There is an African proverb that states, “The world was not left to us by our parents; it was lent to us by our children. What a profound thought. Sadly, however, as we look about the condition of this beautiful planet that God provided for us, we can readily see how it is being abused, mistreated, and even destroyed in so many ways.

Our oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams either are or are becoming horribly polluted. The fish in the ocean are so full of mercury, it is causing a devastating health problem. Our basic food chain is being compromised. What do we do when that can’t be fixed? The very air that we breathe, without which we would quickly die, is full of contaminants, pollutants, etc. How much more of these can we expect our atmosphere to hold? Our soils are sickened with herbicides, pesticides, even dioxin in some areas. Remember Times Beach? Ice caps that have existed for millions of years are now melting at a dramatic rate. What’s the possibility of our coastal cities being inundated in the not too distant future as a result?

How could we have done so much damage in such a short period of time? Oh, it isn’t just our country; all countries have had something to contribute. Nevertheless, while we are not the largest country in the world, we are one of the largest polluters.

I came across some interesting facts that are not only deplorable, but frightening as well. For example, each year something like fourteen billion pounds of trash is dumped into the ocean. The world’s biggest landfill is not even on land, it is in the Pacific Ocean. The deleterious effect on the creatures of the ocean must be tremendous. Actually, it is estimated that forty percent of all sea life has been destroyed over the last twenty-five years as a result of human pollution.

The rain forests are the lungs of our planet, and yet each day the Amazon rain forest alone loses two thousand trees per minute. That is enough to fill seven football fields. Here in the United States, we have less than four percent of our original forests remaining. In just the last three decades, we have consumed one third of the planets natural resources.

Plastic bags and plastic bottles are another danger and a gigantic nuisance. Each year plastic kills hundreds of thousands of whales, fish, birds, seals, and turtles, to name just a few. It is well to remember that it takes five hundred years for plastic and aluminum to decompose. Americans use about fifty-seven billion pounds of plastic each year, but we only recycle three percent of it. Each recycled piece does make a difference.

Lastly, twenty-seven percent of all food produced each year in the United States for human consumption is tossed into the garbage. That amounts to forty-eight million tons of wasted food each year, or about 163 pounds of food for every person in this country. Approximately 49 million people could have been fed by that wasted food.

It must have been about thirty years ago, we had some of our friends visiting for the specific purpose of showing us their slides from their vacation out west. I will never forget one slide. In fact, I’ve thought about it several times over the years. It was high in the mountains and he had taken a picture of a small rabbit. I was commenting about what a great scene it was. Our son, probably ten at the time, quickly pointed out a McDonald’s plastic stirring stick that was lying on the ground next to the rabbit. I think we were all taken aback. I know I was. Even high in the mountains over thirty years ago could be found evidence of our polluted world.

(continued on page 2)
No one of us can fix everything, but each of us can fix some things. I have been using reusable bags when I shop. It is really a good place to start. Each week, I bring my recyclables up for pickup. I carry water or other liquids in reusable containers. Not only are plastic bottles major pollutants, they can be dangerous as well when used repeatedly.

There are so many things we can do to halt the pollution and destruction. It isn’t fair to our children and grandchildren and generations to come to continue to cause such damage. We must all, everyone of us share in solving the problems now. I want my children and grandchildren to enjoy the world that I have been privileged to know. I’m sure you do also.

Here are a few quotes that I would like to share:

“It is not enough to understand the natural world. The point is to defend and preserve it.” —Edward Abbey

“In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences.” —Robert Green Ingersoll

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” —The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

This false consolation didn’t fool my body. After the first season, I had a stress fracture in my left foot, the following fall I ended the season with a rebuilt thumb joint, and am currently limping from a stress fracture in the right foot - all the result of my “extreme” gardening. It is a race to see if the landscaping gets finished before my parts do.

In compensation for my aches and pains, my garden has gotten some positive responses from the neighbors. In spite of being a new look on a street of traditional turf and foundation plantings, the lady across the street has expressed delight in the view she has of my garden, walkers stop by and chat about my progress, and one day a lady stopped her car in the middle of the street to call a compliment.I am looking forward to spring and my next gardening adventures, but plan to be more mindful of my physical limits this season. What’s that saying about stopping to smell the roses?
From Matt’s Desk

This morning I had the opportunity to do a radio program with Karen Stratmann at KLPW radio. Our topics generally focused on horticulture and I did a plug for the Master Gardener program. I know some of you have also spent some time in front of the microphone sharing your knowledge and love of gardening with the public. Media provides us an avenue to reach the gardener who may not have the time to come to a meeting, but could gain from your information. Consider doing a radio program, writing a newspaper article, or options the internet offers, like Twitter.

At the end of each year we ask you for a report of your volunteer hours. These reports are compiled and a state summary is developed to show the impact our program has in Missouri. These impact reports are valuable in showing decision makers what we do and why our program should continue. In the past two years, an on line reporting system has been developed that allows you to enter your volunteer hours and contacts. The website is found at: http://report.missourimastergardener.com/index.php. You can enroll and get your own user name and password and start entering your volunteer information right away. I can see a benefit for you in this system, in that you can enter your data as you do the work and not try to remember in December what you did in April. If you have questions about this system, please let me know.

Matt

In Defense of Winter

Rosalie M. Laune, Franklin County Master Gardener / In Collaboration with Michele Warmund, University of Missouri

I’ve heard a lot of lamenting from friends and neighbors about our unusually “harsh” winters. Actually I think our last few winters have been too “mild.” But then I’m one of that rare breed who likes winter. I don’t tell this to many people, so keep it to yourself, and I know it’s a strange confession coming from a gardener. Don’t get alarmed I don’t think I’m psychotic, maybe a little neurotic, but then aren’t most of us just a little neurotic.

I look forward to winter as a time of hibernation. Since my friend and I don’t walk until later in the mornings, I stay in bed longer, drinking my first cup of coffee while reading another chapter in my latest suspense thriller. I also while away many hours writing my travel journals, reliving the trips I’ve taken in the previous year. Then of course there are the holidays. I like to decorate for Christmas. And I always vow to get that spring house cleaning (from the previous spring) done; ‘hum’ how many years am I behind on that one.

I do feel a little guilty as I await weather predictions promising snow—because I know not everyone is retired and has the luxury of just snuggling in. However, one day while I was browsing the net for newsletters articles— which is what happens when I don’t get enough submissions—I came across an article by Michele Warmund, Professor of Horticulture, Division of Plant Sciences at the University of Missouri, which vindicates winter and those of us who enjoy it. Below are excerpts from her article:

Chilling Requirement for Fruit and Nut Trees:

“...this is the perfect weather for fruit and nut trees. These trees require a period of low temperatures in the range of 32 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit during winter to produce flowers and fruit later in the growing season. The number of hours necessary to fulfill the chilling requirement varies among fruits crops and cultivars. Peach, plum, cherry and apple trees grown in Missouri generally need 800 to 1200 hours of chilling temperatures. Black walnut trees have a long chilling requirement of more than 1400 hours. Because of the long chilling period, walnuts are one of the last trees to break bud and start growing in the spring.

While many of us enjoy days in February and March when the temperature rises above 60, this is not good for fruit trees that have already fulfilled their chilling requirement. With warm temperatures, fruit buds deacclimate rapidly. After this occurs, fruit buds can be damaged when the temperature quickly drop below freezing. Unfortunately, the closer we get to spring, fruit buds become more susceptible to frost injury. In spite of the low temperatures only 5-10% of the fruits buds on a tree are necessary to produce a full crop.

So far now, take a trip to a warm sunny spot and leave the fruit and nut trees behind in the cold winter weather!”
I’ve thought about writing an article for the newsletter, but I’m not an expert in any area, much less gardening. I try, but that’s about it.

If everything I had bought and planted had lived, you probably couldn’t find the house as it would be in a jungle. And every year I think—Oh, that worked, so I’ll do it again next year. Well, someone needs to tell me why, when I plant the same thing in the same spot the next year, it looks entirely different. Actually, more often I say—that didn’t work so I won’t do THAT again. And I don’t-usually. Sometimes I’m a slow learner. But I enjoy gardening, especially since earning my pruning shears (that’s the same as stripes in the army) and becoming a Master Gardener.

One of the lessons learned I would like to share with the new gardeners is to plan for the plant at its mature size. Years ago I planted a long row of shrubs—really it’s rather pretty with something in bloom at most times of the year. But in the center of the row I planted two Dwarf Blue Willows with a Nine-Bark between. Two mistakes here—believing the word Dwarf (they weren’t trees, but huge shrubs so I guess that qualifies), and not considering the Nine-Bark. If any of you haven’t added that shrub to your area, it’s really pretty with different colors on one plant. Needless to say I had to transplant the center plant. The good news is that it is doing great. The bad news is that the willows aren’t. Old age gets to all of us sometime, including an apricot tree, which died after a long and fruitful life, so now we must replace it and I really liked that tree.

The second lesson I have learned is that you WON’T EVER GET IT ALL DONE. I have often thought that I would love to be able to say “the yard, the gardens and the flowers are all done.” Won’t happen; but that’s OK too.

I used to make a list: weed the south flower garden, weed the round garden, put the plants I bought into some garden, etc. Then I found out I was making the same list every time. So now my list consists of much more general things, like “work outside”. It would probably help if I wouldn’t keep coming up with new ideas for another area.

And the third lesson is to just enjoy the doing. It isn’t necessarily only the end result that is fun, but the journey to get there. My yard and gardens will never be perfect, but I sure have fun just working on things. Every now and then I’m pleasantly surprised that some plant looks great and is in the perfect spot such as my elephant ears.

So I load all three of my small dogs beside me on the seat of my ranger and go off to another project, or garden to work. They don’t realize that it’s a short ride, but they sure have fun getting there. Did I mention my helpers are into the “digging” part of gardening? Sometimes we’ll just drive around the yard with their ears flapping in the breeze and it sure feels good to laugh. I know spring is just around the corner and we’ll be out there again.
**Confessions of a Frustrated Farmer**

Robert Sinclair, Franklin County Master Gardener

When I retired in 2000, my wife had some concerns. However, she encouraged me to do so. We wanted to travel some, but also desired "together time". After leaving the farm where I grew up in 1963, she often referred to me as her frustrated farmer. Over the years we generally had acreage with real soil in Iowa that allowed for a garden. After our kids went to college and became independent, we left the Hawkeye State and in 1992 moved to our present location.

My first feeble attempt at Missouri gardening was an utter failure. There were too many rocks, too much shade, too much poor soil, too limited cleared space and limited time. I quit gardening.

My first major "retirement" project was to develop a waterfall and two fish ponds/water gardens. These occupy a space about 60 feet long by 8-15 feet wide by our house and drive and include rocks from over 30 states including Alaska and Hawaii. It is an on going project.

However, my desire for a real garden grew as I had more time. But I still had too much shade, too many rocks, trees and poor soil. After assessing the situation, I determined that the most sun would hit a narrow area north of our house. It is an earth contact structure so it did not block the sun. I estimated that there would be five to six hours of direct sun per day. I had read about lasagna gardens using compost, peat and other vegetative material arranged in several layers. My first garden was 35 x 8 x 2 feet. The results were rewarding.

My next raised bed required more time and labor. By cutting several oak and hickory trees and clearing the area about 60 feet long by 8 feet wide by our house. The results were rewarding.

My next raised bed required more time and labor. By cutting several oak and hickory trees and clearing the area about 60 feet long by 8 feet wide by our house. The results were rewarding.

The first year (2006) was OK; since then I have been very pleased. Various friends and church members have enjoyed the results as well. I continue to add some compost from time to time. Last year I added three large loads from Purina Farms compost operation. It wasn't free, but it is an excellent product and well worth the charge. The area has been expanded somewhat each year. We now can green beans, tomato juice and beets and freeze some shell outs, etc.

This project has allowed me to overcome some of my "frustrated farmer" tendencies and enjoy the FRUITS of my labor. I highly recommend the Master Gardener program, as well as the recently completed Master Naturalist program. Retirement is great. It is not hard to stay busy at home and as a volunteer with these and other projects.

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**The Best Laid Plans . . . Oft Go Astray**

Lynn Moll, Franklin County Master Gardener

I tried some seeds last year and decided that it just wasn't worth it. But there were all the fun things at the store, so I bought the little pots and some mix.

Today I planted some seeds of leeks, chives, and arugula. As I was doing this I thought, "What a very imprecise process!" I bought the cells and seed potting mix because last year the little round cells didn't work well. So, I thought, "I can at least add the soil and water to a little pot." But when it came right down to it, the potting mix floated out the top when I watered it and it was all a big mess. My hands got so messy that I couldn't find the seeds!

How do you get just a couple of seeds? How far down in the mix do you go? Well, then I got water all over my seed packages and they fell apart completely. Water ran all down the table onto the floor. I put them under a strong light and covered them in plastic. Actually, I have very little hope for anything. I am still a "seed doubter." Does it really work??

P.S. Lana, Doris, and I got some seeds of a strawberry plant from Jim Shuck in September 2008. I kept them in the refrigerator in soil in a plastic bag all winter. I soaked them and got off the seed coat for several days. I planted them in seed soil and at the end of the summer I had four 1-inch sprouts. One made it most of the way through this winter. Now it has lost its leaf. How do I feel? You guessed it. I am still a "seed doubter."
### Mark Your Calendars

**Rosalie Laune, Franklin County Master Gardener**

In May, the Minnesota Master Gardener Coordinator is hosting a garden tour to Scotland with three nights in London and the world famous Chelsea Flower Show. Anyone is welcome, not just Master Gardeners.

Departing in late September, the Wisconsin State Coordinator, Susan Mahr, is hosting a Garden Safari to South Africa for Master Gardeners and their families and friends. The website for more information is: [http://www.hiddentreasuresbotanicaltours.com/mastergardener.html](http://www.hiddentreasuresbotanicaltours.com/mastergardener.html)

For important updates and news about upcoming events relating to MO Masters Gardeners check the state website: [http://mg.missouri.edu/index.htm](http://mg.missouri.edu/index.htm)

### Gardening Goals for 2010

**Evelyn Lucas, Franklin County Master Gardener**

In mid February my husband and I attended the Agritourism Small Fruit and Berry Convention at Lake Ozark, MO. The emphasis was on small farms marketing their crops at Farmers Markets or U-Pic Farms.

We attended two days of seminars on Brambles, Blueberries, pest management, Web design, etc. The booths were very original and each one was tended by a friendly, knowledgeable sponsor. We came home full of ideas and energized.

I think after sitting thru the seminar on tunnel strawberries, we might try that method over my raised box beds.

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### An invitation from Ralph Gildehaus, a graduate of the Master Gardener class of 2009:

Please study the architects’ drawings of the Historic Downtown Washington Post Office (right). I think this could be a really exciting project and I am interested in sharing the project with others who would like to get involved. There will be renovation on the building and some of the areas will not be ready for planting this spring, however the Second Street side will remain the same.

One thought is to do a Historic Native garden. I would like to find plants from older properties labeling the plant with its name and the location that it originated from, thus becoming an interesting garden that has learning and historic values. I am looking for people with plants and or time to help with this project.

Anyone interested in working with Ralph on this project can reach him at:

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