

Seeds of Knowledge

January/February 2007

Message from the Coordinator

First of all, I do apologize for how late this is getting out to everyone. Most of you know what has been happening medically with my husband lately. If not, and you are interested, please give me a call and I'll fill you in. I believe things are getting back to a "normal" state for me, or at least what normal is for me! I'm keeping my fingers crossed on that one, however!

On a "Master Gardener" note, I finally decided to go ahead with the class for 2007. We only have 12 people, but hopefully it will be a good group. I know several are very anxious to take the class. It begins next Wednesday. I'll put a class schedule in the newsletter and if anyone wishes to monitor the class for me or just sit in for some additional education, you are more than welcome. Just give me a call. We have a couple new instructors this year as well as a new power point presentation for several chapters. I'll make a note of those on the list.

Our Annual Recognition Banquet is schedule for April 30th. A formal invitation will come later, but please put that date on your calendars. We'd love to see you there.

Our Spring Into Gardening Conference is all set and the registration brochures will be mailed out next week. I'll be putting a link on our website also, but I will send everyone a notification by e-mail with that web address once is it up and running. Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 21, 2007. It should be a fun day!

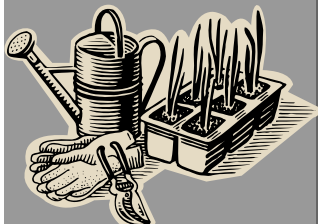
You all should have received information regarding the "Learn To Grow Green" conference at MSU in March. This replaces the Summer Conference that has been held in June. I'll put a blurb in this newsletter with the address you can go to and get the registration packet. It sound like it will be a fun time. I'm planning on going!

Well, I'm sure everyone is diligently looking through all the catalogs that are pouring in getting ready for when spring finally arrives! Hope to see you all soon!

Tracey Knack
Master Gardener Coordinator

Looking for Featured Gardens

I am still looking for "Featured Gardens" for future newsletters. If you took any pictures throughout this past growing season and would like to tell us a little about your garden and your gardening experiences, please do so. We'd love to hear about it. I would need about a page long story and a few pictures. Think about it. They are so much fun to put in the newsletters.



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To contact me by e-mail:
knack@msu.edu



WANTED: MASTER GARDENER HOTLINE COORDINATOR

As some of you may know Linda Davis has coordinated the Master Gardener Hotline for the last couple of years. Well her and her husband have decided to become “world travelers”. While I’m excited for them and all the traveling they are doing these days, this, unfortunately makes it a little difficult for her to continue to coordinate the hotline. Her enthusiasm for this particular volunteer opportunity has been greatly appreciated. She has started a well organized routine for making this a successful addition to the community. But at this time I need to find someone else to be in charge.

The coordinators job duties would include the following:

- 1) scheduling workers - this will require calling people that are interesting in working.
- 2) making sure all forms are in the notebook that need to be filled out.
- 3) Assist in training - be at the hotlines training(s) that are to be held in the spring for new volunteers. You will also need to be at the Spring Planning Bee to answer questions about the Hotline and sign up workers.
- 4) Wrap-up of the seasons questions - Linda has, in the past, compiled the questions and answers from the calls, etc. This helps with future questions, since there are a lot that are the same each year.
- 5) Working on ways to improve the Hotline
- 6) Fill in when available if the schedule is not full

The Hotline is now becoming known in the community and we would like to continue having this option available for people. If possible and necessary we can expand the hours. It is also a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to earn their hours and also learn a lot more. Most volunteers that have worked the hotline have really enjoyed it and say that they learned so much by having to look up answers.

I will be happy to help whoever will become the new coordinator. I promise not to leave you hanging and not knowing what to do, but with everything going on around here, I just don’t have the time to be in charge of the entire thing by myself. As the coordinator you would be able to earn most, if not all, of your required volunteer hours by working on this project alone. And you would really help me out!

Please consider this opportunity.



Do We Have Any Writers Out There??

Our Master Gardener Association has been working with the Morning Sun and we will be featuring an bi-monthly article in the newspaper. Ann Eby, one of our Advanced Master Gardeners, has agreed to write for this, but if anyone else out there is interested in writing articles, please let me know. I'm sure we can work out some sort of schedule. This will be great exposure for the Master Gardener Program as well as a great opportunity to explore your writing abilities. Think about it.



Do you have an idea for a Master Gardener Volunteer Project?

One of the missions of the Isabella County Master Gardener Association is to provide for community projects, not only for volunteers, but also to help spread the joy of gardening to the community. Part of this is providing financial assistance for certain Master Gardener projects. The Association is working on their annual budget and would like to know if anyone out there has a project in mind that they would like some financial assistance with?

I'll give you an example. The Association helps pay for additions and upkeep for the gardens at the Women's Shelter. They also help with project expenses for the Jr. Master Gardener program as well as some expenses for the adult Master Gardener class.

If you have an idea for a Master Gardener Volunteer project and you'd like to request some financial assistance, please contact me. I will need to approve the project as a Master Gardener project and then it can be submitted to the association for consideration.



Annual Recognition Banquet Monday, April 30, 2007

(more details to come)

One of the issues that is handled at the banquet is Executive Board Officer Elections. This year the positions of President and Secretary are up for election. Theresa Turner and Carol Miller have agreed to run again. Any active Master Gardener is eligible to run for Executive Board Officer positions. If you have an interest in becoming involved with this board, please consider running for an officer position. The Executive Board helps to plan Master Gardener events, speakers, and projects, etc. If you might be interested in running for one of these positions, please contact me by the end of February. We welcome new people interested in this part of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

There are several educational opportunities coming up in the next few months. I'm listing below some of the details and where you can go to get more information. Consider attending some of these opportunities. It's always good to learn more!

Know & Grow - Saturday, March 3, 2007:

A one-day seminar sponsored by the Dow Gardens in Midland. Featured Speakers and Topics are:

- 1) Dr. Alan Armitage - If Native Plants are the Next Great Garden Passion, Shouldn't We be Buying the Good Stuff?
- 2) Dr. William Mathis - Hardy Terrestrial Orchids: The Best Kept Secret in the Gardening World.
- 3) Doug Chapman - Propagating Your Landscape
- 4) Tom Kimmel - Hardy Groundcovers for the Midwest

Registration fee: \$50.00. You can register by phone at (989) 631-2677. Registration forms available at: www.dowgardens.org.

ANR Week - MSU - March 2-10, 2007:

**Program Guides are available here at the MSU Extension Office.

Some selected options:

- 1) Annual Michigan Wildflower Association Conference - March 4th & 5th
- 2) Annual Michigan Herb Associates Conference - March 7th & 8th
- 3) Michigan Gladiolus Conference - March 8th & 9th
- 4) Michigan Horticultural Therapy Association Conference - March 9th & 10th

Each of the above conferences are open to members and non-members of these associations. Registration fee is determined by this status. Information is in the Program Guides.

Learn To Grow Green - March 17, 2007: (formerly the MSU Summer Conference)

Registration: \$95.00 for Master Gardeners, Non - MG's - \$110

Optional Welcome Reception on March 16th - \$20.00

Registration packets are available and you can register on-line at: http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/programs/2007/2007-03-SpringConf_Brochure.pdf

If you have any questions about the above educational opportunities, please feel free to contact me.

African Violets Easy to Grow and Propagate



Few flowering plants are as easy to grow, popular and dependable as African violets. Give them enough light, and they'll flower again and again, whether they're in an office, a kitchen window or a greenhouse. "Though they need bright light, African violets don't tolerate direct sunlight," says Mary McLellan, Extension Master Gardener program coordinator at Michigan State University.

In an east-, west- or south-facing window, they'll thrive in light filtered by a sheer curtain and flower all year round. In a north window, they may stop flowering in the winter. Violets that aren't flowering because they aren't getting enough light will also have thin leaves with long stems, and they'll grow vertically rather than horizontally.

Small, leathery leaves curling down around the pot are a sign that plants are getting too much light. Direct sun can also burn plants and cause foliage to turn yellow and die.

Flowers nearly year round and healthy-looking foliage growing horizontally are indications that a plant is receiving the proper amount of light. Healthy-looking plants that aren't flowering may need to be repotted into smaller containers, she suggests. African violets generally flower better if they're slightly underpotted.

"African violets are more tolerant of a range of environmental conditions than many people think," McLellan points out.

They usually do well in average home temperatures, though winter temperatures may be a little on the cool side, especially if the thermostat is turned down at night. There, especially, it's important to make sure that violets aren't placed on a chilly windowsill, which can injure the roots, or closed off from the heat in the room at night by a curtain, shade or blind.

Though African violets appreciate humidity, they don't like water on either foliage or flowers, McLellan says. Unless you can grow African violets in a naturally more humid area, such as the kitchen or bathroom, or in a terrarium or other confined space, the air may be drier than they like. The best way to humidify the air around them is to place them on a tray of gravel almost covered with water.

Proper care of African violets includes proper watering and fertilizing. Pots with drainage holes can be set in a shallow pan of water until the soil surface is moist, then allowed to drain. Plants in pots without drainage holes should be repotted in pots with drainage holes, McLellan suggests.

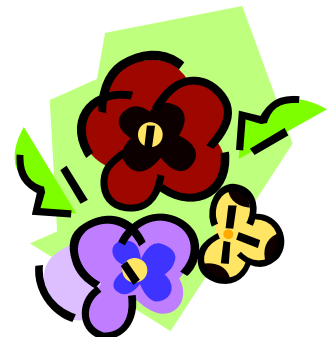
"Good drainage is important to keep the roots healthy," she explains. When watering plants from above, use water at room temperature and pour it on the potting medium rather than into the plant crown (the area where the stems come together and join the roots). Wetting the crown may cause it to rot. Watering from below is an easy way to avoid crown rot and leaf spotting, she notes.

When plants in natural light are actively growing (spring, summer and early fall), fertilize every 4 to 6 weeks with a soluble houseplant fertilizer mixed according to manufacturer's directions. In winter, either reduce the rate or double the length of time between applications, or stop fertilizing altogether.

Plants growing under artificial light may grow and flower all year round and can be fertilized accordingly.

The great variety in plant sizes, flower forms and flower colors in African violets means you can accumulate quite a few without having two identical plants, McLellan observes. They're available in florists' shops and garden centers, supermarkets and discount and home improvement stores, and by mail order. Plants may be anywhere from 3 or 4 inches in diameter to 16 inches or more. Flowers may be solid, bicolored or multicolored in shades of pink, red, blue lavender, purple and orchid, as well as white. Leaves come in a variety of shapes and textures; some are variegated.

Propagation is by seed or leaf cuttings.



ISABELLA COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER
NEWSLETTER

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Mt Pleasant MI 48858

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Email: msue37@msu.edu

We are on the Web

www.isabellacounty.org/dept/msue

2007 Master Gardener Class

The 2007 Master Gardener Volunteer Training Class will be held on Wednesday's beginning February 7th from 6:00 - 9:30 pm, in Room 320 of the Isabella County Building.

All Master Gardeners are welcome to sit in on any class they wish. If you are in need of some education hours or if you just want to hear something again. You can also come if you want to hear a different teacher. This would give you some education hours if you need some.

- **February 7th - Introduction** - I could use one person's help with registration, etc.
- **February 14th - Soil Science** - Paul Gross
- **February 21st - Plant Science** - Jessie Spry
- **February 28th - IPM Plant Health Care** - Dan Rossman (New Powerpoint last year)
- **March 7th - Lawn Care** - Bob Rau
- **March 14th - Small Fruits** - Jim Lincoln
- **March 21st - Vegetables** - Bill Miller (New Instructor and Powerpoint)
- **March 28th - Tree Fruits** - Mike Jenkins (New Powerpoint)
- **April 4th - Woody Ornamentals** - Dave Breedlove (New PowerPoint)
- **April 11th - Flower Gardening** - Mike Creller (New Instructor)
- **April 18th - Exotic Forest Pests** - Roger Lintemuth
- **April 25th - Houseplants** - Nancy Fry
- **May 2nd - Spring Planning Bee** - Put this on your calendars!
- **May 9th - Diagnostic Training**

If you would like to sit in on any of the classes, just let me know. If you would like to earn some volunteer hours by monitoring the classes, you would be responsible for grading quizzes and handing out quizzes at the end of class, taking attendance, etc.

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