

TWIGS

The Garden Club of Greater Lansing Newsletter

Member of: Michigan Garden Clubs Inc.,

National Garden Club Central Region,

National Garden Club Inc.

Volume 37 #11

April 2019

Editor: Joan Lenhard

Distribution: Reba Torongo

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I traveled to the sunny south last month where I saw forsythia, daffodils and red bud. I missed our last meeting, but thanks to Sue Kesti as my replacement and chairman of the day I heard it all went very well. Sorry I missed the speaker, sort of... white sand, 80 degree weather, sleeping in.

I did get to enter the IIB flower show, I was glad to see a few of our members also enter. I did get a blue ribbon (YEAH!) instead of my usual white. I was truly surprised and very happy. I hope to see more members entering in the future. I do it to learn and I enjoy having something to think about and plan for when the winter doldrums hit.

In April Lois Snover-Hanson will show us how to make a Tussie Mussie. Bring a bouquet of small flowers (baby's breath, lavender or other herb flowers) from your local grocery or supplier and scissors or clippers, the rest will be supplied. I will be your chairman of the day, so bring a sandwich to share and your own service. I hope to turn the area into spring!

The District IIB event on April 18th. Sign up by April 1, send your check for \$25.00 to Barbara Lowes. It will be held at the Livingston County Public Safety Bldg, 1911 Tooley Rd., Howell, MI. It is always a good time!

Michigan Garden Club, Inc will have their conference in Traverse City at the Great Wolf Lodge on June 5th & 6th. Our club will pay for 2 delegates to attend the conference. This

covers your entry and meals. It does not cover your room.

Again, we are still looking for a vice president. You are asked to attend the board meetings and may have to fill in for the president. It is NOT a difficult position. You help to develop the Program Book along with a great team of folks. (Sue already has extra ideas for next year). Please consider it. We need you!!!

In May, we have our annual meeting to be held at the Grand Ledge Country Club. I've never been there so I am looking forward to this event. If you are a committee chair please type a report in triplicate to present to the members. More news soon. HAPPY SPRING!!! Ann Schoals

HORTICULTURE

Let's hope that since March came in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb --- and stay that way for an early spring. In some ways it is beginning to feel that way. The days are getting longer, hellebores are beginning to show green leaves again. Early daffodils too have little green tops showing above the mulch. Snow crocus and snow drops are peeking their pretty heads out. Even the birds that are here seem to be singing more.

With the Home and Garden Show behind us, we can look ahead to our own yards and gardens. The hardest task will be to keep ourselves reined in until the soil is warm enough for new plants. Around here we can start to clean our yards, plant early shrubs and

trees, perhaps add a few more bulbs, but that's all until at least mid-May.

Every year as I plan my garden there has to be space for herbs. These days most of mine are in patio pots for easy access, although oregano always comes up in my patio garden, once planted mint never goes away, and English lavender is welcome in several locations. I find that herbs are among the easiest plants to grow. Many herbs are native to the Mediterranean so in general that helps to define their growth needs. Individual herbs have different requirements, but in general they need little care as long as they have warm weather, sun, good drainage, and regular water. They reward us by adding scent to our gardens as well as being deliciously fresh and ready for salads, soups, and so much more. I also find that they work easily to fill an empty space, serve as a ground cover, fill in around taller plants, and add interesting texture contrasts with other plants.

Among my favorites are rosemary, basil, parsley, cilantro, lavender, lemon verbena, chives, savory and dill. My bay tree (bay laurel) stays in during the winter and goes on the patio for the summer. I also like the scented geraniums. A special "find" was the citronella geranium which has a lemony scent that helps to repel mosquitoes.

I grow most herbs for their foliage. An exception of course is the geranium. To keep leaves fresh and available, remove the blossoms before the plants bolt. Blooming makes the plants leggier and often the new leaves are somewhat smaller and less flavorful once the plant energy goes into forming flowers. To prolong the flavorful leaves, nip off those buds as they form.

Most of all I hope you enjoy the flavors and textures of spring and summer. Perhaps our season changes help us to appreciate them even more. Barb Amundsen

MARCH PROGRAM RECAP

Emily Nichols, Interim Manager for Hunter Park GardenHouse, talked about starting a

garden from seeds and transplants. She mentioned that the Allen Park Neighborhood Center was started in the '90's with the first farmers' market in Michigan to accept WIC and double up coupons for needy shoppers. They also have a licensed commercial kitchen which can be rented, and have expanded to where they have a food pantry (bread basket) and now offer pre-made dinners through Allen Place to Go, along with many other services and programs.

Planting from seed involves a gardener's space, time, money and labor. Many seeds can be planted now because of the time they take to germinate. Problems with planting from seed include production needs and slow germination. For some seeds pre-soaking will help their germination. One method, called "chitting," or pre-sprouting indoors, places the seeds between wet paper towels like a sandwich. Keep the towels moist until seeds sprout. When the radical is as long as the seed, the sprouted seed can be planted in soil. Plants always need to be thinned to make enough room for neighboring plants to grow.

Using transplants gives mature plants earlier. Gardeners can have more crops in each season, and there may be a wider variety of plants available. Growing plants keep the soil covered more. A disadvantage can be transplant shock which can set growth back by as much as 2-3 weeks. Ideally plants to be transplanted should be outside the first few days for 2 hours, then 4 hours at a time, then additional hours. New transplants also need some protection from wind.

The Garden Project Resource Center has transplants, as does Van Atta's. Good seed sources are Johnny's Seeds and Baker Creek. The Foster Park library is starting a seed bank that may become a source of seeds once it's operational.

Allen Neighborhood Center will hold a plant sale the first weekend in June. Another good source of plants is Green Eagle, which sells plants at the Allen Street Farmers Market, Wednesday's from 2:30-7.00. Green Eagle

has an annual open house. They are located in Onondaga. Barb Amundsen

GARDEN NEWS



Last summer some friends and I went to the Marshall Garden Tour. There were some amazing gardens. One person had an array of topiary displays were very creative.

The many different shapes and her choice of plantings

were interesting. She kept a journal of all the plants she used with the tags and pictures of what each plant looked like.

Ronnie Polad

GARDEN WORKSHOP

The MSU Horticulture Gardens Make and Take event on March 16 was FANTASTIC. I attended three workshops.

The first workshop was an introduction to modern brush calligraphy, by Sara Koert of Light and Salt Designs of Grand Haven Michigan. She was a former intern for the 4H Children's Garden while earning her Horticulture degree from MSU. She now is an independent garden consultant and watercolor calligrapher under the name Light and Salt Designs in Grand Haven, Michigan. I had never attempted calligraphy before but Sara expertly lead over 100 participants in making a rustic hand lettered garden sign. This was the largest class she had ever done; she usually has 20 students. Her written hand out and instructions helped all to complete their signs. I may even try this again on my own! It was

relaxing once I decided to let go of trying to be perfect.

The second workshop was first introduced with an overview of herbal teas by Daedre McGrath, a staff member in the horticultural garden. She gave an excellent overview of herbal teas with a focus on herb teas that can be grown in Michigan. So much to learn about the parts of herbs that can be harvested and brewed for tea! Daedre also discussed various themed herb gardens such as a relaxation garden containing borage, catnip, chamomile, lemon verbena, lavender, mullein, oregano and sage. She provided an excellent handout on other themed tea gardens, another one I may try is a citrus scented/ flavored garden containing lemon grass, lemon verbena, lemon balm, lemon scented geranium, lemon thyme and lemon basil. Can you tell I like lemon? I like the scent plus use it to flavor vegetable and fish dishes. Her handout also included how to harvest and dry tea herbs. The harvesting and drying vary,



(Project from each workshop by Sue Kesti)

depending on if you are using leaves, flowers, seeds or roots. Most tea drinkers know to store teas in an airtight jar or tin in a cool, dry, dark place. I need to take my off the kitchen counter! Did you know there was a different expiration date for leaves and flowers? Yes, one year. Roots will last longer and seeds last almost indefinitely. Teas do not really go bad, but they will lose their color, flavor and/or aroma beyond expiration dates. Daedre's handout also gave information about blending and brewing herbal teas as well as herbal tea blends and a list of books for herbal teas and

herbal tea gardening.

At the end of the overview, each participant planted their own herbal tea container to harvest and enjoy at home. The sponsor of the workshop was Fraser Tea, a Michigan based producer of small batch organic teas. We were able to sample some of organic tea blends during the gourmet desserts, coffee and tea break following the workshop.

The final workshop was presented by Bethany Troy, Perennial Garden Manager at MSU Horticulture Gardens. She first gave an overview and power point on types of air plants and how to care for them. I had a misconception that air plants could live on a little misting of water and neglect. The plants need bright, indirect light. Direct sunlight will burn the plant. Some plants may handle low light but they need a source of natural light to survive. Beth provided a hand out on the care of air plants that also included how to water, and the frequency of watering, containers and the importance of air flow to improved survival of the plants. All participants created an air-plant wreath with moss to take home.

This was my first opportunity to attend a “make and take” at the MSU Horticulture Gardens. The day went swiftly and I will look forward to attending next year! Sue Kesti

SPRING SUMMER FALL GARDEN TRAVEL

I am planning a trip to Meadowbrook this summer and will look into the Greenmede Historical Village. I am also open to other garden trips. Let me know if you are interested in any travel. Joan Lenhard

Greenmede Historical Village

20501 Newburgh Road; 38125 Baseline Road (8 Mile Road) Turn right off 8 Mile onto Newburgh and go Joshua Simmons Road and turn right. We should get information at 248-477-7375 and to make arrangements for visit. or admin@livoniagardenclub.org

GARDENS NEWS

Linda Brownell visited Longwoods Garden last

May. The garden is located in Kennet Square in Pennsylvania. This garden is known for its majestic plantings. Here we have a picture of Linda being dwarfed by a gigantic Foxglove which stands over 5 feet tall.



(Linda Brownell at Longwood Gardens)

GARDEN NEWS ARTICLE

MSU research finds ways to aid monarch butterflies

For years, lovers of the orange and black monarch butterflies that make Michigan home in the spring and summer have planted milkweed to help the declining species along. In an odd quirk, milkweed is the only plant monarch caterpillars eat, and the plant’s broad leaves are sought out by the butterfly for egg-laying.

New research out of Michigan State University, however, says monarch lovers should

consider chopping down at least some of their milkweed plants later in the summer. "From a monarch's perspective, they need milkweed, but not all milkweed stems are equal," said Nate Haan, a postdoctoral research associate in MSU's Department of Entomology. "When they are flying around looking for the best places to lay their eggs, they are seeking out younger, more tender stems that haven't flowered yet. As summer progresses, those stems get more and more hardened."

Haan's research, published in the peer-reviewed, scientific Journal of Biological Conservation, shows that mowing a third of milkweed patches in June and July, respectively, resulted in more monarch butterfly eggs laid on the regenerating milkweed than on the remaining, undisturbed third. "Milkweed is really robust," he said. "If you chop some down in the middle of summer, in a couple of weeks it will send up new shoots."

It's a phenomenon that has been observed for generations, Haan said – "even some observations going back to the 1800s that after hay fields got harvested, the fields got mowed, and the milkweeds that came back up had a lot of monarch eggs on them." But no one had tested the anecdotes in an empirical study before, he said.

The mowing has an added benefit, Haan said. "Monarch eggs and caterpillars get eaten by predators such as ants and spiders," he said. "We wondered if the disturbance of the milkweeds would also knock back predator populations, providing a window in time where predators are less abundant and the eggs and caterpillars are better allowed to thrive. We found that was the case, too. It takes a few weeks for the predator populations to build back up" after a milkweed mowing.

This process happened for most of the 20th century as milkweeds grew in agricultural fields and were taken down during mechanical harvesting, Haan said. But changes in the types of herbicides farms use have all but wiped out milkweeds in the fields, he said.

MSU researcher's tips for helping monarch butterflies in Michigan: Plant milkweed, which is vanishing in its typical, natural habitats. "The more milkweed we plant, the better," said Nate Haan, postdoctoral research associate in Michigan State University's Department of Entomology. Seeds for milkweed plants native to Michigan can be purchased online or at some local greenhouses.

Don't misuse his research. Haan doesn't want people taking a lawnmower to the entirety of their milkweed stands this summer. Instead, use a weed whip to take down about one third of an area's milkweed plants around mid-June; then do the same to a different third of the plants in mid-July. "What I guess will happen, on that new growth, is you'll see a lot more eggs and caterpillars," he said. **Keith Matheny** Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

MEMBERSHIP DUES

It's that time of year ladies - time for those pesky dues. Paying them in a timely manner will guarantee your contact information will be printed in the new Yearbook. Dues are \$26 for Regular Members, and \$36 for Associates, same as last year. Be sure to bring your checkbook to the next meeting. If you are not going to be at the March meeting send the check to Barb. Barbara Lowes, Treasurer

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 18th District IIB Meeting. \$25.00 Howell, Livingston County Public Safety Bldg. \$ in by 4/01/19

June 5 & 6 Michigan Garden Club Conference in Traverse City.

PLEASE SAVE. CUT AND POST BY YOUR COMPUTER

National Garden Clubs Inc.,
www.gardenclub.org

Central Region NGC
www.ngcentralregion.org

MGC District 2II B
<https://mgcdistricts2b.weebly.com/>

Michigan Garden Clubs
www.michigangardenclubs.org

Facebook: The Garden Club of Greater Lansing
The Garden Club of Greater Lansing
www.gardenclubofgreaterlansing.org

MARCH RECIPES

Cinnamon Sugar Biscotti

6 Tbs softened butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg plus 1 egg yolk
1 tsp vanilla or almond extract
2 cups flour
1 tsp baking powder
1/4 tsp salt
1-2 tsp cinnamon

For Topping

1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp cinnamon
1 egg beaten

1. Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add egg and yolk, beating well. Add extract.
2. In separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Whisk to blend together.
3. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, one cup at a time, mixing together to form a stiff dough.
4. Shape dough into a long log about 3 in. X 10-12 in. Place on parchment-lined baking sheet.

Topping

Brush with beaten egg, and sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon.
Bake 40-45 minutes in preheated 325 degree oven.

5. Remove from oven and while still warm, slice diagonally into 3/4-1" thick slices. Place slices back on baking sheet, sliced side down. Sprinkle with remaining sugar and cinnamon. Place back in oven for 15 minutes until just golden.

6. Let cool completely, store in airtight container.

*Will be firm - good for dunking.

Pistachio Cake & Cream Cheese Frosting

Cake:

1 box yellow cake mix
3 boxes pistachio pudding (instant dry mix)
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup milk
1 cup sour cream
4 eggs

Oven 350 degrees

1. Combine all cake ingredients with electric mixer. Mixture will be thick.
2. Pour into greased bundt pan.
3. Bake 1 hour. Cool.

Frosting:

8 oz. softened cream cheese
1/2 cup softened butter
2 tsp vanilla
3 cups powdered sugar
2 Tbs milk

Whip all frosting ingredients together. Add additional powdered sugar as needed. Frost the cooled cake. *Makes a generous amount of frosting for bundt cake.