



# The BACK FENCE

Check out the local MG website: [www.muextension.missouri.edu/gkcmg/](http://www.muextension.missouri.edu/gkcmg/)

## To herb or not to herb

By Judy Aull, Intern Class of 2007

If the idea of having a landscape that is not only beautiful but also useful appeals to you, then you should consider planting herbs. Using plants that provide fragrance, flavor, health benefits and color as well as beauty gives the garden the added advantage of versatility. Herbs are a good choice for both the novice and the experienced gardener. Most can be grown easily without a lot of effort. Most suffer from very few pests and diseases that plague other plants, and most are comfortable in any garden.

Herbs are defined as “any plants of a non-woody nature, which die after blooming” They can be used whole or in part, fresh or dried, in many applications. They also improve the health of the garden as their aromas help to protect other plants from invading insects. The use of basil planted beside tomatoes is a tried and true example. Summer savory, coriander, and other annuals also provide protection for nearby vegetation. Why? Egg-laying moths that produce caterpillars that eat our plants are confused by the fragrance of these herbs.

### Classification of herbs

Herbs are usually divided into four groups—culinary, aromatic, ornamental and medicinal.

### Culinary herbs

If you are a cook, you want to plant culinary herbs. When we mention herbs, this category is the first one we think of. The oil in the leaves of the herb gives its aroma and flavor to the cuisine. Without these seasonings, imagine how tasteless our food would be. The herbs usually grown for culinary use are:

chives	rosemary
dill	thyme
lemon basil	summer savory
parsley	sweet basil
marjoram	taragon
mint	

If you choose to have a bed dedicated to the culinary herbs, (hopefully near your kitchen door), a good design is important for your convenience. At the back of the bed, tall upright plants of tarragon and rosemary could be planted with chives and garlic chives in front of them. Use low-growing thyme or curly parsley in the front as a border. Scattering in a few purple basil plants would add color.

If Italian cuisine is your specialty, you should plant basil and oregano. These two herbs have many varieties that are available to the gardener. If tea is where your interest lies, plant the herbs that could be used in your teapot. For instance, use lemon balm, mint, anise hyssop, lavender,



### In this issue

To herb or not to herb . . . . .	1
Along the alley . . . . .	4
Nikki in the garden . . . . .	5
Stone meets stonecrop: Hardscape and drought tolerant ground cover . . . . .	6
How do you squash a squash bug? . . . . .	7
10 reasons why it's Wonderful to Be a Master Gardener . . . . .	8
Arnold's in LeRoy, Kansas . . . . .	9
Demystified pruning . . . . .	10

sage or peppermint.

### Aromatic herbs

Aromatic herbs are just what you think they would be—plants with pleasant smelling flowers or foliage. Their appealing fragrance comes from their oils, which can be used to

**Herbs continued on page 2**

## Herbs continued from page 1

add scents to many items.

There are several cosmetic companies who produce herbal shampoos, cosmetics, and bath mixtures. However, wouldn't it be more satisfying to make your own cosmetics with herbs you have grown in your garden? For the bath, good choices of herbs to plant would be angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), roses, lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), and mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*). And there are still others that work well in the tub, such as rosemary and fennel for a lift and comfrey and chamomile for relaxation. Tie several tablespoons of the chosen herb in a piece of cotton or washcloth and soak the bag in the warm water.

Cherchez, a popular New York boutique, specializes in growing and drying these herbs and using them in popular sachets, potpourris, wreaths, and pillows. Some of their favorite aromatic herbs are rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), scented geraniums (*Pelargonium* species), sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), and chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*). The owners, Mel and Barbara Ohrbach, have written a book, *The Scented Room*, that gives the reader a clear understanding of the usefulness and versatility of herbs. This book can be found in Kansas City bookstores and in local libraries.

## Ornamental herbs

Many of the ornamental herbs grown today are considered to be perennials. One of the most popular uses for the bright colors and foliage of the ornamental is in fresh and dried arrangements. These herbs are beautiful alone but are at their best as companions for other flowers. Planting them in the same beds with your flowers adds color and interest to your garden. Some options for orna-



**Sweet woodruff**

mentals could be lavenders (*Lavandula* spp.), catmint (*Nepeta* spp.), bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), calamint (*Calamintha nepeta*) and feverfew (*Chrysanthemum parthenium*). Other good choices are artemisia (*Artemisia* species), variegated thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), and mint (*Mentha*).

## Medicinal Herbs

Medicinal herbs can be used today in many ways to enhance your health. The most common and most often used method is in the form of tea. Some people drink herbal teas for their delightful taste, but herbal teas have also been used for therapeutic purposes; as a mood elevator, for indigestion, upset stomach, insomnia, and respiratory illness.

Herbal baths are not only pleasant but they are a form of old medicinal treatments. They were used for soaking away tension and stress and relieving skin irritations. One-half cup of dried rosemary flowers, comfrey roots and thyme in a tub of warm water was said to have relieved puffiness. A warm sage and mugwort bath was used to relieve aching muscles and

joints. These baths are still used today.

Many prescriptions today contain drugs that are derived from natural sources. Two examples are the heart medicine, Digitalis, which is a derivative of foxglove, (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Echinacea, a derivative of the purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), which is commonly used for respiratory illness.

The American pioneers in the 1800's depended very heavily on the healing power of herbs. Each pioneer family had its own herb garden and the mother was both doctor and pharmacist to her family and workers. The John Wornall House Museum at 61st Terrace and Wornall Road in Kansas City, Missouri has an herb garden whose history dates back to the 1850's. It is still tended today by a committee of volunteers.

## Design

Herb garden design can be as varied as the gardeners who plan them. Some gardens are formal, which include the knot garden with its manicured herb hedges forming a rope pattern. There are many other intricate designs, such as the spiral, the diamond and the compass. Features can include geometric shapes and narrow paths. The edges are crisp and the plants are symmetrically placed. One of the simplest designs is pie-shaped beds around a central feature such as a birdbath or sundial. Ideally the plants should be far enough apart to allow them to be distinct when fully grown.

In an informal garden, the herbs should be placed in a random, more casual manner and grouped closer together so that at maturity they seem to blend together. Paths can be made of gravel, mulch, earth or grass. This type of garden can become overgrown and look unkempt if not carefully planned.

In any design, when placing plants,

**Herbs continued on page 3**

## Herbs continued from page 2

use the same design principles that you use in any other garden. Basically arrange the height of the plants from short in the front to taller in the middle or back. Colors, textures, and bloom times are very essential to a garden for interest, so do your planning carefully. Most garden designs today are simple. Basically all that is required is just a “few feet of sunny, well-drained space”. For those of you who want to try very special designs, there is help at the nearest bookstore or library.

### Soil

If you want to have a successful herb garden, one of the most important things you can do is to prepare the soil properly. According to Thomas DeBaggio, owner of Earthworks Herb Gardens, a successful herb nursery in Virginia, “dig your garden a depth of 12”, then add 6” of compost or sphagnum peat moss” with a little perlite for good drainage. (University of Missouri publication recommends several bushels of compost to each 100 square feet of garden area.) DeBaggio also says, “There is almost no soil that doesn’t benefit from the addition of humus.” It holds moisture in sand and loosens clay for better drainage.

Average quality soil is all that is necessary for growing herbs. For good growth and flowers, the soil should be neutral or slightly alkaline with a pH of 6 to 7.5. Before planting, check the pH of your soil. To test the soil or you



**Stevia, the sweet herb**

all herb images courtesy of wikipedia



**Vietnamese coriander, rau ram**

### Site and light

Many of the herbs that we grow today are natives of the Mediterranean, which means they like a lot of sun. Most need “full sun”, which means at least 6 hrs of direct sun a day.

These sun-loving herbs can survive a little shade but will not produce the best quantity or quality of oil and flavor. Some herbs prefer shade, such as,

angelica	
chervil	mint
chives	parsley
costmary	sweet cicely
lemon balm	tarragon
lovage	woodruff

Have you ever thought about the amount of sunlight your garden receives and how it affects your plants? If not, take a day and follow the sun across your yard. Watch and take notes every hour or two. Then decide where you should plant your sun-loving herbs. Most people have some usable sun in their yards but it may require planting in moveable containers. Growing herbs in pots and containers outdoors allows you a little more creativity in the design of your garden. You can put your color and texture exactly where you want it. You can decorate your yard in the same way you would decorate the interior of your home.

Container gardening has the same requirements as bed gardening; correct sun, soil and moisture. However, there are two exceptions, potted herbs cannot draw nutrients or water from the ground so they must be given diluted fertilizer monthly and extra moisture daily. Herbs grown in con-

can send a small soil sample to your local cooperative extension service. If you need to lower the acidity of your soil, just dig in some lime along with the humus. You can buy lime in pellets or powder form at your neighborhood nursery.

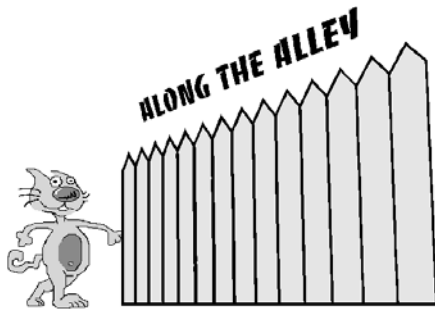
A little tip on Kansas City soil, we have so much limestone in the ground here that it brings most of our soil into the alkaline or neutral range. Acidic soil is very difficult to find in this area. The city water that we use for our plants is also alkaline. So be aware every time you water, you are adding alkalinity to the soil.

Five percent organic matter added in the topsoil assures the best performance of garden plants. This organic matter allows the soil to hold nutrients and water well and helps keep the soil porous and easy to work with.

### Fertilizer

While working the soil in your garden site, this is a good time to add organic fertilizer but with a light touch. Herbs are not like other plants, they prefer “not-too-fertile” soil and don’t need regular fertilizing. If over-fertilized, an herb will put on excessive growth and some of the fragrance and flavor will be lost. Once established, adding just a little compost (mushroom compost is highly recommended) in the fall is all that is necessary. Some herbs may need extra feeding. Your local nursery can give you advice about these herbs.

**Herbs continued on page 12**



by Joanne Couture, Class of 1991

*Play Garden Jeopardy: This native perennial received its odd common name because “their unusual hinge-like stems allow them to be bent into position and not spring back.” (Wayside Gardens) WHAT IS...? (Solution at end of article)*

**Lala Kumar** had a very busy spring with daughter Shruti’s May 31 marriage in Detroit. Four hundred guests were invited. Groom Ajay will be in his first year of medical residency this fall in Boston, where Shruti is in her last year of law school. Lala’s parents made their first visit to the U.S. for the occasion and will stay for two months. Lala’s son, Toshi, is a computer programming architect in D.C.

Several MGs were featured in *Kansas City Star* articles this spring.

**Chris Veach’s** (2001) photo showed her hugging a tree (*Little Green Steps*, 4/22/08, E1-2). Chris “got hooked” on trees when taking Hot Line calls for the MGs with the frequent plaintive question, “Can my tree be saved?” Planting too deeply, improper pruning, piling mulch high against the trunk (“mulch volcanoes”) can doom a young tree. Favorite tree? Her own tricolor beech (“slow to break dormancy”) and the lace-bark elm, quick-growing but hardy, admired for its trunk that peels to display attractive colors, and for its purplish leaves in autumn. Check it out at the Linda Hall Library’s wonderful grounds. What trees to avoid? Ash trees, possibly doomed by the emerald ash borer, could be wiped out in the future like our elms; Austrian pines,

threatened by diplodia tip blight; Scots pines’ wilt problems; and walnut trees, whose juglone-bearing roots poison many plants in the immediate vicinity. Incidentally, for Valentine’s Day Chris’s husband gave her a “21-foot telescoping pole saw.”

**Julie Koppen** (2002) promoted a greener lifestyle in the article *Local Color: Q & A*, (4/6/08, E2). Publisher of a local environmental living magazine *Greenability*, Julie offered tips on greener living: She uses “a cordless electric mower—gas lawn mowers are huge polluters. . . R-50 insulation made out of recycled newspapers. . . and for her printer, 100% recycled paper and 95% recycled file folders.” Julie grows vegetables from heirloom seed and loves “trying new natives, usually from seed.” Favorites include rose verbena, pale purple coneflower, wild bergamot, rose mallow, butterfly weed, and brown-eyed Susans; and shrubs such as wild hydrangea and white-flowered ninebark, whose many layers of bark peel off attractively. White-pink flowers appear in the spring, and reddish fruit in the fall.

**Elaine Scatizzi** (2007) uses “all the wonderful resources we received in class to try to solve some of my problem areas”—namely, shade. She’s trying ligularia ‘Big Leaf,’ “a ground-cover type with yellow flowers,” and *Lysimachia nummularis* ‘Moneywort,’ an old English herb whose leaves resemble the pence coin. It’s also called ‘Wandering Jenny,’ ‘Running Jenny,’ and ‘Creeping Joan’—makes you wonder about those wild medieval girls. She also planted an amur maple ‘Flame’ for its fall color. “It will be an exercise for pruning for me, as I will need to keep it fairly small. I’m learning a lot,” Elaine added. (So do we all, Elaine—and it never stops!)

**Nora Reinhardt** (2007) and husband Bob have “about 200 acres between Holt and Lawson.” (And you thought you were busy!) In addition

to perennial flowers and veggies, they have three apple trees—including a Granny Smith, the green Australian import—and are experimenting with small walnut and pecan trees from Missouri Conservation. (We’ll be expecting some pies, Nora!)

**Don Bjuland** (1992), gardenmeister of the MG trial plot at Community Gardens, spent his May birthday trying to get the heavy clay soil, clogged with the constant spring rains, into shape. It was like “crawling around on hands and knees over rough golf balls. . . . We’d need a ton of compost to help this problem.” Even “Big Bertha,” his “trusty grub ax,” didn’t help. He finally got his ‘Heritage’ seed potatoes planted. No one works harder physically for the MGs than Don. We’ll give you his report later this year.

**About Town:** Check out the new rain garden designed by students of the Kansas City Art Institute “to educate the public about the capture of rainwater” at Theis Park, Volker Boulevard and Oak Street. For more info, go to [www.kcai.edu/raingarden](http://www.kcai.edu/raingarden). And nearby, visit the Kauffman Memorial Gardens’ new resident cat, Crazy. A stray trapped at the Kansas City Zoo last fall, the gray tabby was “hired” to protect the Kauffman grounds from rabbits and rodents. According to the staff, Crazy has proven much more skillful than his late predecessor, Rocky, who preferred to snooze in the sun among the scampering chipmunks, or to curl up in the Conservatory’s potted palms.

Directly across from the Kauffman Gardens, between Rockhill Road and Troost, is the Discovery Center built on the site of the huge brick “car barn” where the old streetcars were cleaned, repaired and routed when 48th Street was the city limit. Building material for the Center was salvaged from demolished KC buildings. Observe the masonry artifacts in the walls, and

**Alley continued on page 5**

**Alley continued from page 4**

the roof decking and wooden display fixtures in the Nature Shop and the workshop windows. MGs who know the Center only from the evening Gardeners' Gathering meetings should check out the surrounding ten acres in the daytime. On land donated and shared by the Kauffman Foundation is a 10-acre quilt of rain gardens, urban prairie and wetlands, butterfly and wildflower gardens designed and planted by Powell Gardens staff. Frogs pop out of pocket ponds, and ducks and geese glide over the small lake. Well-marked mostly native plants are selected to entice year-round birds and other wildlife.

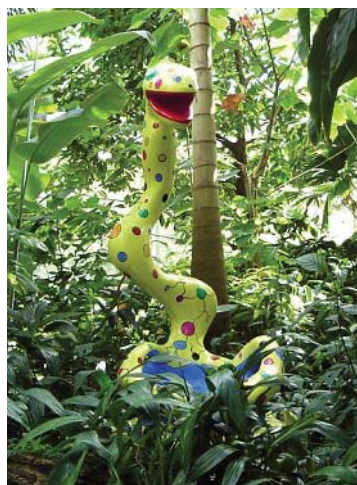
**Just Wondering:** Those of you who go to "the boats" or buy lottery tickets—did anyone happen to gamble on the "Reblooming Lilac" promoted by Michigan Bulb Company (yeah, that group) this spring? The 4-6' "super-hardy" shrub promised a first flush of blooms followed by flowers "all summer long often right up to the first frost of autumn." Or the "Canada Green grass seed that covers Super-Fast. . . In just 10 Days, a thick, green beautiful lawn you'll be proud of"?

If you did—and they performed—let me know (jcouture2003@yahoo.com). I'm an aging cynic, but horticultural miracles do happen!

In the dog days of summer, those of you with bored kids (or who are just plain gardened-out), should try this trick: "Remove a leaf from showy sedum or its hybrid such as 'Autumn Joy,' and use your finger tips to gently squeeze the leaf base so the upper and lower surfaces of the leaf begin to part. Then blow it up like a balloon." Don't believe me? Check out [floridata.com/ref/s/sedu\\_spe.cfm](http://floridata.com/ref/s/sedu_spe.cfm)

*Garden Jeopardy solution: What is the obedient plant? Physostegia virginiana is a heat-loving quick spreader with pink panicles of large snapdragon-like flowers, blooming abundantly summer till fall.*

*Nikki in the Garden at Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis*



# Stone meets stonecrop: Hardscape and drought tolerant ground cover

By Marjorie Yates, Class of 2006



Hardscape is a relatively new term in the home gardener's vocabulary, so new that the spell check in the word processor does not recognize it as a word. Generally referring to the non-living elements of a landscape, it includes a wide range of materials and objects such as stone, wood mulch, pavers, birdbaths and gazebos. Many of these materials have not always been easily available to the general public, but are now readily available at specialty shops, home improvement centers and online.

The use and selection of hardscape will depend upon the gardener's priorities and purposes. Hardscape can fill a wide range of needs from solving problems to creating beautiful year-round vistas in the landscape. Used properly, it is also a valuable tool for those interested in truly "green gardening" by reducing mowing time and use of herbicides. In the long term, it will also save money previously spent on watering and yearly over-seeding of problem areas.

Used in tandem with ground cover, hardscape will help solve problems and provide visual relief from large expanses of lawn. A walk around the yard will reveal trouble areas: bare spots caused by foot traffic of your two or four-legged family members, the triangle by the end of the driveway your not-so-careful visitors use as they back out, and/or washout from the gutter. Next, think of all the time spent on mowing day to movie lawn furniture around or navigate around

irregularly shaped flower beds and borders.

Perhaps it's time to put down a hard surface under the lawn furniture to create a comfortable seating area. A wide choice of paving selections includes ground-level wood decking, river rock, bricks, man-made pavers or flagstone. In addition to making the mower's job easier, a paved area will also cut down on uninvited visi-



*Callirhoe involucrata* -  
purple poppymallow

tors such as chiggers and mosquitoes. Add a few pots with scented geranium or other insect-detering plants or a small container water garden.

Another way to provide visual interest to a paved area is to plant low-growing ground cover between the stones and around the paved area. Some of the most versatile, drought-tolerant ground covers include the many varieties of stonecrop sedum and thyme. The USDA Plants website (<http://plants.usda.gov>) lists 52 species of Sedum and 26 varieties of Thyme. Each boasts plants with many different shapes and colors of both leaves and

flowers. Some of the showier, low growing varieties for planting zones 4-9 include:

*Sedum acre*. Goldmoss stonecrop

*Sedum Kamtschaticum*. Striped Kamtschatka Stonecrop

*Sedum Spurium*. Two-row Sedum

*Thymus* cv. Lime Thyme

*Thymus serpyllum*. Creeping Thyme, Mother of Thyme, Minus

Once established, these and all perennial ground cover are virtually maintenance-free. They do NOT require regular watering or mowing, though some do benefit from being sheered back at the end of the growing season.

Several publications and websites are available to provide technical guidance and inspiration in planning, designing and completing a project. *Covering Ground* by Barbara W. Ellis includes hundreds of color photos, descriptions and suggested uses for both hardscape and ground cover. It includes sections on sun and shade plants, wet and dry areas, vines, shrubs and grasses. In addi-



*Sedum acre* L. - goldmoss stonecrop

tion, it contains a variety of ideas such as using ground cover to fill in the little spaces where flower bed edgings meet, along the street or driveway, on hard-to-mow hillsides and as living mulch under trees. Plant descriptions include practical facts such as which are invasive and which will withstand foot traffic or exposure to road salt.

**Stone continued on page 7**

## Stone continued from page 6

One chapter, "The Dirty Dozen", includes a list of the most invasive and often used ground cover such as Bishop's Weed and Vinca.

To the novice or do-it-yourselfer, embarking on a hardscape project can be daunting. Barbara Ellis suggests making a landscape plan and prioritizing projects. First do those which will save time right away, then those which will pay the biggest dividend by enhancing the look of the area. Decide which projects will require a contractor and which can be done by the home gardener. Up-front research on paver types, including cost, maintenance, availability and appearance, is also important as this will be a large investment and one to be enjoyed for many years. Websites, garden shops, home improvement centers and contractors can all provide product samples, photos of finished projects and cost calculators.

For those who are more driven by financial aspects, the addition of hardscape to solve problems will increase the curbside appeal and value of the property. For others, combining hardscape and ground cover is sure to bring out their creative side. The variety of color, shape, texture of both paving materials and plants provide the media to create lovely pictures in the yard and garden—ever changing pictures to be enjoyed throughout the seasons. For both practical and creative reasons, explore the possibilities!



*Thymus serpyllum*, creeping thyme

# How do you squash a squash bug?

By Becky Peck, Class of 2003



The three main pests to cucurbits are the squash vine borer, the striped cucumber beetle, and the squash bug. When it comes to squash bugs, their favorite cucurbits are squash and pumpkins. Squash bugs (*Anasa tristis*) are sometimes mistaken for stink bugs because they may give off a foul odor when squashed. Stink bugs, however have a wider shield-shaped body. Here is a picture from the Missouri University Extension site of the squash bug, looking like he is covered by the armor a tiny knight left behind.

You will be glad to know there is only one life-cycle per year with squash bugs. The adults hang out during the winter in garden debris and come to life in late spring. They are brown or black and reach  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in length. The bug sucks the sap from leaves and stems, taking the nutrients from the plant. The leaves and stems then wilt and turn brown. Any surviving fruit on the plant will not taste right. The adults tend to hang out on the main stems, while the nymphs are more frequently found on the underside of the leaves. The nymphs start out as eggs that look metallic and shiny. Usually, they can be found in the angle between the veins. As they emerge, they are gray-green with red or black legs. During the day, the squash bugs and nymphs hide under garden debris. Often, they are near the crown of the plant. Keeping debris away reduces the places they can hide.



There are two times when the most damage is done to the plant: (1) Seedlings damaged by adults as they emerge in the spring, and (2) plants flower just as eggs are hatching. If you find the squash bugs early enough, the plant can recover.

Here are some organic control methods to try:

- Place an old board or shingles near the base of the plant. Turn the hideouts over, and put them in a bucket of soapy water. Play taps.
- Put row covers of nylon netting or cheesecloth over the plants until you need insects for fertilization of the blooms, and then take it off.
- Some people have had moderate success with putting aluminum foil around the base of the plant.
- Pick bugs and eggs off the plant and put them in your bucket of soapy water.
- Plant later and go for a crop after the bugs have emerged and gone in search of greener pastures.
- Plant more resistant squash varieties such as Butternut, "Royal Acorn," "Sweet Cheese," and "Black Zucchini." I must tell you that I asked more than one seed company what made the varieties more resistant? Tougher stems? They taste bad? I couldn't find an answer.
- Clean up the garden in the fall to reduce the good sites for over-wintering.
- Use insecticidal soap every three days for the first two weeks after squash bugs

**Squash continued on page 13**

# 10 reasons why it's Wonderful to Be a Master Gardener (MG)

By Kellie J. Rodriguez, Class of 2005

## 1. To learn about something you love.

This program abounds with golden opportunities to learn, from the initial training provided by university-trained horticulturists and expert gardeners, to tools and resources at the Extension Center and through the website. Attend demonstrations and gatherings. Learn to apply proven techniques and best-practices in your gardening world.

## 2. To share and give back!

The Power of Giving is potent. The return on your time investment can be invigorating and can bolster your spirits. Spend some time teaching others to bring beauty to their world, to help them grow food or establish a pleasing garden. Everyone benefits from your gift.

## 3. To produce.

There is nothing like planting seeds or starting a transplant and growing food for your family's dinner table. Watch your tomatoes flourish and crunch on sweet carrots right from your garden plot. Harvesting your own vegetables and fruit is a very soul-satisfying adventure. Moreover, it's a way to cut down on food bills. Fresh, fulfilling and all at the right price.

## 4. To be part of a visionary organization.

I read that true happiness comes from contributing toward something you believe in. Being needed, then satisfying that need lends to a great sense of happiness and worthwhile. It's sensible and valuable. It's vision with action, which can change the world.

## 5. To understand ways to enhance your own well-being.

Being part of the Master Gardener program fulfills several main elements of Maslow's

Hierarchy of Needs: the physiological need for food; the need for security—for love and belonging, the need to give, receive and be a part of something; the need to be a unique individual with self-respect and to enjoy general esteem from others; the need to experience purpose, meaning and realizing all inner potentials. All needs can be met through this program.

## 6. To be part of the green effort!

There is a yearning in our land to protect and preserve our Earth. Every day counts. Be involved in a range of activities and events that encourage eco-friendly and sustainable living. Over the past 20-30 years we've had a real problem with earth-degrading processes, fair-trade issues, farmer justice, energy choices, and livestock and corporate farm practices. Be a part of the solution. Help us take green mainstream and educate others on practices that protect and heal our planet.

## 7. To have fun.

When MGs get together, it's all about fun, fellowship and generally, food! We have a great time, probably because we are like-minded individuals that appreciate creating beauty in the world. What better way to connect?

## 8. For travel.

Not only do we have the opportunity to visit gorgeous local and regional gardens (check out the Garden Tour we host!), we can travel to the annual Missouri State Master Gardener Conference, and even have international tour opportunities to exciting places such as Costa Rica, Scotland or New Zealand! How cool is that?

## 9. To use your strengths to favorably impact our community!

Our MGs bring many talents besides the love of gardening to the organization... computing skills, coordinating, logistics, speaking, training, artistic, accounting, writing and managerial. You'll find many ways to apply your skill sets in this program for the good of all. There are so many things to become involved in. If you're great at research and working with folks by phone, be a part of the Hotline. If you're good with kids, join our children's programs. We've got a gardening program that works with those with special needs, if that's your passion. If you like to talk, consider joining the speaker's bureau! There's something for everyone.

## 10. To build a community.

The MG program is about teaching and equipping people through research-based knowledge and problem-solving resources. An incredible by-product for providing this service is the networks and bonds that develop both between MGs serving together, the University of Missouri Extension Center staff, and those we help in the public. In the end, we all learn and grow, which is icing on the cake. We can implement these practices and knowledge not only during volunteer time, but also with our family, friends, and neighbors. And so our ties grow along with the gardens we plant or inspire.

Check us out! Learn more about our program at the Greater Kansas City Master Gardener website: <http://extension.missouri.edu/gkcmg> or the Missouri Master Gardener website at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/mg>. For those without internet access, contact our Hotline at 816-833-TREE, and we'll send you program information.

Happy Gardening!

# Arnold's in LeRoy, Kansas

By Becky Peck, Class of 2003

I've heard rumors for a long time that over on the Kansas side was one heckuva huge greenhouse run by fine folks out in the country. Being from a tiny town in rural NE Missouri, I know jewels are found in these sorts of places. That would include the product as well as the helpful people! At Powell's spring symposium, there was a table near the entrance where three-quarter inch thick plant catalogs were given out by Arnold's Greenhouse, in Leroy, Kansas. I went to their website at [www.arnoldsgreenhouse.com](http://www.arnoldsgreenhouse.com), and decided a trip was in order. Fellow MG, Marjorie Yates, my friend, Jill, and I piled into Marjorie's van one Saturday morning. Marjorie had removed the back seat so there was plenty of room for us to buy plants. I believe it is safe to say that we left \$300 behind when we started home.

Arnold's is about 1.5 hours from downtown Kansas City. You take I-35 south to 75 south. You may be familiar with this intersection of I-35 and 75 by the name of "BETO Junction." A little trivia for you: BETO stands for the four cities north, south, east and west of that intersection. That would be Burlington (south), Emporia (west), Topeka (north), and Ottawa (east). As you take 75 south, keep an eye peeled to the left and you will see the Wolf Creek Nuclear Power Plant. Go through Burlington, and you will reach Highway 58. Turn left (east) and you are almost there. We drove past the greenhouse on our left and into Leroy for some of Luther's Barbeque to give us strength for the buying ahead.

Arnold's is truly a family operation. Rita and George Arnold started the greenhouse as a way to occupy George so he wouldn't be bored while



**Rita Arnold**

Rita Arnold RN was working the night shift. The first year, they made \$200. The nursery was moved to its current location in 1983. Initially, they were only a wholesale nursery. They have been a supplier to Skinner Nursery in Topeka for many years. In recent years they have added their

current in to aid in the growing of the plants. You can shop in and from their growing area as well as from this greenhouse. They have taken a couple of the greenhouses down to make room for a section right to the east of the front door to their Garden Center for the Children's Garden. The Arnolds want to encourage young families and children to become gardeners. The children's garden will soon be complete, making visits to the nursery an exciting experience for youngsters. There is a tricycle track for the children. A chicken house with fencing, chickens and a living roof on the chicken house is nearly ready. A check-board sits awaiting some action.



**Left: Arnold's enclosed shopping area**

**Below: Arnold's greenhouses**



retail business. Rita calls their greenhouse a "candy store" of plants because they have an extensive selection of every type of plant in one place.

Arnold's grew to 21 greenhouses with 80,000 square feet. The retail greenhouse behind the Garden Center has a retractable roof to allow the wind

Nearby is a maze of perennial Carl Forrester grass in the shape of the state of Kansas. One of the nursery's part-time employees is a junior high math teacher. This maze was one of his math lessons. The teacher and five boys from the class put in about 600 plants that

**Arnold's continued on page 11**

# Demystified pruning

By Terrence Thompson, Class of 2006



Give me sunrise in a garden of beautiful flowers where I can walk undisturbed said Walt Whitman, the great American poet. A beautiful thought but if Whitman had been a Master Gardener he probably couldn't have gotten far on his morning walk without doing a little pruning here and a little flower pinching back there.

When I walk through my garden

realize I left my coffee cup sitting on a garden rock somewhere, the coffee tepid or cold.

Early this spring I severely cut back my 'Endless Summer' hydrangeas because if I don't the stems will get too long and be weighted to the ground by the huge flowers heads. Soon I will reduce the height of my wolfsbane to keep it getting so tall I have to stake the long stems before it blooms in October.

Those of us who have gardened

mystery. I remember doing some really dumb things when I first started my shady garden, such as the first time I pruned back my wolfsbane. I waited too late in the season and pruned the plants after they already had started making tiny buds I could not see yet. I got no wolfsbane flowers that year and was sorely upset.

That's when I discovered what has become by my pruning bible—*The Well Tended Perennial Garden* by Tracy DiSabato-Aust. I purchased a copy of this book years ago. The good news is that a new edition of the book has been published and should be available wherever good garden books are sold. It's a bargain at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

Even seasoned gardeners will love this book for those times when we want to try a new plant or to check whether we are doing the correct pruning of the plants we have. The book lists hundreds of plants and provides individual pruning information for each plant. It's fun to browse through the book to find the plants in our gardens and to see what advice DiSabato-Aust provides. The author also provides other helpful information about each plant, such as its soil

and water needs and other maintenance requirements.

One of the most interesting parts of the book is a section about how to prune for effects that many gardeners might not think about. For instance DiSabato-Aust's suggestion that height of a plant

grouping be staggered to change the bloom times. Here's a quote from the book that explains:

**Pruning continued on page 12**



**Left: The bellflower is a plant that needs to be dead headed constantly to keep it blooming.**

**Below: Endless Summer hydrangea is pruned to keep stems short so that the flowers don't fall on the ground.**

with a coffee cup in hand to do what I tell my spouse is my morning garden inspection I frequently put my coffee down. I pinch off finished flowers or cut back something that is getting out of place. I know by doing so I will keep plants blooming for a while longer and keep my garden attractive.

My columbine and foam flowers will bloom for weeks if they don't spend their energy turning flowers into seeds. My peach-leaf bellflower plants will soon be blooming and I will delicately pinch back spent flowers on its tall stems every morning most of the summer to keep the plants blooming maybe into August. Sometimes I get so busy pinching and pruning I return to the house only to



for years generally know what and when to prune. For those just starting to garden pruning can be confusing

**Arnold's continued from page 9**

will be golden from June onward. To the side of the children's garden is a gazebo with picnic tables. Customers are invited to sit and enjoy their lunch while watching the children play.

Although Arnold's focus is perennials, they want to have everything you would need in one place. They even have faithful patrons from Arkansas who drive up once in the spring and once in the fall to get everything they need at Arnold's. I was particularly impressed with the complete labeling on the plants themselves as well as the aisle and overhead signs directing you to annuals, perennials, grasses, herbs, roses, vegetables, etc. Aquatic plants are also inside the greenhouse. There is spacious walking room around the plants. Outside there is a well-labeled selection of trees, shrubs, and conifers. There is a much larger selection of varieties at Arnold's than in most of the metro nurseries. I particularly thought their rose, ornamental grass, herbs and hosta sections were very large. Rita had suggested I take a look at their ensete from the banana family which will grow to twenty feet. If you are looking for some new introduction you read about in a magazine, however, that probably won't be there.

Plant selection, quality and knowledge are a focus of Arnold's. Their Midwest competition would be Bluebird Nurseries in Nebraska, who has more perennials than Arnold's, but they only sell wholesale. Arnold's reaches a 125-mile radius in wholesale sales in addition to their retail business.

From October 1<sup>st</sup> until early May, you will find the Arnold's team busy on their transplant schedule. In addition to Rita and George, daughter Darlita is the Garden Center Manager. Rita told me their biggest concern right now was rising energy costs.

The Garden Center features a "Garden Inspirations Library" with a number of gardening books and



**Arnold's retractable roof greenhouse**

**Middle: Arnold's trees and shrubs**

**Below: Water plants**



magazines. I still preserve garden vegetables and noted a book on the shelf entitled "Preserving the Harvest" by Costenbader. I look forward to reading the 150 recipes for freezing, canning, drying and pickling fruits and vegetables.

Throughout the Garden Center and greenhouse, you will find garden art, tools, soil amendments and so much more! Check their website and you can plan a visit around one of their educational seminars or fun hands-on

**Arnold's continued on page 14**

### Pruning continued from page 10

“For perennials grown in large groups, you can encourage the plants to mature to differing heights or to bloom at slightly differing times by pinching and cutting back. This creates interesting gradations and extends the bloom time of a planting. You can delay flowering on a few stems of an individual plant to provide for a longer bloom period at the expense of abundance.”

Other points that author makes in her book include these generalities:

Reducing plant height eliminates the need for staking.

Keeping plants in their own space will give the neighboring plant room to thrive.

Pinching back some plants will change its flowering. Removing the side buds of a plant will produce one larger flower on a long stem. If the terminal bud is removed the side shoots will produce many small flowers.

Thinning stems on mildew-prone perennials can increase air circulation and reduce disease problems.

Some perennials are valued for their foliage and removing small or poor flowers enhance the beauty of the foliage.

The author also includes bonding with your plants as a reason for pruning. “Pruning is a form of meditation for me. I find it very relaxing to go out into my garden, sometimes for some light snipping, other times getting into major shearing, depending on how I am feeling,” she writes.

Of course there are other books that include pruning information and the Internet can provide detailed information about how to prune some specific plants. But if you just want just one good book about pruning, I think this book is the best.



### Herbs continued from page 3

tainers can be just as beautiful and fragrant as herbs grown in the ground but their size won't be as large.

Herbs can find other homes in your garden. Golden oregano can be tucked under shrubs or tall flowers as groundcovers; borders can be filled with curly, dark green parsley; thyme can be grown in a rock garden; parsley, sage, or rosemary can share space with annuals in a pot. Lavender can be substituted for dwarf boxwood in a formal edging and catmint can be planted under leggy shrubs.

### Drainage

When siting an herb garden, drainage is considered to be the single most important factor. Most herbs do not like wet feet. However there are a few herbs, mint, angelica and lovage, that survive well in moist soil. A poorly drained site can be modified by raising the beds at least partially above ground level or by digging down 12" or so and refilling with a mix of topsoil and compost.

### Watering

Even though watering would be simple with an automatic sprinkling system, many herb growers recommend using soaker hoses instead, in order to keep the water off the plants. Soaker hoses can also be automated with the use of a timer. Once they are established, herbs do not require a great amount of water. After all, they did start out as native wildflowers, surviving only on rainfall.

### Mulch

Mulch is invaluable to the health of your herbs. After preparing the soil, weeding the garden, and planting your herbs, mulch to a depth of 2" with buckwheat or cocoa hulls. It conserves moisture, helps keep down new weeds and maintains an even temperature in the beds. It also keeps

the soil from splashing on the edible plants. The chocolate scent and fine texture of cocoa hulls make it a favorite mulch of many herb gardeners. Other good choices for mulch would be peat moss, decomposed leaves, straw, pine bark or shredded hardwood bark.



### Sources

There are many sources for “all about herbs” and herb gardening. Much of my information came from the books at the garden library at Loose Park, 52nd Street and Wornall Road, Kansas City, Missouri. It is open to the public and has a vast array of herb volumes. The Kansas City public libraries also have various sources. Many online sources have been created by knowledgeable gardeners and only require that you search and find.

### Summary

Keep in mind, raising herbs is not rocket science. If you understand the basic requirements for growing plants – that is, the need for light, moisture and nutrients, then success is not far behind. Armed with a little information and determination, you can have a flourishing herb garden. There is a lot of joy and satisfaction to be gained from so little effort. Old herbarians say, “Herbs leave their fragrance on the hand that gathers them.”

first appear. Since these soaps are contact insecticides, make sure you cover all the plant surfaces. Cover Mr. Squash Bug too if you see him.

There is a predator of squash bugs: the parasitic wasp of the family *Scelionidae*, which will eat the eggs of the squash bug.

If the organic options don't work for you, here are other options:

- Carbaryl: Use when adults first appear. Do not apply within one day of harvest
- Pyrethrins and Rotenone: Are most effective on nymphs. Put on upper and lower leaf surfaces. Do not apply within one day of harvest.
- Sabadilla: Put this on moist foliage and directly onto Mr. Bug. Do not apply within one day of harvest.
- Ortho recommends its product Ortho Bug-B-Gon, a multi-purpose insect killer concentrate, or Ortho Bug-B-Gon multipurpose garden dust.
- Sevin: It's worked for 30 years! Application timing is every seven to ten days.

Read label before using any organic and non organic chemicals.

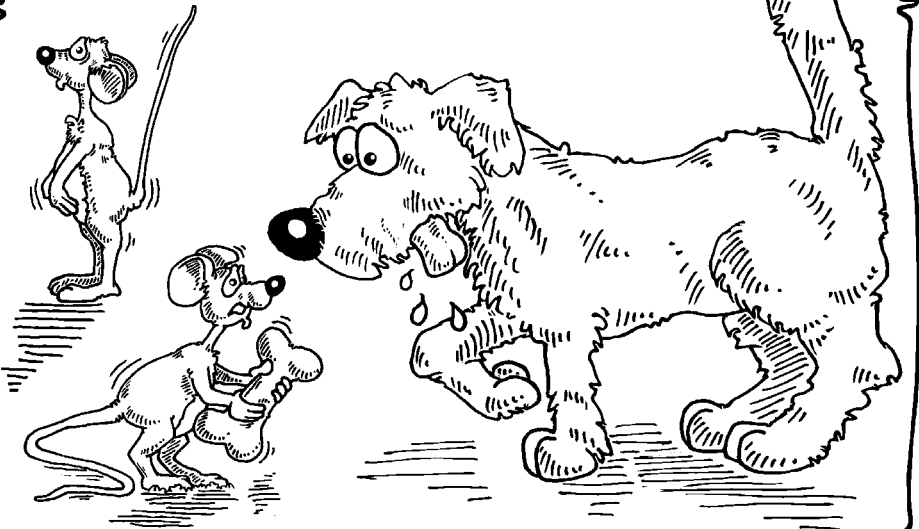
If you see sawdust-like insect debris left near the base of the stem of a squash plant, you probably have squash vine borers rather than squash bugs. If the stem is split open, you can pretty much count on it. Once those guys get inside the stem, insecticide control is worthless. For vine borers, when the vines begin to run, use rotenone, pyrethrum, malathion or Sevin every seven to ten days.

The sources for this article are the University of Missouri Extension as well as the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis ([www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp](http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp)). Draw your swords and go after those little armored beasts! Let us know what works.

## GARDOONS

life is a garden... enjoy it!

cartoon by  
Stephen Stone



PERHAPS A LITTLE QUID PRO QUO...  
REGARDING A CERTAIN CAT ?

A stylized signature of the cartoonist, Stephen Stone.

© ARDYART

## GARDOONS

life is a garden... enjoy it!

cartoon by  
Stephen Stone



NOW, THERE'S A SPARROW THAT  
ASPIRES TO GREATNESS !

A stylized signature of the cartoonist, Stephen Stone.

© ARDYART



## The Back Fence

Quarterly publication of the K.C. Metro Area Master Gardeners

Volume 34, Issue 3  
March 2008

### Editorial Staff:

J. Braswell  
Becky Peck

### Layout

Laurie Chipman

### Contributors

Judy Aull  
Terrence Thompson  
Joanne Couture  
Kellie Rodriguez  
Becky Peck  
Marjorie Yates

Lala Kumar  
Horticulture Specialist

University of Missouri, Lincoln University, U.S. Department of Agriculture & Local University Extension Councils Cooperating University Outreach & Extension does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability or status as a Vietnam era veteran in employment or programs.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
 Extension

Arnold's continued from page 11

classes. Nearly every Saturday from March through June, you'll find craft classes like mosaic bird baths, jeweled pansy pots, decoupage strawberry jars, a hairy pot-ter planter, and hypertufa. This spring, Dr. Alan Stevens with K-State presented "Foligeiferousness: A New Trend in Gardening." Some of their other seminar topics are:

- Herbal teas
- Planting for continuous bloom
- Plant combinations for continuous color
- New plants for 2008
- Shrubs for all season
- Rain gardens
- Growing a green roof
- Heat and Humidity tolerant annual flowers
- Design and inspiration
- A kitchen garden
- Organic gardening
- The information classes tend to run

about \$5 each with craft classes running higher. What a bargain!

Rita goes to a horticultural short course in Ohio every year with a trade show to learn what is new. Arnold's is a member of the perennial plant association and Arnold's goes to their annual meetings. Rita recently presented a seminar in Fayetteville, Arkansas where there is a new botanical garden called Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. A little boy wrote to her after that presentation that he enjoyed being outside gardening. Rita feels that children miss these things with the hubbub of daily life. That is why it has become a passion at Arnold's to get the kids outside having fun with nature.

I hope you enjoy some of the photos we took. As you can tell, this is one big place! Marjorie and I are planning a trip to the new botanical garden next. Check it out at [www.bgo-zarks.org](http://www.bgo-zarks.org). We promise a full report with pictures when we get back.

