

The Grapevine

Bulletin of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association

October 2004 Volume 8, Issue 10

Talk to your plants — before it's too late

Jerry Somalski, the second generation to run Bay Landscaping in Essexville, may be zipping to a job site, but he still hears trees, plants and lawns screaming along his route.

"As gardeners we have to understand the language of plants and trees if we expect to keep them healthy and growing," he explained during a break at "An Autumn Affair for Gardeners" at Saginaw Valley State University, where he was a guest speaker.

"To do that we have to know how they grow, we have to read, go to classes like this, and yes, talk to our plants. By engaging in a conversation with them, we can learn what they need, what to use and when to help.

"Even when I'm driving 40 miles an hour I can hear them saying 'I've got a disease,' 'I need water,' 'I need pruning' — it's a matter of observing. And the more you look, the more you understand what's going on."

Somalski will discuss pruning at the

October session of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association.

"Pruning is probably the least understood aspects of gardening — and the most important. It's why you see all those boxes, balls and cones in front of houses — and where the Master Gardener can come in and say 'no, no, no.'



Jerry Somalski of Bay Landscaping answers questions following his session at the SVMGA fall gardening conference. He is the speaker for the October meeting

"I've done 60 talks in the Tri-Cities and I tell people 'You don't cut your perennials to pieces, why your shrubs?'

"Pruning gets you a plant at a manageable size while maintaining the same characteristics of why you bought it.

"Six months of the year, it's all you have to look at so why behead it? The winter habit is just as important as its flowers."

Part of the Master Gardener challenge, he said, is to disseminate information and raise the education standard of non-gardeners.

"The result not only beautifies your community, it improves the quality of life. Studies show that a stream in an urban area usually has far more chemical pollutants than anything farmers might add." (See related story, Page 5.)

Somalski, who has a business degree from Central Michigan University, picked up his technical background working alongside his dad in the family's nursery.

"It was too expensive to pay a baby sitter," he joked.

He's also attended numerous education sessions through professional associations, meetings and conferences.

"Bay Landscaping started out in 1948 installing lawns and shrubs," he said.

"Now we're a design and build

Next meeting

- 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct 27, at 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. Jerry Somalski from Bay Landscaping discusses "Pruning"
- 1 hour education credit earned

nursery and landscaping business that grows a lot of its own plant material. We do everything from garden design to putting in sidewalks, patios and pools, as well as plant material."

One thing gardeners lose sight of in their rush to get plants, he said, is the overall design of their yards.

"Yes, you can have a tremendous plant collection, but the design is not architecturally sound. It's like decorating your whole house with paperweights, quilts or lamps. Yes, you want to display them, but it's hard to appreciate the whole when that's all you have."

The key is developing a structure or design for your garden that functions with your lifestyle and looks good.

"It's like creating outdoor rooms with interesting views," said Somalski.

"Gardening today has taken on a higher level of importance, due in part to Master Gardeners, but the masses don't want to work that hard. They want us to install the photo and walk away, then don't understand why it all falls apart."

Cities like Frankenmuth and Midland, as well as Frankenmuth Mutual Insurance, have hired horticulturalists, he said, because they realize maintenance requires a higher level of expertise.

"Gardening in the Tri-Cities is five years behind large metropolitan areas and 10 years behind Europe.

"I think it will continue to grow in importance here, but it won't be

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Minutes of the September 2004 meeting

President Judy Henning welcomed everyone back to the Anderson Enrichment Center at the Sept. 22 meeting.

Bob Schust moved that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as published. Marilyn Karpicke seconded the motion.

Deb Keller read the treasurer's report:

Balance as of last treasurer's report: \$4,536.28
 Deposits 8/26/04 to 9/22/04 4,905.00
 Expenses 8/26/04 to 9/22/04 395.82
 Balance as of 9/22/04 \$9,045.46

As of 9/22/04, we have 161 paid members.

Henning thanked the 2005/2006 slate of officers for volunteering. Aileen

Cowan, vice president, and Henning will remain as non-voting board members.

With Jan O'Dell and Anne Birkam accepting board nominations, two volunteer opportunities opened up.

Beck Geidans volunteered for refreshments. The mentor position is still open.

The pond at the MSU Extension Office is no longer a MSUE-directed project. It has been suggested that it no longer be a pond, but be filled with plants instead.

Applications for the MG Coordinator position will be accepted until Oct. 1, 2004. The job involves six to eight hours work per week and pays \$9.05. Applications may be obtained at the office.

Henning had a sign-up sheet for volunteers to work with Ted Waters at the Veterans' Memorial Plaza on South Washington. Volunteers would plant mums for color and add mulch.

Kathy Leach was looking for volunteers to help with the Wednesday, Dec. 1, potluck.

Cowan read a thank you letter from the Saginaw County Parks Commission for all our work on the rail trail. There will be bulb planting at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 13, at the rail trail.

There are 122 people registered for our "Autumn Affair for Gardeners" conference.

Will Hufton reminded everyone of the CAT Alert, which urges Master

Gardeners and others to get their tetanus shot up-to-date.

Kathy Berger presented a sign-up sheet for volunteers to work at the Hemlock High School memorial garden.

Another "Make a Difference Day" is scheduled from 7:50 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 21, to help area residents clean up their yards. There is a sign-up sheet available.

Another volunteer opportunity is the Ring Garden from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 23, at the Saginaw Art Museum.

Patty Decker spoke of the Saginaw Children's Zoo clean-up from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 30.

Ruth Sny handled the raffle of a tool bucket, a book and a caddy for a tool bucket.

Shirley McNier presented a sample T-shirt and a sample of the proposed logo. The T-shirt cost will probably be \$9 and be navy blue in color.

Members voted to have the full name of Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association written out rather than just using the initials SVMGA.

Cowan told us of a chance to get shrubs from a local pumpkin farm. They will cost \$2 each. The group will go Sept. 27 and Oct. 7.

The business meeting adjourned and refreshments were shared by all.

Speaker Matthew Dykstra gave a slide presentation on "Native Landscaping Around Ponds."

Officers for 2004

President

Judy Henning 799-4136

Vice President

Aileen Cowan 865-8784

Secretary

Ellie Robertson 792-4356

Treasurer

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Program Director

Gail Caird 793-1942

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Gardening takes hard work, knowledge...

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universal... not until people learn to value what it takes to make a living at horticulture and what it takes to install and pay to maintain a garden. It takes a lot of work and knowledge."

Too many people, he said, expect more for less.

"Gardening requires hands-on work even with the advent of new plant varieties that are disease-free and perform better with little effort — unless you want to pay me to be your gardener," Somalski

said.

"I always wondered why janitors are in charge of landscape care."

Somalski is in the midst of creating his own garden for his wife Wanda and daughter Hannah, age 10.

"The house has had a lot of projects, like a leaky roof, but now we're beginning to make the garden a priority. We just completed the patio."

In his spare time, he enjoys sailing.

"You have to initiate the conversation with your plants," he reiterated.

Letter from the President

This month's letter starts with a thank you from the bottom of my heart.

It goes to those members who made "An Autumn Affair for Gardeners" a smashing success by working on a committee, attending the seminar, or both.

Without your commitment to the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association and your efforts for the seminar, it would not have succeeded.

I want to thank Aileen Cowan, who co-chaired the seminar with me, for her hard work and her humor that helped us get through the frustrating times.

We both left the seminar tired, but very satisfied with a job well done.

I hope you have taken advantage of the unseasonably warm weather to start or

complete your fall clean-up.

What you do now makes spring that much more enjoyable.

The early frost we had might have been the jump-start needed.

The morning after the frost I truly expected to pull my castor bean out, but it was still standing proud at 9 feet, 6 inches tall.

We have a new Master Gardener Coordinator.

One of our members, Mary Lysogorski, from Bridgeport, will fill the spot formerly held by Angela Irwin.



There is no doubt in my mind that Mary will do a great job and be an asset to the Master Gardener Program.

Please give Mary a warm congratulations when you see her.

We will be officially voting for the new Board at our October meeting.

Jerry Somalski is our speaker. He is a great source of information on pruning and he gives that information to us with humor.

He was a great hit at the seminar when he talked about turf management.

Take care — and get out for a drive and enjoy those autumn colors.

Judy

Hours for recertification due Dec. 31

It's not too soon to start compiling your hours for recertification as Master Gardeners for 2005.

Due to the change in the state MG calendar year, Master Gardeners have until Dec. 31, 2004, to submit their required 15 volunteer hours and 5 education hours — along with any additional hours they have compiled.

The amount of hours required for volunteer work and education increased this year.

Program Director Gail Caird says that it is extremely important hours be turned in by the December deadline because approving and recording the data is a huge task and several year-end reports are held up until all the data is in.

Recording the data is done by Master Gardener volunteers, not MSUE staff, so please do not add to their workload by putting off turning in your hours.

Forms for turning in hours were mailed with your recertification cards this year.

If you did not receive one, forms are available at the MSUE office, 1 Tuscola.

Recertification is required for membership in SVMGA.

Please write or print clearly.

It is NOT necessary to write down each individual day if you are involved in an ongoing project.

Simply write the start date, what you did, and the TOTAL number of hours spent on the project.

For example, you might write, "5/5/04 Adopt-a-Garden at Children's Zoo, planting, weeding, watering, answering questions, total hours: 50."

Here is the list of education hours from the SVMGA meetings this year.

Please include the date, the title, the speaker and the education credit hour for each session attended.

10/22/03 – "Doubling Up Perennials," Pam Palechek, 1 hour.

11/19/03 – "Winter Preparation: Putting the Garden to Bed," Chuck Martin, 1 hour.

1/28/04 – "Iris," Peggy Shaver, 1 hour.

2/25/04 – "Plant Biotechnology," Wayne Loescher, 1 hour.

3/24/04 – "Rock Gardens," Tony Reznicek, 1 hour.

4/28/04 – "Longwood Gardens," Lynn Wiese, 1 hour.

5/22/04 – University of Michigan Herbarium and Tony Reznicek's garden, 2 hours.

9/22/04 – "Native Landscaping Around Ponds," Matthew Dykstra, 1 hour.

10/2/04 – "An Autumn Affair for Gardeners" seminar; Frederick Case,

Grey Gitzen, Peggy Shaver and Jerry Somalski; 4 hours

10/27/04 – "Pruning," Jerry Somalski, 1 hour.

11/17/04 – "English Gardens," Peggy Shaver, 1 hour.

Also, if you went to the MSU Summer Conference June 21-23, it counts as 25 education hours.

Hours may be mailed in or dropped off at the MSUE office downtown.

Next board meeting:
**9:30 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 3,
at MSU Extension office**

Newsletter deadline:
Monday, Nov. 1

Send submissions to
**Darlene Damp, Co-Editor
shrew@att.net**

or
**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**

Odds and Ends

Clean-up volunteers needed at Children's Zoo

The annual fall garden clean-up at the Saginaw Children's Zoo, Celebration Square, is set for 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 30.

In addition to the routine fall garden bed maintenance, volunteers will cut back ornamental grasses, prune bushes and move some shrubs.

Volunteer hours in the zoo gardens are MSU Extension-approved for trainees.

Certified Master Gardeners this is a great opportunity to complete your volunteer hours before the end of the year!

So bring your garden gloves, pruning tools and a can-do attitude.

Refreshments will be served in the morning. If you have any questions, please call Patti Decker at 792-6633.

Lysogorski new MG Coordinator

Mary Lysogorski, a Master Gardener, is the new Master Gardener Coordinator at the Michigan State University Extension office, 1 Tuscola.

The Bridgeport resident is scheduled to start Monday, Oct. 18.

Volunteer opportunity awaits

The Saginaw Art Museum is in need of several volunteers to help with their Ring Garden fall clean-up.

It is from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 23, at the museum, 1126 N. Michigan. For information, call Shelley Whitehead at (989) 892-0179.

Thank you Master Gardeners

Dear Ms. Cowan:

On behalf of the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, I would like to thank you for your group's recent volunteer efforts along the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail.

The work that was done and the items that were planted along several areas of the trail are a nice addition to the existing landscape.

Thanks again for member donations and efforts in beautifying the trail. Your assistance is greatly appreciated and we look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,
Saginaw County Parks and Recreation
Commission

Daren Kaschinske, assistant director

Here's a planting tip

Advanced Master Gardener Judy Ross doesn't have to leave it to memory when it comes to where she planted seeds in her garden.

She corrals like seeds in a small circle



Participants at "An Autumn Affair for Gardeners" listen as Grey Gitzen outlines the bulb sale. They bought every package — and ordered more.

defined by the tops of gallon planting containers she trims off in two- to three-inch widths.

Once the plants are ready to be transplanted, there's no question what the tiny seedlings are.

Christmas potluck needs help

Only one person signed up to help with the annual Christmas potluck on Wednesday, Dec. 1, at the Andersen Enrichment Center on Ezra Rust Drive.

If you're interested, contact Angela Irwin, 777-7947, or Joe and Kathy Leach at 781-3959 or leachjo@svol.org.

Web site examines landscape issues

Jerry Somalski from Bay Landscaping in Essexville suggests Master Gardeners looking for current information on landscape issues try www.ipm.msu.edu/landCAT.htm.

The site provides up-to-date answers on pests, lawns, plant material and more.

Junior MG program begins

A new Junior Master Gardener program for third- to fifth-graders begins Thursday, Jan. 27, at Hemmeter Elementary School in Saginaw Township.

It offers horticulture and environmental education through fun and creative

activities.

After completion of classroom activities, students become certified Michigan Junior Master Gardeners by completing community volunteer service.

The sessions run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursdays, Jan. 27 to March 17 and cost \$60. Textbook and materials are included in the fee.

To register, send your name, address, telephone number and payment to STCS Community Education, P.O. Box 6278, Saginaw, MI 48608 or call 797-1847.

Winterize rose beds at Andersen Center

Despite an attack by some hungry mice during the winter and a couple of rabbits in the spring, which were a "kick in the plants," there was an exceptional show of color at the Rose Garden this summer.

I want to again thank all volunteers who winterize the beds and uncover in the spring. These are big and important tasks.

Monday, Nov 20, is the date the rose beds at the Andersen Enrichment Center, 120 Ezra Rust, will be mounded with compost and covered with leaves.

Please bring a rake and a shovel. Several wheelbarrows and tarps also will be needed. A sign-up sheet will be available at the October meeting.

Thank you very "mulch."

Ben Pawlik, 793-4238

Selecting healthy bulbs

Grey Gitzen offered these tips at the fall gardening conference for purchasing healthy bulbs:

- If you buy at a store, look for the largest bulbs available. They will have the greatest food reserves, and produce more flowers of a larger size.

- Select plump, firm bulbs. The bottom of the bulb should be hard.

- The brown paper covering around the bulb is called a tunic.

It is alright to buy a bulb if the tunic is missing or flaking, but discard bulbs with bruises or other damage to their tips or bases.

- Completely dormant bulbs will establish the best, so buy bulbs that show no signs of root or shoot growth.

Meet the Master Gardener...Brian Ott

This one time "copy boy" for a well known law firm has snorkeled in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

He is an avid MSU football fan, an Indy 500 attendee and a runner in Indy's annual 13-mile run. Yet he feels gardening is an important form of relaxation for him.

Brian Ott was born and raised in Saginaw with two siblings and graduated from Arthur Hill High School.

He was a co-op student in the law firm where he currently is employed as its systems administrator/legal assistant.

The firm specializes in asbestos litigation with some medical malpractice cases and a few lead cases as well.

Brian works on the client data base and research. Although Brian attended Great Lakes for accounting, he stayed on at the law firm and worked his way up to his current position....that was 20 years ago!

As a kid, Brian remembers eating green beans and cucumbers right off the vine in his parents' garden.

His interest in gardening wasn't spurred until he bought his first house and got tired of looking at a yard full of yews.

Together with his Aunt Charlotte, he "took the class" in 1997 because he needed to know how to replace those yews that he ripped out.

It didn't take long for him to become involved in SVMGA. Shortly after doing the newsletter mailing, Brian became the editor of "The Grapevine."

His many volunteer hours with the MSU display garden, the calendar fundraiser, Saginaw Art Museum gardens, Saginaw Children's Zoo, Horticultural Society, and adopt-a-garden, 1-75 rest area and the committee for the inaugural Saginaw gardening conference have earned him Advanced Master Gardener status.

By 2001, he sought a home with more room, inside and out. Challenged by the many trees (26 ash trees in his back yard

alone) he opened up the areas under the trees creating four large flower beds.

The trees in the front yard had water flowing through so he developed a gully where iris grow.

Brian says, "There is a water feature somewhere in my future!"

While touring New Zealand and Australia in July 1999 (their winter) he was amazed at the palm trees, banyans and Calla lilies in 40-degree weather.

After viewing the "lushness of Australia," Brian is looking forward to the tropical paradise he will visit in November and December when he travels with family and friends to Hawaii, including Kauai, the garden isle!

There will be a family wedding and oh, an MSU - University of Hawaii football game and some snorkeling. He may just find a car race there too, to cover all of his bases.

Aloha, Brian!

Story by Joan Martin

How environmentally responsible are you?

How environmentally responsible are you when it comes to taking care of your lawn?

The National Gardening Association has published the 2004 *Environmental Lawn and Garden Survey*, a ground-breaking report detailing how environmentally responsible consumers are when it comes to caring for their lawns and gardens.

Sponsored by Organic Gardening magazine with support from the Lawns and the Environment Initiative, the association takes an in-depth look at consumers' lawn and landscape practices.

The survey is based on research conducted by Harris Interactive in July 2004 using a representative sample of more than 2,000 households nationwide.

Topics addressed include how big the market for all-natural lawn and garden products is compared to conventional fertilizers and pesticides; who the environmentally-responsible consumer is and how many there are in the U.S.; what lawn and garden activities are most popular; why people use organic gardening methods

and why they don't; and how the use of all-natural, organic gardening methods will increase in the future.

The report also rates how well U.S. consumers are doing based on their participation in environmentally responsible lawn and garden practices.

Bruce Butterfield, association research director, reports, "A majority of U.S. households followed only 3 out of 12 recommended environmentally friendly lawn and garden practices.

"Less than half of all households followed the remaining nine simple environmentally friendly practices."

"It's clear homeowners make choices when caring for their lawns and gardens that have an impact on the environment," says Scott Meyer, Editor of Organic Gardening.

"With just a little information and, in fact, less effort, everybody could have a lawn that's both lush and eco-friendly."

Responses to the 2004 survey show:

- Some 67% of those surveyed keep their yard safe, clean, and well maintained to add beauty to their home and neighborhood.

- 65% water their lawns and plants only when they need it and use water wisely.

- 53% read and follow the label carefully when using pesticides and fertilizers.

- 45% leave grass clippings in place on their lawn.

- 43% keep fertilizer, pesticides, and yard and pet waste out of water sources and off pavement.

- 42% choose and use the right plants in the right spot for their climate, sun/shade, soil, and rainfall.

- 42% apply mulch around trees, shrubs, or garden areas.

- 39% cut their lawns at the highest recommended mower setting.

- 32% identify lawn and garden problems, and research appropriate control methods before using insect or