleasant, \$45.

Spring into Gardening, Saturday, March 20, at Kalamazoo, \$70.

Spring into Gardening, Saturday, March 27, at Ubly, \$30 in advance, \$40 after March 12.

Program Director Gail Caird organized four trough-making classes and had a sign-up sheet. (See Odds and Ends, Page 5.)

Caird also discussed plans for two field trips, one in May and the other in July. (See Bus Trips, Page 3)

The Midland Conservation District Sale is coming up. For a catalog call 687-9760.

Following refreshments, we were treated to a talk on "Plant Biotechnology" by Wayne Loescher of MSU.

He explained this process allows plant selection to be specific rather than random. It takes seven to nine generations to refine a change.

Members listened attentively and in absolute quiet to his very informative presentation.

Respectfully submitted by Ellie Robertson, secretary

Officers for 2003-04

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Rock gardens continued....

(Continues from Page 1)

"That diversity of plantings is what can make the difference in our environment, say like when you look at the ash borer disease in Michigan and the damage that is going to cause because people have planted so many of the same kind of trees."

The diversity of the Herbarium collection provides students with the sources they need to learn plant identification. Researchers rely on it to track plant evolution.

"In order to do that, you have to look at hundreds, even thousands, of species to understand what's going on. There is no way we could grow that many specimens at one time or travel that

much - it would be an insurmountable task.

"The Herbarium's collection allows you to do that quickly and easily. Any time you pick up an identification manual or guide to plants, whether it's a popular book or highly technical, you see the plants carefully named, all based on this kind of collection."

Michigan's forests, he says, are very young, although they may not seem so.

"When you think that ice covered this area 14,000 to 15,000 years ago - and that man cleared vast areas of woods here and brought in other species - our flora is still very dynamic," Reznicek says.

"But the stability we see in plants is an illusion, especially when you look over longer periods of time.

"The collection allows us to put a name on things, to see how vegetation coverings around the world developed from the past to today."

Story by Darlene B. Damp, co-editor

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

Yesterday the temperature was in the 50s, the crocus and snowdrops were starting to bloom, and the pussywillows were opening up (a little early, I think).

Today winter is back (ugh!), the temperature is 38, there are snow flurries, and the possibility of 1 to 3 inches of snow.

Well, whoever said Michigan weather was predictable?

Last year, if you recall, I put forth a challenge to see who could grow the tallest Castor Bean plant. I would start the seed, grow it until it was ready to be planted out in the garden, and the rest was up to the MGs who took up the challenge.

I had 27 participants and of those reporting back to me this is the final results: 1st Place, Ellie Robertson; 2nd Place, Mary Anne Malek; and 3rd Place, Shirley Oryczak.

I hope those of you who participated had fun growing your Castor Bean. Winners please contact me for your prize.

The Board is working hard to make

2004 a fun and growing year for the Association.

Gail Caird, as always, has been busy planning some hands-on trough making classes, bus field trips (including one to Saguaro Nursery to fill those troughs), and new things and adventures for us to share.

Shelly Beck, from Habitat for Humanity, was at our February meeting, to ask for our help in designing gardens at the homes their volunteers build in June. We would also plant the new beds in the fall.

We would talk with the homeowners and get their ideas as to what they would like blooming in their yards. It is a great opportunity for the Association to share our knowledge of gardening with members of our community.

I am hoping we can get a group of Master Gardeners together to grab a hold of this project and get it up and running. I will have



a sign-up sheet at the meeting. Please give some thought to volunteering for this project.

The Board has come up with a new and, we think, exciting project we would like to see happen in the fall. It will take many volunteers to make it happen.

I will give an overall view of the project at our March 24 meeting. I hope you will be there to hear about it, become as excited as we are, and volunteer to help make it successful.

As I looked out into the group at the last meeting, I saw many new faces and some that have been around for a while. But I couldn't put a name to them.

Try as I might, I still don't know who all of you are. So, please, **new, somewhat new and old members wear your name tags.**

See you at the March meeting with your name tag on.

Take care, stay warm, and think spring.

Judy

Sign up for bus trips to Ann Arbor, Marshall

Master Gardeners — and their friends and family members — can take one or both of the bus trips Program Director Gail Caird has lined up.

The first is Saturday, May 22, and features two tours and a shopping opportunity for those troughs members will make next month. (See Page 4.)

The bus leaves at 8 a.m. from Meijers on Tittabawassee to visit the Matthaei Botanical Gardens with its herb, rose, English border, international and wild-flower areas.

It also will stop at the University of Michigan Herbarium, where curator Tony Reznicek (this month's "Rock Gardens" speaker) will give members the rare opportunity to see the vast collection of plant specimens that form the underpinnings of plant naming and classification around the world.

Saguaro Nursery in Whitmore Lake is the last stop. The nursery is well known for its selection of alpine and rock garden plants.

It also features trees, shrubs and conifers, perennials, grasses, bamboos, ferns, heathers, roses, winter hardy water lilies, tropical water lilies and water hyacinths. Shop-

pers also may select succulents, orchids, bromeliads, carnivores and voodoo lilies.

The bus will return at 5 p.m. Cost is \$23.50, including the bus and entrance fee to Matthaei. Payment is due on sign-up.

Lunch will either be a sack lunch or on your own. There are no refunds.

Caird said if there aren't enough people to fill a bus, it could be a car trip.

The second bus trip is Saturday, July 10, to the annual Marshall Area Garden Club's "Welcome to My Garden" tour.

The bus leaves Meijers on Gratiot at 7:30

a.m. and heads to Marshall to visit six gardens, spending 20 to 30 minutes at each site. Some are located in the historic home district.

The bus will stop at Marshall's Garden Market, a "fabulous collection" of vendors dealing in plants and garden accessories, Caird says.

There also is an art fair going on the same day that bus trippers may visit.

The bus returns home at 5:30 p.m. Cost is \$28, including bus and garden tour fees. Payment is due at sign-up. There are no refunds.

Members may sign-up at the March meeting — be sure to have your check-books handy.

For information, call Caird at 793-1942 or e-mail her at sgcaird@hotmail.com.



Odds and ends

Trough-making classes still have spaces left

Spaces are still available in two trough-making classes this spring.

Two spaces remain in the 5:30 p.m. Friday, April 23, class at Grey Gitzen's home, 1400 Coolidge, Saginaw Township. Cost is \$7, due at sign-up. Gitzen and Bill Wegneer are the instructors.

Four slots remain in the 10 a.m. to noon session Saturday, April 24, at Aileen Cowan's house, 13505 W. Burt Road, Chesaning. Cost is \$6, due at sign-up. Cowan and Judy Henning are the instructors.

Participants in each class should bring rubber gloves to protect their hands from the ingredients used to make the planters.

Program coordinator Gail Caird says if more people sign up than there is space, additional classes will be offered.

A bus trip, set for May 22, will take members to Saguaro Nursery to shop for plants for their newly made troughs. (See related story, Page 3)

We need chairmen....

President Judy Henning is seeking leadership for the logowear sales project and the designing/planting project at this year's new Habitat for Humanity homes in fall.

Dorothy Bodeis is retiring from her work on the logo wear sales. The new chairman

receives service hours for work on the project. The logowear chairman selects the items, takes orders from members and delivers them at a meeting. The project usually runs over two months time.

The chairman for the Habitat for Humanity project will coordinate members to design and/or plant gardens with the help of the new homeowners at 14th and Hartsuff.

The project could involve one to four houses, depending on interest.

There will be a sign-up sheet at the March meeting. For information, contact Judy Henning, 799-4136.

Magazine exchange in April

Bring those garden magazines for an exchange next month.

Those who have current or near current magazines they no longer want may bring them to the April meeting to exchange with other members.

Members who bring magazines are asked to collect whatever is left so none are left at the Andersen Enrichment Center.

Project money available now

The SVMGA Adopt-A-Garden at the Saginaw Children's Zoo will receive \$200 in 2004 project funds to plant the two areas at the front entrance.

This year, SVMGA has \$3,000 available for 15 projects.

Applicants must fill out a Presentation/Project Material Funding Request form and return it to any board member for consideration.

Forms are available from Aileen Cowan, vice president.

The board will review requests and notify recipients of their awards.

Funds are allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Those who receive grants must track what they spend and keep receipts for a final accounting to the board.

For questions, please call Judy Henning at 799-4136, or Aileen Cowan at 865-8784.

Donations sought for baskets

Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association will sponsor two gift baskets for a drawing at the annual Summer Conference in June at MSU.

Each gift basket will contain a pair of leather gloves, two neck coolers and a magnetic notepad.

Members who have other items to place in the gift baskets – there should be at least two of each, one for each basket – may contact Judy Henning at judrich@juno.com or call 799-4136.

Farmer's Market sets opening day

The first day of the Saginaw Farmer's Market is Friday, May 28, or Flower Day, featuring the sale of annuals and perennials.

The market will be open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Operation will continue Wednesday, June 5, then every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, until the grand opening Saturday, July 10.

The new market hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Butterflies in Bloom opens

MIDLAND – Escape the winter blues and learn about butterflies during the annual Butterflies in Bloom event now at Dow Gardens.

The conservatory, open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. weekends now through Sunday, April 18, is filled with hundreds of colored butterflies.

There's also kids crafts in the barn from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekends, where children can make a butterfly mask, a finger puppet or a colored "stained glass" picture to hang in a window.

Or try "wing tours" from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesdays, March 17 and 31 and April 14, starting at the Visitor Center.

Saturday, March 20, artist Tim Drier creates glass butterflies from noon to 4 p.m.

A butterfly story time is set for 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, April 9, for children and their parents.

Participants will learn how to fold an origami (paper) butterfly. Cost is \$2. Please register by Friday, April 2.

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Welcome new members!

The following people are new members of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association:

Mari Zimmerman-Thompson, Freeland, MG trainee

Susan Smokoska, Saginaw, MG trainee

Les Tincknell, Saginaw,

There are 127 paid members.

SVMGA President Judy Henning sent a gentle reminder letter to delinquent members that March 1 was the deadline to renew your membership.

Those who have not paid their dues no longer have a membership and can not attend meetings.

Meet the Gardener....Anne Birkam

"I just can't do what Monet did," says this Master Gardener after spending a spring vacation in France.

"Wall to wall" irises in Monet's garden in Giverny thrilled Anne Birkam. Try as she might, she couldn't reproduce that spectacular scene.

European travel is not new to Anne. She traveled as much as she could during each break from her studies in German literature and history while in Freiburg, Germany. She took a year away from MSU where she received a bachelor of arts degree in social sciences and German.

She later completed a master's degree at Wayne State University, then took a year to work with VISTA — Volunteers in Service to America — in Atlanta, Ga., to assist problem youngsters with referral to agencies that could help them.

Though Anne grew up in the Detroit area, she has made her home in Saginaw. She is a librarian at the Hoyt Public Library.

Currently, she is reading "How to Be a Gardener," a new book at the library this season.

Says Anne, "You can always find a

good book, something is always coming in," or "I'll order it" Spoken like a true librarian!

When Anne talks of her duties at the library, especially her work teaching basic internet classes, she gets very excited about the vast information available with access to the database using one's library card number. This is a great resource for all, especially students — and you don't even have to leave home. The information is available any time.

Anne grew up with grandparents who owned a farm in Allen, MI. The couple grew a variety of crops, but Ann's favorite were the "real strawberries" with a taste like nothing else!

She could hardly wait to plant her own patch when in 1985 she bought her Saginaw home. Anne says she had much to do to the yard in the beginning and began by removing nine tree stumps.

She now has many newer trees, but is especially pleased with her 3-year-old "Bladder Nut Tree." It is native to Michigan and bears white flowers every spring.

Many perennials grace her yard, but she always makes room for a vegetable garden: tomatoes, potatoes, zucchini, cukes, let-

tuce, etc. Extras make their way to Hoyt Library where Anne shares in her abundance, but coworkers prefer her zucchini bread. She also enjoys an herb garden and uses them in cooking.

Since taking the Master Gardener class in 2000, Anne has spent her volunteer hours at the Saginaw Children's Zoo, Andersen Enrichment Center, Saginaw Art Museum and the Lions Park.

She has assisted in planning our last two Christmas parties and has been refreshment chairman for two years. She has been responsible for the coordination of those monthly treats at our meeting. Yea, Anne!

Her hobbies include cross-country skiing, roller blading and traveling. She has just returned from Florida where the Bougainvillea and Hibiscus were in full bloom and gorgeous.

She tries to spend time during the summer at her parent's home in Tawas.

Believe it or not, she does work 40 hours a week, every other Saturday, occasional Sundays and evenings! Says Anne, "I wish I had more room to plant!"

I think she means more time!

Story by Joan Martin

Spring croaks a warm welcome in three-part harmony of frogs, toads

Winter is almost over.

Look for the first spring wildflowers blooming — skunk cabbage and harbinger-of-spring — peeking out now, besides the usual crocuses.

And very soon, there will be the sound of spring — birds singing and frogs and toads calling for mates.

Yes, says Steve Allen, a wildlife biologist, frogs and toads.

"As we try to establish native landscapes, we expand the biodiversity of our yards and our community and this is who and what is coming to live there," Allen said at the recent Michigan Wildflower Conference in Lansing.

Twelve different types of frogs and toads make their home in Michigan and while some live in the water, others can be found in open grassy fields, the edge of ponds — even trees.

This month, you're likely to hear the wood frog, which is no bigger than your thumb, seeking his mate come night time, or the spring peeper, an even tinier frog that sounds just like his name implies.

And if that's not enough of a spring serenade for you, Allen says, the Western chorus frog joins the throng with his song which sounds just like a fingernail being rubbed over a plastic comb.

Next month, the Northern leopard frog introduces his snore-like call to the cacophony.

The pickerel frog chimes in with a croak that sounds like a thumb being rubbed over a balloon.

And by the end of the month, the American toad, with his trill, makes it a three-part harmony.

(Continues on Page 7)

Here's who to contact

Here's who to contact within the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association:

Aileen Cowan, if not receiving the newsletter, 865-8784

Nancy Cotcamp, member address or e-mail change, 797-3390

Gail Caird, program director, 793-1942

Wil Hufton, MSU Extension Office orientation, 758-2500, ext. 206

Jan O'Dell, mentor coordinator, 793-4357

Janet Martineau, historian, 790-7341

Anne Birkam, refreshment chairperson, 754-7090

Dorothy Bodeis, SVMGA clothing, 799-6086

Judy Henning, speakers bureau team, 799-4136

Peggy Shaver, MSUE Demonstration Garden planner, 695-5489

More odds and ends

(Continues from Page 4)

The event closes with an insect puppet show from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, April 18, at the Visitor Center. The show is tailored for kindergarten to second-grade students.

Herb Society meets

Garlic is the topic of this month's Herb Society of America, Frankenmuth Mid-Michigan Unit, on Wednesday, March 17, at Zehnder's restaurant.

The society also features its Garden Market Days on Saturday, May 15, and a Secret Gardens of Frankenmuth tour Sunday, June 27.

Computer training focuses on gardening resources

Learn how to scan the Internet for gardening resources in a computer training class offered at Hoyt Library, 505 Janes.

Master Gardener and reference librarian Anne Birkam will highlight the best of these resources during a hands-on workshop from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 20.

To register or for questions, call 755-0904. The workshop is sponsored by the Public Libraries of Saginaw.

More gardening resources

Master Gardener Coordinator Angela

Next board meeting:
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Wednesday, April 7

Newsletter deadline:
Monday, April 12

Send submissions to
Darlene Damp, Co-Editor
shrew@att.net
and
Beth Bedtelyon, Co-Editor
sisinc@charter.net

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

Irwin has found a gardening directory on the Internet you might like to try.

Simply type in <http://StringBikini.com/Gardening.htm> and a full array of information on gardening, including how to plant, tools, nurseries, seeds and bulbs, landscaping and trees is available at your fingertips.

Irwin warns not to forget to put Gardening in the search, otherwise you may see an array of bathing suits – and more.

Gardening Odyssey March 27

ST. CLAIR SHORES – The Yardeners of St. Clair Shores presents 2004 Garden Odyssey from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 27, at James Rodgers Elementary School, 21601 L'Anse, just south of 12 Mile Road.

Joe Derek, Farmington Hills naturalist, will discuss "Water Features for Any Size Garden" while Caroline Biribauer, Great Lakes regional director for the Wildlife Habitat Council, talks about "Backyard Conservation Practices and the Forgotten Pollinators."

Gretchen Mueller, a landscape designer for St. Clair Nursery in East China, will present "Design How-tos from Start to Finish."

There are vendors and the school's Athletic Club will sell food and drinks in the morning and at lunch.

Early registration is \$10; day of the event, \$12. Make checks or money orders payable to Joyce Janicki-Yardeners and send to Yardeners, care of Joyce Janicki, 33916 Jefferson, St. Clair Shores, MI 48082.

For information, call Sue Trupiano at (586) 727-3106.

Bluebird Festival in Jackson

JACKSON – The 20th annual Bluebird Festival and Wildlife Art Show is Saturday and Sunday, April 3-4, at Jackson Community College.

It is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 3 and noon to 5 p.m. April 4.

The show also features wildlife programs, live animal programs, juried nature and wildlife art show, conservation exhibits and booths, guided walks to bluebird habitat and Jackson area hotspots, a children's area and vendors.

There is a bluebird banquet at 6 p.m. April 3, costing \$20. Reservations are required by calling (517) 782-3453.

For information on the festival, go to www.dahlemcenter.org.

Native plant sale in May

KALAMAZOO – Kalamazoo Nature Center, 700 N. Westnedge Ave., hosts its semi-annual native plant sale in May at the Monica A. Evans Arboretum.

It is from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, May 21, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 22.

The sale includes more than 70 native Michigan plant species, including lupine, lobelias, coreopsis, trillium, liatris, sedges, ironweed, milkweeds, cupplant, sunflowers, ferns and grasses for prairie, woodland and wetland habitats.

To learn more about native landscaping, the center hosts a May 1 workshop, "Creating your Native Landscape."

For information, call (269) 381-1574 or visit www.naturecenter.org.



The Saginaw Conservation District hosts its annual tree sale at the Saginaw County Fairgrounds.

They are seeking volunteers to lend a hand with packaging and distribution of seedlings.

Volunteers will package seedlings from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 7, and 8 a.m. Thursday, April 8, until packaging is complete.

Distribution will be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, April 10.

Lunch and beverages will be served each day.

For information or to sign up, call Patricia Copes at 781-4077 ext. 4.

Gene bank seeks herbaceous ornamental seeds, plants

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ornamental Plant Germplasm Center at Ohio State University is collecting seeds or plant material from heirloom and related species.

First established in 2001, the center is the only USDA National Plant Germplasm System genebank specializing exclusively in herbaceous ornamental plants.

The center joins the system's network of some 25 other plant repositories around the United States to collect, conserve, evaluate and distribute the valuable crop germplasm.

All the seed lines collected are backed up at state-of-the-art long-term storage facilities of the USDA National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, Colo.

Currently the system has 450,000 accessions (seed lines) in its genebanks and only about 3,000 of them are herbaceous ornamental species.

"Without genebanks, genes that confer valuable traits, such as natural resistance to insects or diseases can be lost when our heirloom plants are replaced by newer, trendier varieties, or when natural habitats of the related wild species of our crops are destroyed by urban and rural development," explained Joanne Dole, an Ohio Master Gardener volunteer, who is assisting in the seed collection efforts.

"The preservation of flower germplasm has become even more important as concentrated breeding narrows the gene pool of many popular flowers by focusing mainly on aesthetics."

She says the Ornamental Plant Germplasm Center staff are responsible for not only maintaining the existing collection, but also for continuously building the collection, either through exchanges or plant-collecting expeditions.

They also generate new and improved techniques for long-term conservation.

"At this time, we are letting you know about our task in the hope that you will be able to assist us with our collection efforts," Dole says.

"Please refer to our Web site, <http://opgc.osu.edu>, to learn more about the project.

"Click on 'Priority Genera' on our Web site.

"In addition, if there are other significant heirloom, 'native' or non-hybrid plants for which you have seed or plant material, we would appreciate you letting me know so we may consider adding it to our collection."

Those who are interested in assisting Dole, may e-mail her at opgc@osu.edu or call (614) 292-1941.

Spring a real trill...

(Continues from Page 5)

In May the Fowler's toad wheezes his call in southwestern Michigan while Crop treefrogs begin their emergence and continue mating all summer long.

Don't be surprised to find treefrogs in a birdhouse or outside your window – with the suction-like pads on their toes, they're agile enough to end up anywhere.

Blanchard's cricket frog, found among duckweed cover around a pond, sounds like a baby sucking or steel marbles clicking together. His call continues all summer, too.

If green herons or water snakes don't get them, green frogs belt out a call that mimics a banjo being plucked.

Most of us won't see mink frogs, which live in the Upper Peninsula, but we may be amazed by the size of the bullfrog, some 10 inches in length. They are hunted for their delicious legs.

And it's probably their tadpoles you and your children have captured in ponds – since it takes them two years to grow to full size.

"Be young at heart," Allen says. "Learn your frogs and toads."

Make your own seed tapes

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- If you like the convenience of seed tapes but begrudge the cost, consider investing a little time instead of money and make your own.

"If you're buying garden seeds anyway, the only extra cost is a few paper towels and some flour paste," says Mary McLellan, Extension Master Gardener program coordinator at Michigan State University.

"A small investment of time gives you the ease of planting and perfect spacing with seed tapes at a lower cost."

Cut paper towels into strips about 3/4 inch wide. Make flour paste by mixing 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of flour with enough water to make a paste the consistency of heavy cream.

Check the seed packet for the recommended spacing for seeds and mark the paper towel strips accordingly. Place a drop of flour paste and a seed at each mark — this may be easier if you handle the seeds with tweezers — and then set the strips aside to dry before storing them in a jar or other container

that will keep them dry until planting time.

The short strips can be glued together, McLellan says, but long strips can be difficult to handle outdoors, so she recommends leaving them short.

At planting time, make a furrow at the appropriate planting depth (follow directions on the seed packet), lay the tapes in the furrow, and cover with soil.

"You don't have to worry about whether the seeds are on top," McLellan points out.

"The paste will dissolve and the paper disintegrates when they get wet, so it doesn't matter if the seeds end up beside or under the paper at planting time."

In the vegetable garden, seed tapes are especially handy for small-seeded crops such as beets, carrots, lettuce, radishes, parsnips, spinach and turnips.

Small seeds are difficult to space evenly, McLellan notes, and often require thinning later to achieve the appropriate spacing.

Seed tapes work well for small-seeded annual flowers and lightweight seeds such as marigolds.

Now, there's no more worry on a breezy day.