

# The Grapevine

Bulletin of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association

November 2007 Volume 11, Issue 11

## Sign up by November meeting for Christmas potluck

The November meeting is your last bid to sign up for the annual Christmas potluck, set for Tuesday, Dec. 4. If you can't make the meeting, call Ruth Snyder by Nov. 28, at 928-7315.

Members may each bring one adult guest to the party, which features food, door prizes, and entertainment, including Lynn Kauer and his puppet friend Ollie.

Snyder is asking participants to arrive by



6 p.m. to place food on the buffet tables at the First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, 121 S. Harrison, off Court.

Please use the Webster Street entrance and parking lot. An elevator is available for those who need it.

The party begins at 6:45 p.m. Dress is Christmas casual. Reservations are required.

Snyder is asking those who sign up to indicate what dish they will bring — main dish, vegetable, salad, dessert, bread or help with the punch.

"We have a lot of desserts and some members are bringing a ham and I'm making turkey so what we really need now are veggies," Snyder says.

SVMGA will collect canned food and checks for Hidden Harvest in Saginaw.

"We've got 80 people so far but we can accommodate 200. That's why we moved it to the church hall," Snyder says.

## Fascination with ferns leads to family business

OWOSSO — A pair of social workers were trying to find a niche market to make some extra money.

So Ned Bromley and his wife looked at what they liked to do in their spare time and decided it had to involve gardening.

Their efforts began with cut flowers, wholesaling them for a friend.

But for the last seven years they turned to a retail business, selling hardy ferns, aquatic plants and ornamental grasses at their 1889 farm home at Riverby Gardens, 3887 N. M-52 Road, four miles north of Owosso.

"We've been married for 34 years and



Ned Bromley, owner of Riverby Gardens

even before we were married we gardened together," Bromley explains.

"We live on the Shiawassee River and it was my own fascination with ferns that got me started on that. There was nowhere locally to buy them."

He'll share his interest in ferns with SVMGA members at the November meeting, complete with a Power Point presentation and hand-outs.

Bromley may even bring some evergreen ferns for the monthly drawing.

"I live in soybean country so there's not really the interest in ferns here, but the more I've learned about them, the more fascinating they are," Bromley says.

"Just the botany of them — a mature fern produces spores, that once fertilized grow into gamophytes and those plants need to be fertilized before they can become ferns."

Some are deciduous, others evergreen, and they come in a range of colors and textures.

Besides a little information on fern botany, Bromley discusses the needs, care and types of ferns.

"There are foundation ferns, some that

### Next meeting

- 7 p.m. — 9 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 28, at the Andersen Enrichment Center, Ezra Rust and Fordney
- 7 p.m. — 7:30 p.m., business meeting
- 7:30 p.m. — 8 p.m., refreshments
- 8 p.m. — 9 p.m., Ned Bromley of Riverby Gardens, in Owosso, details "Glorious Ferns"
- **Please wear your badge.**

spread quickly and those that don't. Plus I'll talk a little about plants to accompany ferns.

"There are a large variety of ferns that are fully hardy. I think once you understand the structure and how a plant grows, you appreciate it much better."

Bromley is a school administrator for the Shiawassee Regional Education Service District, which provides special education support services.

He has education and social work degrees from Traverse City Junior College, Northern Michigan University and Michigan State University.

He's also provided aquatic gardening classes for Master Gardener classes.

### Inside this issue:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <i>October minutes</i>                 | 2   |
| <i>President's Letter</i>              | 3   |
| <i>Learn about giant sequoias</i>      | 3   |
| <i>Odds and ends</i>                   | 4,5 |
| <i>Re-certification deadline looms</i> | 5   |
| <i>2008 schedule of events</i>         | 6   |

(Continues on Page 5)

# Minutes of October 24, 2007 meeting

Susan Scott welcomed 103 members to the Anderson Enrichment Center.

Pat Yockey moved approval of the September 2007 meeting minutes. Crystal Kauer seconded the motion; motion carried.

Kauer read the treasurer's report. Waunita Pettiford moved approval of the treasurer's report; Sheila Hempsted seconded the motion; and the motion carried.

Judy Henning said the fall seminar was a success. Attendance was down but the seminar financially broke even. Attendees gave the seminar an overall rating of 5 on the exit survey, based on the 98% percent who turned them in.

Vendors said sales were low, but blamed it on Michigan's economy.

Henning had books available for sale from the seminar in the back room.

She also asked members if they want to continue the seminar next year. Grey Gitzen moved to sponsor a seminar next year; the motion was seconded by several people and carried.

Henning detailed the annual greens sale Nov. 19, hosted by the Saginaw Branch of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association at the Germania Club.

Ruth Sny had sign-up sheets for attending and bringing a dish to the Christmas potluck plus another for the planning committee.

Scott asked for volunteers to close the Andersen Rose Garden on Nov. 17.

She also had a bag of tiger lily bulbs up for grabs at the front table.

Shirley McNier had logo wear for members who ordered it. While she was still accepting orders for November delivery, she said some items were not available. Those members' checks will be refunded.

Gloria Schuler asked for flat bottom wicker or rattan baskets and cans of spray paint for an upcoming fund-raising project. Drop them off at Grand Voyages travel agency, across from the mall. She hopes the first event be at the Women's Expo at SVSU.

Scott presented the following issues for discussion:

- Should SVMGA sponsor a spring bulb sale? Kauer moved to conduct another sale; Pettiford seconded it; motion carried.
- Should spring bulb sale profits go to the Saginaw County Master Gardener Program? Henning moved that profits go to the program; Sheila Hempsted seconded it; motion carried.
- Scott asked for a committee to han-

dle bulb selection, packaging and sales.

- Should SVMGA have it own web site? It was tabled due to lack of membership response.

- Should dues increase to cover increased costs? Bill Wegner moved to raise dues to \$30 per year; Pettiford seconded it. Motion carried 43 to 42.

Scott asked for a new refreshment committee chair — and more members to volunteer to bring treats. Members also discussed the need for this socializing break, and its time slot in the monthly meeting.

Gitzen had bulbs for sale from the fall seminar. He also said the Master Gardener class will increase in cost to \$225.

Thanks to Home Depot for donating the yard rake; Aileen Cowan, the nine-bark shrub; Cowan and Henning, the Two Sisters gourmet bread mix. Donors were not identified for the scented candle, strawberry pot with 'hens and chicks', and the candle in a ceramic pot.

The respective winners were: Robert Gubbins, Bob Sawyers, Gitzen, Helen Weitzman and Bonnie Dutcher. The winner of the last item listed above was not identified.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Joel Miller, nursery manager at Goldner Walsh Nursery. He gave an informative and visually pleasing presentation about "Freaks, Witches Brooms and Chimeras in Michigan's Landscape."

*Submitted by Melva Bond, secretary*

## Officers for 2007-08

*President*

Susan Scott 791-9270

*Vice President*

Karen Tilden 777-6673

*Secretary*

Melva Bond 777-4092

*Treasurer*

Crystal Kauer 792-6874

*Program Director*

Mary Andrews 797-3319

*Newsletter Editor*

Darlene Damp 746-9113

**MSU Extension**

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Saginaw, MI 48607-1287

*Master Gardener Coordinator*

Nancy L. Burd, 758-2504  
burd@msu.edu

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## Virus X makes hosta clean-up in fall mandatory

Don't forget to cut back and clean up those hosta plants, says member Grey Gitzen.

Cases of Virus X, a highly contagious disease, have been reported here.

It attacks the leaf, traveling up the leaf in between the ribs. If leaves are left on

the ground and the plant is infected, the virus could go into the ground, Grey says. He recommends destroying all virus X-infected plants.

For more information, visit [www.hostalibrary.org](http://www.hostalibrary.org). It not only details virus X, but helps identify all hosta plants.

## 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

Although it did so begrudgingly, summer seems to have departed until next year.

How are your yards looking? I have mine almost cleared up and am waiting for some trees to finish. I have a big sycamore in the front yard and it is always the last to finish.

A couple of years ago I undertook a complete re-do of my front landscaping. Because my feeling is that you can never have enough grasses, I planted a row of them by my parking area. Well, this year they reached their full potential.

The thing I did not consciously think about when planting them was the huge amount of enjoyment they would give me this fall. With all our windy days, they are such a pleasure to watch as they toss and turn in the wind.

I sit at my kitchen table and watch them and my bird feeders. If I am not

careful, things will remain undone as I enjoy them.

While I have other grasses I love, these are the easiest to see from the house.

Remember that the Christmas potluck is Tuesday, Dec. 4, and we have lots of room so I hope to see most of you there. Please call Ruth Sny or sign up at the November meeting.

I look forward to all the good companions and good food to be found at these gatherings.

My only complaint is my stomach is too small to sample everything and so usually is my plate. Our group has to have the best cooks around.

For those who didn't attend the last meeting, a vote was taken and member-



ship dues, starting in 2008, increase to \$30 per member. However, we neglected to vote on an increase for family memberships, traditionally a reduced amount for couples. We will vote on this at the November meeting.

**Calling all Master Gardeners!** We need 2 people to lead some committees. The first is the refreshment chair. Becky Giedans has done a wonderful job for a very long time and now we need someone new to step up.

The chair makes a sign-up sheet available at meetings, calls prior to the meetings to remind volunteers of their commitment, buys supplies as needed, assists in setting up the table and making coffee and possibly helps serve.

We also need one or more people to make selections for the spring bulb sale to benefit the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Program.

I have requested a list of the bulbs from the vendor and should have that available soon. This is a very easy job.

Please let me know if you are interested. E-mail SuHunSco@aol.com or call me at 791-9270.

Toodles,  
Susan

## Wegner reviews new book on sequoias

**“The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring,”** by Richard Preston, 320pp, Random House. Published April 2007.

The cool, moist coastal area of northern California is the backdrop for the events in this exciting, true story.

Old-growth California redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) thrive in the temperate rain forest in this region. These trees soar to heights of more than 350 feet over the course of several thousand years.

This makes them the tallest and largest living things in the world. These giants are the remnant of the 95% that have been logged off.

With trunks often up to 30 feet in diameter, branches of these 30-story-high titans start at about 100 feet off the ground.

The crowns of the tallest redwoods sometimes look like plumes of exhaust from a rocket.

It was generally assumed there was nothing much to see in the redwood canopy.

But Steve Sillett, a botanist, passionate climber and explorer revealed the tremendous diversity of life that can exist in the

canopy.

“Bonsai” trees are rooted in soil deposited in the crotches of the tree over countless millennia.

At 30 stories above the earth, huckleberry bushes bear fruit and reproduce.

There is a whole primeval kingdom of plants and animals that only a handful of people have ever seen.

And the people who do the climbing are part acrobat, part adventurer and part scientist.

At 300 feet above the ground, you can be surrounded by a latticework of fused branches hung with gardens of ferns and lichens.

The climbers show love and respect along with a burning desire to learn all they can of the diverse life and all its interrelationships.

Along with much botanic information comes a good human interest story of their literal ups and downs.

This is a remarkable book I think most members and even their spouses would thoroughly enjoy. I found it fascinating.

William Wegner  
Advanced Master Gardener

Next board meeting:  
**5:30 p.m. Wednesday,  
Dec. 5, at MSU Extension**

Newsletter deadline:  
**Monday, Jan. 7, 2008,**

Send submissions to  
**Sue Stemler, editor,  
suestemler@chartermi.net**

View the newsletter at:  
**web1.msue.msu.edu/  
mastergardener/saginaw/**

View the SVMGA web page at:  
**web1.msue.msu.edu/  
mastergardener/saginaw/  
association/**

## Odds and ends...

### More members earn 2007 MG certification

Three trainees have earned Master Gardener status while a number of other members have recertified for 2007.

The trainees are Constance J. LaClair, Roberta L. Schaffer and Beverly E. Thomas.

Those who re-certified include: Carolyn M. Birchmeier, Anne Birkam, Pat Chelsky, Sara Clark, Pat Collier, Anne Bremer Draper, Sue Fortune, Jed Fulkerson, Alice Hudson and Mary Anne Malek.

Also Arlene Purvis, David Quinnan, Sharon Remer, Ellie Robertson, Judy Ross, Gloria Schuler and Stella Thelen.

In addition, several members have certified as Advanced Master Gardeners: Kim J. Kaufman, Barbara Jo Milwrick, Arlene J. Purvis and David T. Quinnan.



### Dow Gardens sponsors Know and Grow seminar

MIDLAND — Stephanie Cohen, the Perennial Diva, is the keynote speaker at this year's Know and Grow Seminar at Dow Gardens.

Set for 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23, at the Midland Center for the Arts, it features four speakers, lunch and garden marketplace hosted by the Midland Master Gardeners.

Cohen, who has taught herbaceous plants and perennial design for more than 20 years at Temple University will talk both about "Perennial Design" and "Perennial Foliage."

Cohen is a contributing editor for *Fine Gardening* magazine and writes frequently for *Country Living Gardener* and *American Nurseryman* magazines.

Both she and Janet Macunovich, founder of the Michigan School of Gardening will sign copies of their books during the breaks.

Macunovich will discuss "Seeking the Best of New Perennial Introductions" and why they make her hit list. She'll also explain how to choose from each year's menu of new cultivars.

Elly Maxwell, entomologist, and

Chuck Martin, horticulturist, team up for "What's Bugging You?"

The Dow Gardens staffers will present an interactive program on some of the most common organisms that make pests of themselves in the perennial garden.

They also will offer an integrated pest management overview.

Early registration is \$50; or \$60 after Feb. 1. Full refunds are available by Friday, Feb. 15; those after Feb. 15 may be transferred to another person.

Master Gardeners receive five education hours for the all-day seminar.

To register, call (800) 362-4874 with your credit card information; or by mail (brochure available on-line at [www.dowgardens.org](http://www.dowgardens.org)) with check or credit card; or in person at the Dow Gardens Visitor Center, Eastman and West St. Andrews.

### New Grapevine editor starts

Advanced Master Gardener Sue Stemler begins writing and editing

SVMGA's newsletter, *The Grapevine*, with the January 2008 edition.

She replaces Darlene Damp, who edited the newsletter the past five years.

SVMGA publishes the newsletter from January through November, distributing it by mail and posting it on-line at [www.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/saginaw/](http://www.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/saginaw/) Stemler will gladly take submissions, from book reviews to calls for help with an upcoming project.

Deadlines are posted in each month's issue.

Send submissions to [suestemler@chartermi.net](mailto:suestemler@chartermi.net) or call her at 781-4656.

### 'Make A Difference Day' a success for kids, MGs

Thank you to Master Gardeners Anne Draper, Raeann Krauss, Sheila Hempsted, Julie Trinklein, Arlene Purvis, Carolyn Birchmeier and Robert L. Miller Sr. who offered their green thumb expertise during "Make a Difference Day" on Oct. 25.

Five homes in Saginaw County look spiffier thanks to their hands-on work

alongside students from 13 high schools.

And thanks to Master Gardeners Ruth Sny, Bill Wegner, Arlene Purvis, Mary Anne Malek and Helen Weitzmann, who dug in their gardens to provide an assortment of hosta, lilies, coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, daisies, lady's mantle and anemone to plant at those homes that day.

Keep us in mind for next year.

Janet I. Martineau, SVMGA Make a Difference Day coordinator

### Bring baskets to meeting!!

Gloria Schuler wants to get a spring fund-raiser going now so please bring flat bottom baskets — like the Easter bunny delivers — to this month's meeting.

She's hoping to collect 100, which will be cut and painted to sell and use in the garden. Schuler's also look for spray paint and volunteers to get the baskets ready to sell.

You may drop baskets at her office, Grand Voyages, 4600 Fashion Square Blvd. To volunteer, call 892-7679 or e-mail [globobarama@excite.com](mailto:globobarama@excite.com).

### Plan now to attend state MG conference March 8

EAST LANSING — Melinda Myers, author of 19 books and TV host, is this year's keynote speaker at the MSU Master Gardener Volunteer Spring Conference.

She will share her 25 years of horticulture experience with advice for an intimate garden in large spaces — or gardening for small spaces Saturday, March 8.

The seminar is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the MSU campus and is open to all Master Gardeners and their friends.

Cost is \$75 for certified /active Master Gardeners (so be sure to get your education and volunteer hours in by Dec. 31 deadline) and \$90 for gardener friends.

There also will be breakout sessions, garden vendors, door prizes, food and fellowship.

The conference brochure and registration will be available Saturday, Dec. 15.

(Continues on Page 5)



## Re-certify for 2007 by registering hours now

The deadline to recertify is nearly here and without it you can't rejoin SVMGA.

You must complete a minimum of 15 hours of volunteer work and 5 education hours by Monday, Dec. 31.

Education credit is earned by attending SVMGA meetings with a speaker (see accompanying list) or other classes approved by the state or local Master Gardener coordinator for this calendar year.

Volunteer hours are earned by working on projects approved by the Master Gardener Coordinator for this calendar year.

You may either enter your hours online at [web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/](http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/) — or submit the form, available at the MSUE office, 1 Tuscola.

To use the on-line system you must have your password and log-on.

Get your password and log-on from Grey Gitzen if your last name begins with A to G; from Darlene Damp for last names from H to M; and Judy Henning for N to Z.

Contact Gitzen at 792-0615 or

[jgregzn@aol.com](mailto:jgregzn@aol.com); Damp at 746-9113 or [shrew@att.net](mailto:shrew@att.net); and Henning at 799-4136 or [judrich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:judrich@sbcglobal.net)

Once you're on the site, click the volunteer reporting box to bring up your personal MG page. Select education and volunteer hour reporting and navigate between the two.

**Education hours must be entered individually and fully, listing the date, class, instructor and hours for each meeting or class.**

**Volunteer hours are recorded by the start date, the project, type of work performed and TOTAL number of hours completed. Example: 5/5/07, Saginaw Children's Zoo, hands-on work, 50 hours.**

Here are the education hours available from SVMGA meetings or events this year:

**1/24/07** — "What's New for 2007?" Matt Bouvy, 1 hour.

**2/28/07** — "Hosta Culture," Mark Hanner, 1 hour.

**3/28/07** — "Master Gardener Program Update," Mary McClellan, 1 hour.

**4/25/07** — "How Deep Is the Water?" Mike O'Sullivan, 1 hour.

**5/6/07 and 5/11/07** — Tour of botanist Fred Case's garden, 1 hour.

**10/6/07** — SVMGA's An Autumn Affair for Gardeners, Monica Milla, David MacKenzie, Susan Scott and Ruth Blumenstein, 5 hours.

**10/24/07** — "Freaks, Witches Brooms and Chimeras in Michigan's Landscape," Joel Miller, 1 hour.

**11/28/07** — "Glorious Ferns," Ned Bromley, 1 hour.

Master Gardeners earn service award pins for all the hours they work and are approved. Please record all of your hours to put toward the total, not just the minimum.

## More odds and ends...

(Continues from Page 4)

Hotel rooms have been blocked at the Kellogg Center, Candlewood Suites and Waterford Estates.

Visit <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/>; or e-mail [mgvp@msu.edu](mailto:mgvp@msu.edu); or call (517) 355-5191, ext. 1-408.

### Please label donations for drawings

Both Ruth Sny, SVMGA drawing

### Fern fanatic...

(Continues from Page 1)

"I enjoy learning new things," Bromley says.

"I gave this talk to the Hosta Society of Eastern Michigan and the Western Michigan society president told me this was just the right balance of cultivation and botany."

Story by Darlene B. Damp, editor

chairman, and Melva Bond, SVMGA secretary, are asking members to put their names on items they donate for drawings.

"We want people to get credit for making the donation — and we also want to recognize those who win," Bond said at the November board meeting.

She also is asking all winners to please identify themselves to her before selecting a door prize.

"With so much going on when people come into the meeting, I can't always remember who gave me what," says Sny, who sells tickets for the drawings in the Andersen Center lobby prior to the meeting.

### On a sad note...

Members of SVMGA may want to extend their sympathies to Elaine Rappeley, whose husband William died Nov. 6.

The funeral was Nov. 9. Memorials may be made to the St. Charles Athletic Association or the American Stroke Association.

## 2008 committee chairs

**MSUE Hotline orientation** — Phyllis Shlien, 642-6656

**Mentor coordinator** — Waunita Pettiford, 777-6918

**Historian** — Anne Birkam, 754-7090

**Refreshments** — open

**Member handbooks** — Bonnie Dutcher, 624-9011

**Membership roster** — Karen Tilden, 777-6673

**Newsletter mailing label-maker** — Debbi King, 642-2940

**Newsletter mailing committee** — Bonnie Stewart, 793-1442

**SVMGA logo wear** — Shirley McNier, 799-7172

**Speakers bureau** — Judy Henning, 799-4136

**MSUE demonstration garden** — Sara Clark, 964-7141

**Volunteer opportunities** — Mary Andrews, 797-3319

**Drawings/ Christmas potluck** — Ruth Sny, 928-7315

**No newsletter?** — Karen Tilden, 777-6673

**Fall seminar** — Judy Henning, 799-4136, and Aileen Cowan, 865-8784

## Upcoming SVMGA programs

- 11/28/07 — Ned Bromley, Riverby Gardens, “Glorious Ferns”**  
**12/4/07 — Annual Christmas potluck, First Presbyterian Church fellowship hall**  
**1/21/08 — Sue Grubba, Michigan School of Gardening, “Creative Night Lighting”**  
**2/27/08 — To be determined**  
**3/26/08 — Heidi Frei, Nature Conservancy, “Water Quality in the Shiawassee Basin”**  
**4/23/08 — Charlene Harris, past president of the Michigan Conifer Society, “Conifers: Backbone of the Garden”**  
**5/28/08 — Plant exchange, location to be determined**  
**6/25/08 — Garden tour at the home of Sharla Hammer, Freeland**  
**7/23/08 — Garden tour at the home of Joan Martin, Saginaw Township**  
**8/27/08 — Garden tour and annual picnic at the Japanese Gardens in Saginaw**  
**9/24/08 — To be determined**  
**10/22/08 — To be determined**  
**11/19/08 — To be determined**  
**December 2008 — annual Christmas party**

Meetings in January to April and September to November are at the Andersen Enrichment Center. Meetings in May through August are at members' or public gardens. Planning for field trips is still under consideration.

Each October, the SVMGA sponsors an educational seminar, An Autumn Affair for Gardeners. It is open to all gardeners and features experts sharing the latest in gardening information.

## Mulch pile hosts whole array of hungry organisms

EAST LANSING — It's easy to think of the backyard compost pile as a collection of dead stuff — leaves, grass clippings, fruit and vegetable waste from the kitchen.

But a compost pile is alive with organisms in a range of sizes, from microscopic decay fungi to earthworms and beetles.

What they have in common is that they all feed on dead stuff.

“A compost pile is designed to promote the breakdown of plant materials by microorganisms,” says Howard Russell, diagnostic entomologist at Michigan State University.

“We mix carbon and nitrogen sources and add moisture and stir the pile occasionally to add oxygen and even add nitrogen fertilizer so that the fungi and other decay organisms can do their job quickly and completely.”

Along the way between raw materials and finished compost, a host of insects and other arthropods, as well as earth-

worms, take advantage of the pile as a source of food, shelter and even warmth during the cold months.

Turning the pile reveals hosts of springtails, for instance, tiny, light-colored insects that move by activating a spring-like device on their rear ends.

If the compost is literally hopping with insects, they're probably springtails.

Ground beetles are other common compost pile inhabitants. Though some may feed on decaying plant material, more are predators that prey on other arthropods.

Sowbugs, centipedes and millipedes will also inhabit a compost pile.

Sowbugs and millipedes are there to feed on decaying plant matter; centipedes are predators taking advantage of the other inhabitants of the pile.

Sowbugs, centipedes and millipedes are not insects, Russell points out, though, like insects, they are arthropods, a large group of creatures with external skeletons

and jointed legs.

Other members include spiders, ticks and mites, and crustaceans such as lobsters and shrimp. Sowbugs are crustaceans, he notes.

Spiders will also hang around a compost pile because of the food available there.

Like centipedes, they aren't interested in the plant matter but in the creatures feeding on it.

“When gardeners build a compost pile, it's to dispose of and recycle plant materials and nutrients into a product beneficial to their gardens,” Russell observes.

“But they are also providing conditions conducive to a whole community of organisms they may never get more than a glimpse of.

“It's those organisms that make a compost pile more than just a pile of dead plant parts.”

*MSU News Wire Service*