

Seeds of Knowledge

March/April 2007

Message from the Coordinator

Well, I think spring is on it's way. At least this week we are supposed to have some nice temperatures, although as I look out the window this morning it is raining. But I prefer rain to snow and ice, even though it makes some nice ponds in my yard!

The 2007 class is going smoothly. I can still use some monitors for a few classes. If you want to earn some volunteer hours you can help grade quizzes, and hand out things at the end of class. You can also sit in on a class if you want to for education hours. Just give me a call and I'll let you know which classes I still need help with and what is coming up.

I want to remind you again about our Annual Recognition Banquet 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. We are planning a special recognition of the class of 1994, the very first Master Gardener class in Isabella County.

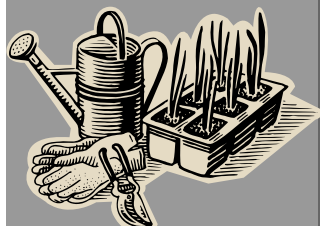
Registrations are still coming in for our Spring Into Gardening Conference, April 21st. I hope all of you are planning on attending. It should be fun and educational day.

The "Learn To Grow Green" conference at MSU is coming up this weekend. I'm looking forward to seeing how it works for them. I know they closed registration because they got full, which is great!

I have planned the date for the Spring Planning Bee as well as a diagnostic training. Look for more details in the newsletter. Please plan on attending these. The Spring Planning Bee is where we will start signing-up for volunteer activities this spring & summer. We will also have some presentations on volunteer opportunities that are happening. It's also a good time to meet the new class as well as see other Master Gardeners that you may not have seen in a while.

Spring is coming - I swear it's just around the corner!

Tracey Knack
Master Gardener Coordinator



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Looking for Featured Gardens

I am in need of some volunteers for our "Featured Gardens" section for future newsletters. I am using my last one in this issue. If you 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.

WANTED: MASTER GARDENER HOTLINE COORDINATOR

I have yet to have anyone volunteer to be the Hotline Coordinator. I really need someone to step up and do this job. We have got something good started and I don't want it to slip through the cracks because there was no one around to coordinate things. This is a job that could even be done by a couple of people - co-coordinators.

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 - 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.



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 ASAP. We welcome new people interested in this part of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program.



Diagnostic Training

Wednesday, May 9, 2007

6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Room 320, Isabella County Building

Dave Roberts, MSU, will be on hand to talk about diagnostics. We will have some hands-on experience with diagnosing some common problems that will come up. If there is time we will go over Hotline information.

Mark your calendars! This will be a great training opportunity. More details will follow.

Last Chance

Consider this your last opportunity to turn in 2006 volunteer hours. I will be completing entry of volunteer hours this month in order to have an up-to-date list of all those that have received their initial certification, advanced certification or re-certification. This will be used for the Recognition Banquet in April. If you don't have your hours in you will not be recognized at the banquet. If you haven't turned them in or entered them into the database, please do so within the next week.

Gardens of our Master Gardeners

Our featured garden this month is from Jo Palm. Jo has been a Master Gardener since 2002. She spear-headed the garden improvement at the Women's Shelter a few years ago and is still working on that project. In addition, she is an active member of the conference committee and the county building beautification committee. She is currently serving as the Vice President of the Isabella County Master Gardener Association.

My Lasagna Garden



For years I have had a small vegetable garden in my back yard. And for years I have borrowed my neighbor's roto-tiller, hauled it across the street, and faithfully tilled the garden twice a year. Fortunately, about five years ago I came across the book Lasagna Gardening by Patricia Lanza (Rodale Press, 1998). This book has literally changed the way I garden and, in the process, has made my small plot much more productive. It also no doubt has saved me from endless back and shoulder pain as the roto-tiller is now a thing of the past and gathering dust in my neighbor's garage.

Lasagna gardening is simply a method of covering the garden with layers of organic materials, beginning with a thick layer of very wet newspaper. Since I was working with an existing garden, I began in the fall by covering the entire garden with layers of newspaper I had collected over the summer. Lanza suggests dipping the paper in a tub of water, but I took the easy way out and used the hose to thoroughly wet down each layer. This step is crucial because it provides shelter for the earthworms which actually act as the unpaid tillers of your plot. Following the newspaper layer, I used layers of peat moss, shredded leaves and compost. The layers reached between two and three feet tall that first year, but by spring were a manageable 8 – 12 inches high.

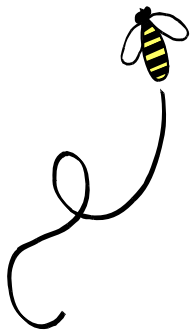


When planting time rolled around, I simply pushed aside the organic material and planted my seeds and purchased plants. Because my garden is fairly small, I have always planted crops closer together than is usually advised. This seems to work very well with the lasagna gardening method and, since I use the layers of mulch between rows, weeds are kept at a minimum.

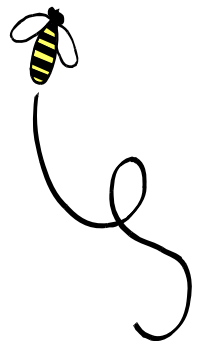
To maintain the garden, each fall I again cover the garden with layers of shredded leaves, compost, and peat moss – certainly much easier than pushing the roto-tiller. An added benefit is the garden also serves as a place to heel up tender perennials until I can re-pot them in the spring. I am now a dedicated advocate of lasagna gardening and, as Lanza says in her book, "It's the way to have it all without doing it all."

Master Gardener Spring Planning Bee

Wednesday, May 2, 2007
Room 320
Isabella County Building
7:00 pm



Desserts provided
(feel free to bring a dessert if you wish)



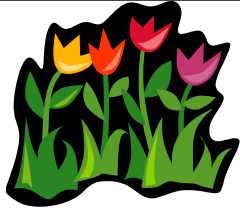
All Master Gardeners are asked to attend this planning bee to discuss, organize and plan our upcoming volunteer activities for this season.

We would like everyone's ideas and thoughts on the volunteer projects we have planned.

We will also begin signing-up for volunteer hours.

Please RSVP by April 27th if you will be coming.





Spring Plant Swap
May 19th
Chipp-A-Waters Park
11:30 am to 12:30 pm



We need people to help set-up and check-in plants, as well as bring plant material to swap!

Mark your calendar. This is always a fun time!

A “Thyme to Get Away” Series - Bus Tours

Theresa Turner, MG Association President, in conjunction with Hartzler Travel have organized a series of two bus tours coming up this spring and summer. This is an opportunity to visit some interesting educational places around Michigan.

Hidden Lake Gardens & Michigan Historical Museum Tuesday, May 8, 2007

One of the best kept secrets in Michigan is tucked into the beautiful Irish Hills near Tecumseh. Hidden Lake Gardens, a 755 acre arboretum and botanical garden includes an exotics-filled conservatory, an outdoor Bonsai Courtyard, demonstration garden, and dwarf conifer collection. You will be thrilled with the beautiful scenery afforded by the lake, pond, and natural woodlands. After our visit to the Gardens we will board the motorcoach to travel north to Lansing. First stop is for a delicious lunch at a Lansing area restaurant. Following lunch, we'll visit the Michigan Historical Museum. You will be surrounded by Michigan history from prehistoric times through the late twentieth century. Enjoy being transported back in time as you walk through an Upper Peninsula copper mine; one room schoolhouse; 1920s street scene; and 1957 Detroit Auto Show.

TOUR INCLUDES: Round trip transportation on a Hartzler motorcoach; entrance to Hidden Lake Gardens and Michigan Historical Museum; Lunch; all taxes and gratuities on included items except driver and escort tips

Cost Per Person: \$86.00

Registration Deadline: April 6, 2007

Summer Getaway - Shopping/Country Garden/Lakeside Resort Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Bring some friends and get away with us for a day of fun and variety. Our first stop will be downtown Traverse City for shopping and lunch on your own. Then we'll head for the country with some time to wander, take pictures and feast our eyes on thousands of flowers at the Betsie River Centennial Lily Farm. This historic farm specializes in day lilies, lilies, grasses, and garden art. The Lily Farm also features an antique walk-in corncrib, gift shop and studio. Our next stop is Bear Lake Manor; a magnificent Victorian bed and breakfast located 12 miles north of Manistee in Bear Lake. Enjoy a cold drink and short tour of this elegant manor with its wrap-around front porch and three stories of lovely rooms. Board the motorcoach for a short ride to Portage Point Inn for a buffet dinner. This 103 year old inn is two blocks from Lake Michigan beaches and is situated right on beautiful Portage Lake



TOUR INCLUDES: Round trip transportation on a Hartzler motorcoach; visit to Traverse City; visit to Betsie River Centennial Lily Farm; visit to Bear Lake Manor; Dinner at Portage Point Inn; all taxes and gratuities on included items except driver/escort tips.

COST PER PERSON: \$79.00

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: June 15, 2007

For more information or to register for either trip, please contact Hartzler Travel at 989-773-6123.

In Search of.....

The Spring Into Gardening Conference Committee is looking for clean pint size canning jars. We plan on using these at the conference for a centerpiece of sorts. Colleen French is planning on bringing some fresh cut herbs for people to be able to examine. Our thought was to use pint size canning jars and tie a piece of raffia around the top to make it look nice. We have about 10 right now and we need 30.

If anyone has a couple they can part with it would really help us out. If you have any, please bring them to the MSU Extension Office.

ISABELLA COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER
NEWSLETTER

200 N Main St
Mt Pleasant MI 48858

Phone: 989-772-0911 ext 302
Email: msue37@msu.edu

We are on the Web

www.isabellacounty.org/dept/msue

Garden Design Series - Upcoming Workshops

The Garden Design Short Course is being held in Mt. Pleasant (and other areas later in the year). The schedule for the local series is as follows

Intro to Garden Design - March 24th
Advanced Garden Design I - March 31st
Advanced Garden Design II - April 14th
Garden Design Graphics - April 28th

The series is being held on the Campus of Central Michigan University. You can sign up for the entire series or just one or two classes (pre-requisite of Intro to Garden Design required). Additional locations and dates and cost can be obtained by calling the office or going to the Master Gardener website at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener>.

Garden Design Boot Camp - May 18-23

This is being held at MSU. This is an intensive camp which includes all of the short course classes, plus additional speakers and evening activities. Cost for the Boot Camp is \$649.00 (which includes all necessary supplies and materials and lunch each day) Accommodations have been arranged at the Owen Graduate Center at MSU for \$35.00 per night. Registration information for this camp can be obtained on the Master Gardener website at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener>.

I have the information for both of these here in the office, if you would like me to send you a copy, just give me a call.

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