



Master Gardener News

A monthly publication of the St. Louis Master Gardeners

August 2004

Feature Writers

Anita Joggerst –Website Update

Holly Parks – Book Review

John Stephens – Q&A

Connie Alwood – Bird Bath

All contributing writers will be noted with a byline

A Word from the Editor, by Stacy Rolfe

Well, another year humbled by the St. Louis Post Dispatch Great Garden Contest. My word, what's a person got to do to win this thing?? Every year, I put my best foot, I mean photo-forward, seal the envelope with a kiss and wait for my little red light to flash on my answering machine announcing that my entry has won - anything, (I'd take an honorable mention at this point). And I can imagine my sheer joy at the thought of knowing that all the time I spend in my yard has not only paid off but in some way been validated by a third party - other than my mother. I let myself get all caught up in the whole idea of winning the contest - how surprised everyone would be since I never tell anyone except my husband and kids that I enter. I would proudly

display my "best garden" marker in my yard - the front yard that is, and fein my best ballplayer response to anyone who comments with replies such as, "Why thank you but, really my yard looks so good because it butts up to your and it's your yard that makes such a good blend with mine - it should really be a team award". But, alas, the award continues to elude me. Perhaps one year a new category will come up that will offer me a better shot at it...hmmm what could that be...think, think, think...how about best garden for those born on December 18, 1962.



What's Inside

MBG Receives Award for Garden Excellence

Book Review

Horticulture Co-Op Field Day

Q&A

Bird Bath

Advisory Board Minutes



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN



Missouri Master Gardener
University Outreach & Extension

To provide research-based horticultural information to the public for community service and gardening pleasure.



Q&A with John Stephens

Q: *What could cause the formation of those ugly growths at the tips of the branches of my mature white ash tree?*

A: Those misshapen growths are ash flower galls caused by an eriophyid mite that infests the male flowers of ash trees. After egg-laying, affected flowers develop abnormally to form irregular galls that tend to cluster. Each gall may contain several eggs. Kelthane sprays, applied in spring at bud-swell will provide control.

Q: *Can I grow Crenshaw melons from seeds recovered from a store-bought specimen?*



A: Try it. Wash the recovered seeds to remove pulp and dry them at room temperature on paper towels. Plant seeds, 4 to 6 per hill, about 1/4-inch deep in a sunny site containing well-drained soil. Approximately 90 days are required to reach maturity, so don't delay. Be alert to control insects and diseases as necessary. The Crenshaw melon belongs to the winter melon group, which refers to the

light color of its flesh and has no relationship to the period of marketing and/or use

Q: *What are the green balls and the greenish twig-growth which I'm seeing on my bald cypress tree?*

A: The green balls, about one inch in diameter, are cones, the normal seed-bearing bodies of the bald cypress, *Taxodium distichum*. The greenish white growths are twig galls caused by egg deposition of the female cypress twig gall midge, a tiny insect that somewhat resembles a very small mosquito or gnat. The larvae, orange maggots, overwinter in the galls. Good sanitation during fall and winter will usually provide acceptable control.

Q: *Should I transplant the hybrid lupines, which I started this spring, into my garden now?*



A: Generally, hybrid lupines do not succeed in the St. Louis region because of hot, humid conditions. Also, because they resent any root disturbance, I suggest that you continue to grow them as container plants. Choose a protected site that receives some morning sun and keep them well-watered but not soggy. If they survive the summer, bury the pots, (up to their brims), in a mulched, protected site for the winter. Hybrid lupines tend to be short-lived.

Q: *What has happened to cause so many of the stiff-needle pines in my neighborhood to die this spring?*

A: Sphaeropsis blight, (formerly Diplodia tip blight), is an especially devastating fungal disease of 2- and 3-needle pine trees growing under stress. It has hit areas of the St. Louis community, (e.g., the Creve Coeur/ Ladue corridor), very hard this spring where previously infected pine trees were subjected to unusual stress due to excessively wet soils. Dead trees should be removed promptly and all debris containing foliage and cones destroyed. It is interesting to note that this disease rarely affects species in their native ranges.

Q: *What can I do to rescue a tall white pine, which is leaning precariously because of recent storms?*

A: Do not attempt to correct this condition yourself. Consult a member firm of the St. Louis Arborist Association for professional advice and service.



Q: *How can I safely control the weeds that are growing in my inclined beds of Vinca minor?*

A: Such plants can best be controlled by hand weeding. There are no selective chemical sprays that can be recommended for this job. Take care, while working in these beds, to avoid crushing crowns



or stems of the Vinca plants. Such wounds may lead to serious infections by microorganisms responsible for crown/stem rots.

Q: *Can I dress my yew hedge with some light trimming now?*

A: Yes, but keep it light. Delay any major pruning until early next spring—just prior to the start of new growth. Remember to maintain your hedge broader at the base than at the top to keep plants dense and compact.

Book Review



Garden Stone, Creative Landscaping with Plants and Stone, is an interesting book for the gardener who views the garden space as *artistic space*. The book is filled with detailed instructions for creative projects using stone in the garden. This includes the expected uses such as rock gardens, walls, walkways and steps. But it also provides plans for Japanese gardens, dry streambeds, swales, hills, ravines, water gardens and stone ornaments. Each topic includes design suggestions, how to select and place stone to achieve different effects and precise illustrated instructions for cutting and setting the stone. You can build a labyrinth, a mosaic, a waterfall or a bench following the detailed outlines and

diagrams. Four pages are devoted to different ways to move stone as well as cutting stone and working with mortar.

Garden Stone is equally dedicated to the landscaping for stone projects. Each section includes the most appropriate plants for the project type and site condition plus careful outlines on how to prepare the appropriate soil mix, insert the plants and maintain the planting.

The simplest excuse to pick up this book is the lavish photography. The pictures will draw you from one project to the next, tempting you to try another project. The plant combinations alone are wonderful and the stonework is art that anyone can copy.

Garden Stone by Barbara Pleasant is a 239 page soft cover book published by Storey Books. It is available for \$19.95 at Walden Books in West County Shopping Center.



Bird Bath

Welcome to Connie Alwood, MG Class 2004. Connie is a former English teacher at McClellan High School and now lives in Ferguson with his wife, Jo Etta. He was also co-author of Birds of the St. Louis Area: Where and When to Find Them, published by Webster Groves Nature Study

Society in 1995.

In May of 1972 a helicopter with the Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, aboard landed on the Christian Brothers College football field. After being introduced to a local birder, the two men jumped into a waiting limo and soon arrived at a designated spot. Within a few minutes the Secretary of Defense saw a lifebird--Eurasian Tree Sparrow (passer montanus). The only reliable place to see this species in the United States is in the St. Louis area.

On April 25, 1870 German immigrants to St. Louis released a number of European birds--Chaffinches, European Goldfinches, Linnets and twenty Eurasian Tree Sparrows in Lafayette Park in south St. Louis. Only the Eurasian Tree Sparrow (ETS) successfully established a breeding population. Eight years later its cousin, the House Sparrow, was released in Central Park in Manhattan, New York and has been far more successful. In fact the latter bird has driven the ETS from its established nesting areas in the city of St. Louis. Nevertheless, the ETS has expanded its range into the suburbs and farmland in St. Charles County and nearby Illinois counties. We even have reports of a few showing up in Wisconsin. Some remain in the city but there are not many reported in Lafayette Park.

Since many gardeners also try to attract birds, chances are that the ETS is in your garden.



This past summer Dennis Bozzay had seventeen breeding pair in his garden in Crestwood.

He attracts this colonial nester by placing House Wren boxes throughout his small yard. The holes for these boxes are too small for the House Sparrow yet large enough for the ETS. The two species are really weaver finches, not sparrows, but like sparrows, they are easily attracted to bird feeders, eating whatever seed you provide.

Unlike the House Sparrow, the ETS in winter will gather in flocks of fifty to one hundred birds in the farmlands around the St. Louis area. Another difference between them is that the House Sparrow male and female look different (dimorphic) while the male and female ETS look alike.

Like James Schlesinger, literally thousands of birders have visited St. Louis to "tick off" the ETS on their lifelists.



Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Sparrow

Not to be confused with the House Sparrow (photo below)



Missouri Botanical Garden Wins 2004 Horticulture Award for Garden Excellence

Horticulture Magazine, in partnership with the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (AABGA), has given its 2004 "Garden of Excellence" Award to the Missouri Botanical Garden.

The annual award honors one botanical garden or arboretum that exemplifies the highest standards of horticultural practice, design and display. The winning institution is selected by its peers and will be featured in *Horticulture Magazine* next year.

Qualifications are based on the highest standards of horticultural excellence; gardening practices appropriate to a local or regional environment, a demonstrated commitment to plant collections and to a national or regional horticultural community; and encouragement of gardening students at all levels through innovative horticultural practices.

"The awards committee and board members all agreed that the Missouri Botanical Garden was most deserving because of its comprehensive horticulture program that is a model for public gardens and gardeners around the country," said Kathleen Socolosky, director of the University of California-Davis Arboretum and chair of

the AABGA Awards Committee. "The committee agreed that the Garden deserves this award in large part because of the tremendous horticultural efforts, under the guidance of Dr. Shannon Smith, that have been evident in recent years."

Dr. Smith, director of horticulture, accepted the award on behalf of the Garden on June 5 at the AABGA annual meeting in Dallas.

"The Garden is blessed with a superlative horticulture staff led by Dr. G. Shannon Smith," said Dr. Peter Raven, director of the Missouri Botanical Garden. "We're very proud of this award and pleased to share the splendid beauty of the Garden with the people of the St. Louis region and other visitors."

The 79-acre Missouri Botanical Garden – often called "Shaw's Garden" by St. Louisans – was founded by English businessman Henry Shaw, who opened it to the public in 1859 as a center for horticultural display, research and education. Considered one of the top three botanical gardens in the world, the Garden is a National Historic Landmark and renowned center for horticultural display, botanical research and education.

Outstanding horticultural displays include a vibrant tropical rainforest inside the Climatron conservatory, a 14-acre Japanese strolling garden, an English woodland, a



Boxwood parterre and Chinese, German and Victorian gardens. More than 4,000 trees on the grounds include some rare and unusual varieties and a few stately specimens dating back to the 19th century.

A wide variety of home gardening programs are offered on site, online and throughout the St. Louis region, including the Plant Doctor service and PlantFinder database. The William T. Kemper Center for Home Gardening is the nation's largest non-profit gardening information center, operated in partnership with University Outreach and Extension. It includes 23 residential demonstration gardens and a resource library staffed by professionals and volunteer Master Gardeners.



Mark your calendars now to attend the upcoming Fall Field Days:

Green Industry Field Day,
Thursday, September 9th

Gardeners' Field Day, Saturday,
September 11th

For program information, please click on their website:
www.hortco-op.org

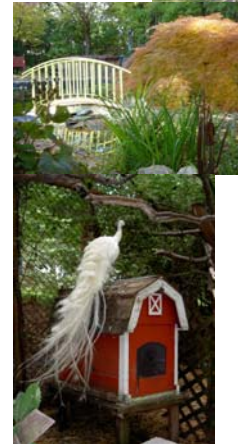
Advisory Board Meeting
Minutes for June 29, 2004
may be viewed by visiting
this link:

<http://outreach.missouri.edu/stlouismg/minutes0604.htm>.



Don't forget to pick up your Master Gardener shirt at the Kemper Center reception desk. Shirts are \$18 and look great while out doing your volunteer work.

Did you miss the tour of Maxine Mirowitz' garden? Here's a peek at her amazing yard...



Don't forget to email me pictures of your yard. Send to



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