



# The BACK FENCE

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

## Fall berries are bounty for birds

by Mary Nemecke, Class of 2008



With the shortening days of late summer giving way to fall, most people notice a substantial decline in activity at their feeders.

This time of year Mother Nature provides a bounty that lures the birds from the feeders to something more tempting. Ripening berries abound and one way to keep the birds, while not at the feeders, but at least in the yard, is to grow some of the preferred berry-bearing natives. Not only do they have excellent wildlife value, but are attractive in the landscape as well. In addition, birds that are not normal yard visitors may show up for the fruit feast. Keep a close eye and you may see Cedar Waxwings, warblers, vireos, thrushes, bluebirds and kingbirds among many others. Many of these natives provide cover and nesting sites for birds throughout the spring and summer. All of the following plants are native to Missouri.

- **American Beauty Berry** (*Callicapa americana*) – deciduous shrub 3-5 ft. with spectacular bright violet berries in late September or early October. Full sun/part shade. May die back to the ground in winter.

- **Black haw** (*Viburnum prunifolium*) – Shrub grows 12-15 ft. White, flat top flowers in spring, purple-black fruit in fall. Burgundy fall foliage. Fruit tastes like raisins. Full sun/part shade.

- **Rusty black haw** (*Viburnum rufidulum*) – 10-15ft., white flowers in March-April and clusters of red berries in September. Red fall foliage. Full sun/shade.



- **Rough-leaved Dogwood** (*Cornus drummondii*) – Small tree or shrub, to 16 ft., that is easily recognized by its white berries in late summer/early fall. Has showy white flowers in the spring. Full sun/part shade.

- **Silky Dogwood** (*Cornus Amomum*) – shrub 6-8 ft., white flowers in June and blue fruit in August, red stems in fall and winter. Sun/shade.

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- **Spice bush** (*Lindera benzoin*) – shrub 9-15 ft., yellow-green flowers in late March-April, red berries in late summer/fall on female plants. Aromatic leaves, yellow fall foliage sun/shade but for best fall color plant in sun. Also host plant of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly.

- **Service berry** (*Amelanchier arborea*) – small tree 10-20 ft., fragrant white flowers in March-April, red fruit enjoyed by birds and people. Orange fall foliage. Full sun/shade.

- **Fragrant Sumac** (*Rhus Aromatica*) – spreading shrub 3-9 ft., yellow flowers in April, female plants bear red fruit in late summer/early fall. Fabulous fall color ranging from orange to scarlet to reddish purple. Sun/part shade.

- **Smooth Sumac** (*Rhus glabra*) – spreading shrub 8-15 ft., yellow spring flowers, red fall fruit in 8" clusters. Striking fall color ranging from bright orange. Sun/part shade.

# Colorful hostas

By Terrence Thompson, Class of 2006

Consider painting your shady areas with colorful hostas. They provide a surprising palette of mellow yellows, extreme variegations, midnight blues, and greens from chartreuse to almost black. They generally stay neat and tidy all summer long. They make wonderful specimen plants or can become an impenetrable ground cover through which no weed would dare push through.

There are even some that will flourish in very sunny areas if you give them enough water. Some varieties can grow as large as four feet tall by five feet wide and some are so Lilliputian one would fit in the palm of your hand. A few even sport large lily-size flowers that have wonderful perfumes that waft across the garden.

I am sure most of you are familiar with hostas and already have a few in your shady areas. I thought I knew about hostas until I contemplated a garden renovation this summer. I started doing some research about what hostas might suit my garden and grew fascinated with what I discovered.

I first learned that you can't tell much about hostas by going to a garden center and looking at what is available. Most hostas take several years to develop their final colors and leaf shapes. All you get are hints of the future hosta in small sales pots. It is best to find a hosta specialist that has large demonstration areas where mature hostas grow so you can see what the full potential of each variety is. You also might discover mature hostas in a friend's garden that you could ask about.

It's also important to consider that the final color of a hosta depends on the light you plant it in. If you buy what you think is going to be a bright

yellow-leafed hosta and plant it in a location where it gets little sunlight you might find what you get are chartreuse leaves instead. The color might be nice but it might not be what you really wanted. And that hosta you expected to show blue leaves like on its label might turn out to be mostly green if not placed in the right spot.

I planted what was advertised as a "blue" hosta years ago and have been disappointed ever since. The leaves are merely dark green. Paul



Arden, in his publication *The Hosta Book* explains why. "The blue surface substance of hosta foliage can be damaged by long-term exposure to excess heat. The surface seems to almost melt off." Blues do their best in cool shady spots, he explains. I had planted my "blues" in a spot where they get brief mid-day sun but that was enough to melt them into green.

A general rule is to develop the lighter, brighter colors, hostas need at least dappled sun throughout the day or maybe a few hours of early morn-

ing sun. Blue hostas do better where they are in good shade. Variegated hostas often need some light for vivid contrast among colors. Fully green hostas can do well in most shady areas with only the darkness of the green affected by the brightness of the light. However, there are some hostas that will keep their colors with very little sun. I have a Patriot hosta, known for its wide white margins against a dark green background that has kept its whiteness even in fairly deep shade.

If you want to get some idea of the colors of hostas take a gander at the *Timber Press Pocket Guide to Hostas*. Categories shown are chartreuse, yellow or gold leaves; very blue leaves;

blue-gray leaves; blue-green leaves; marginally variegated leaves and medio-variegated leaves along with just plain green leaves. It also lists sun tolerant, easy-to-grow, miniature, outstanding flower, rock garden, ground cover, edging and slug-resistant hostas.

Hostas are often described by the type of leaves they grow. Leaves of heavy substance are considered a good attribute and help discourage slugs and snails. Some leaves are described as "seersucker" like because they are covered in small dimples. That also is



In his book Arden explains what kind light each variety prefers to bring out its full potential. The full sun hosta is ‘Sum and Substance’. Another good list of hostas is provided by *Timber Press Pocket Guide to Hostas* by Diane Grenfell and

a desirable feature.

I started adding hostas to my garden last summer when I found some large hostas in five-gallon pots at the garden center at my local grocery store. The hostas were beautiful and on sale. I purchased two ‘Paul’s Glory’, which showed wonderfully bright yellow leaves, and a very dark-green-leaved ‘Big Momma’. I put them along the edge of a pea gravel path by my kitchen window to soften the hard look of the rocks. The ‘Big Momma’ was planted between the two ‘Paul’s Glory’ to offer contrast. I found out this year even though barely three feet separate of the two ‘Paul’s Glory’ one is shaded more than the other and has never turned as bright yellow as its twin.

Arden suggests some gold hostas that keep their color well even when fairly deep in shade. They include ‘Gold Edger’, ‘Little Aurora’, ‘Shade Master’, ‘Sum and Substance’, ‘Sun Power’ and ‘Zounds’. “While they tend to develop their best color in strong light, they achieve a remarkably bright color in the shade,” he explained. They noticeably brighten dark areas in shady gardens. Such hostas can be mixed with “blues” so that the combination will bring out the best colors in both.

Arden lists hundreds of hosta varieties in his book. Hosta ‘Blue Angel’ is the one that gets four feet tall. ‘Tom Thumb’ is its opposite reaching the astonishing height of two inches.

Michael Shadrack. The third book I used for this story was *The Gardener’s Guild to Growing Hostas* by Diane Grenfell. I found the books at my local public library.

I thought the ‘Paul’s Glory’ hostas were gorgeous and got more for this year’s renovation. I luckily discovered them available in 5-gallon pots in the garden center of my local big box hardware store, a rarity. I love to buy hostas big enough so that I can plop them into the ground and produce an immediate mature garden look. Finding hostas in large pots can be difficult but they are available at some garden centers. The next problem is that your choice is generally limited.

As I browse through the photos in the books I am overwhelmed by the variety of hostas offered. I loved the smaller ones with narrow spear-like leaves that don’t look like any hostas I have ever seen. Some of the leaves are almost wiggly in shape. ‘Chartreuse Wiggles’ is one I like. I need some of those.

Don’t forget that hostas do wonderfully as ground cover in areas that are shady, hard to maintain and difficult to weed. “They act like a ‘living mulch’—not only cutting down on the need to weed but also the need for extra watering,” Arden writes.

My problem with hostas is there are so many kinds and so little space.

There are some real hosta problems that I should mention – slugs, snails, rabbits and deer. This story isn’t about how to control these pests. I put down slug and snail bait around my hostas as needed and keep the foliage sprayed with a good deer deterrent. As leaves near the bottom of plants get ratty from slugs or for other reasons some judicious dead leafing will do much to improve the look of the plant.

Whoever names hostas must have a good time. Hostas have such monikers as ‘Red Hot Flash’, ‘Cheaten Heart’, ‘Cracker Crumbs’, ‘Blue Mouse Ears’, ‘Holy Mole’, ‘Hanky Panky’, ‘Ops’, ‘So Sweet’, and ‘Fantabulous’. I have two stands of ‘So Sweet’ in my garden and I added some ‘Heartache’ in my recent renovation. I also threw in a dash of ‘Vanilla Cream’ for flavor and some ‘Fire & Ice’ for excitement.

For you plant history buffs hostas first arrived in Europe from China between 1784 and 1789. *H. plantaginea* seed was sent to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris by the French consul in Macao. This hosta multiplied into thousands in public gardens in France. *H. plantaginea* is known for its lily-size flowers and great perfume. After 1829 hostas started trickling in greater numbers to Europe from Japan. Later plant collectors from England and America brought back hostas from the east.

I have three large apple green *plantaginea* hostas growing along a garden path. They send up amazingly large aromatic flowers compared to my other hostas. Now I know I have a little bit of hosta history growing in my garden.

If you are looking for a garden center that specializes in hostas and has a large demo area of mature hostas that would be Blue Ridge Nursery, in Raytown. Soper’s Hosta Garden in Lenexa has hundreds of plants. You can find them at [www.sopershosta.com](http://www.sopershosta.com).

# The prairie returns to downtown St. Louis

By Marjorie Yates, Class of 2006



During a weekend visit to downtown St. Louis in late June of this year (2009), I noticed an article in the Sunday paper

about the upcoming opening of a new garden in downtown St. Louis. The full-page article mentioned the use of native perennials and art work throughout Citygarden, and the grand opening date was only three days away. As the garden was within walking distance of the hotel and native perennials are my favorite plants, I decided to walk over and check it out. Surely if the gardeners were preparing for a grand opening ceremony on Wednesday, the garden would be ready to enjoy on Sunday! Sadly when I arrived, the two square blocks of Citygarden were still surrounded by a tall, chain-link fence, but I could see enough to know I would be back.

We returned on a sunny Sunday morning in late August. The garden was filled with all sorts of people enjoying the flowers, trees, water features, sculptures, and LED art work. There were families wading and splashing in waterfalls, mothers pushing strollers, friends pushing wheelchairs, people on bikes and even a group of people on Segways. Many people like me were reading the plant markers identifying the 4,000 perennial plants, 1,100 native shrubs and 235 trees.

The garden is laid out in three sections to represent the geographic areas of the region and rivers running through them. The Northern River Bluffs band represents the high ground of the river bluffs, the middle band represents the floodplains of the

Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and the southern band represents the cultivated river terraces. Plants and trees were selected to reflect the diversity of St. Louis' four distinct seasons, with each quadrant focusing on a specific season. The twenty-four contemporary sculptures and art works run the



gamut of heavy and serious to airy and whimsical. From the mammoth bronze head of "Eros Bendato" and cast aluminum "Lifestyle" to the pair of huge white bunnies and the LED display of "Kiera and Julian Walking", there is something for everyone.

Some of the most dramatic plantings in the garden were massive beds of dazzling Cardinal Flowers and tall Switch Grass. Purple and Missouri Coneflowers, Bee Balm, and Goatsbeard were also in bloom. Because the garden is so new, many of the plants were still in their developing stages and had few blossoms. As the perennials become comfortable and mature, their blooms and color will surely be resplendent. The 13,000

groundcover plants are also still getting established, so there was an abundance of wood mulch in view. It was interesting to note that Coral bells planted in full sun and surrounded by cement sidewalks were struggling, while the same species in shady areas were flourishing. Right plant, right place works everywhere!

Considering St. Louis' steamy summers, garden planners were smart to include so many trees, which will eventually shade about half of the garden. Of the twenty species, all

but the Gingko Trees are native to the area. The trees are grouped for seasonal impact and include Red and Sugar Maple, White and Scarlet Oak, Downy Serviceberry and River Birch. Shrubs include Boxwood, Red-Osier Dogwood, Winterberry and Hydrangeas.

Though its beds are not filled with lush, succulent greenery, Citygarden is one of the greenest gardens around! Six separate rain gardens collect and filter storm water. The roofs of both the Terrace View Cafe and the maintenance building have vegetative tray systems which capture rain water, decrease the need for interior building insulation, produce

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**Citygarden continued from page 4**

cleaner air and provide a lovely view for workers in the high-rise office buildings surrounding the garden. All vegetation for Citygarden was selected with the assistance of Missouri Botanical Garden (MoBot) for heat and drought tolerance.

A complete list of plants and trees included in the garden can be found on its extraordinary website at [www.citygardenstl.org](http://www.citygardenstl.org). The list of plants features a link to the MoBot website with information about every peren-

Cafe operating hours and menu are also listed on the website.

Whether you choose to travel by foot, car, bike or Segway; brave the weekday traffic or go on a Sunday, a visit to Citygarden will not disappoint. It will feed your senses, educate you, relax you and maybe inspire you to try some new plant combinations in your yard. Be sure to pick up one of the colorful brochures available in bright red boxes throughout the garden. The map and detailed descriptions of all artwork will enhance your visit.



Cardinal flowers



Joe Pye Weed

nial, groundcover, shrub and tree in the garden. Just click on the scientific name and the MoBot information will appear on your screen. The website also includes information about garden design, location and art.

Located right downtown, Citygarden occupies the two square blocks bounded by Eighth, Tenth, Chestnut and Market Streets. It is easily accessible by car from I-55/I-70 with parking on the street or in several lots in the surrounding area. Walkers will enjoy a nice stroll from Gateway Arch, Busch Stadium, the Amtrak station, Metrolink stop or one of the many downtown hotels. Sunday is a nice time to avoid traffic, but the Terrace View Café is only Monday – Saturday.



# New York Botanical Garden

by Becky Peck, Class of 2003



During the whirlwind of subways, seas of yellow cabs, and throngs of people in New York City this past June,

I had the opportunity to slip away for the day to the beauty of the New York Botanical Garden. A round trip ticket on the Metro North Train from Grand Central Station costs a little over \$10 and gets you there in 20 minutes via the Harlem line. The gate to the garden is immediately off the train stop parking lot.

I distinctly remember feeling on my last visit to New York City that the people there could use a course in friendliness. I didn't find that to be the case this time. When I showed them my membership to the Horticultural Society, they let my entire party in for free. This is a "grounds pass" however and it doesn't include the tram, conservatory, and other special exhibits. I couldn't come all this way and miss that, so I chucked up the \$20. The man at the ticket booth said I had to make sure I saw the rose garden as it was in full bloom.

A quick round of the first corner in the walking path left me confused. I saw a large glass conservatory that looked just like those I had seen at the Kew two years previously. This was no accident. The NY Botanical Garden is patterned after the Kew. This conservatory is called the Haupt Conservatory and they refer to it as their "Crown Jewel." On the tram ride around the gardens, I picked up some other tidbits of interesting information. There are over one million plants at NYBG ([www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org)). Admission on Saturday morning is free so you can engage in bird watching. The river traveling through

the gardens has gotten cleaner as the factories faded away and now over 200 species of birds make their home in the river valley.



**Rose Garden**

One of the tree highlights was a turkey oak, which I had never seen before. It derives its name because the leaves are elongated and resemble the foot of a turkey. Two new areas are set to open soon. In 2011 the Azalea and Rhododendron Garden will open. In 2012, the Native Plant Garden opens. OK, Stop. I know you are thinking it is too far away, New York City costs

too much, and you won't be going there. Round trip direct air fare is easy to find for \$200. There are great sales on hotels during these depressed economic times. My hotel (Kitano) was fabulous, only four blocks from Grand Central Station and \$211/night. There was even a towel warmer in the bath-

room. Not bad for downtown NYC!

When visiting the rose garden portion of the botanical garden, I found two workers there. I introduced myself as

a Kansas City Master Gardener and said "So what is the cure for black spot?" They very quickly said "silk roses." However, the gardens are heavily involved in trials with roses that are less likely to have these issues. From Germany they are getting disease-resistant roses. Germany does not use chemicals. The line they have in the

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garden is called Kordes. It won the ADR Award in Germany. The Fairy Tale Collection's "Kosmos" is another favorite, as well as the Meiland Romantic Series. Earthkind roses from Texas A&M are in trial in the fields. The Northeast United States will be doing trials testing next year on Earthkind. Although Belinda's Dream does have some fragrance, the disease-resistant roses seem to have given up on the scent to go with the disease-resistance. Go to the website for Roses Unlimited in South Carolina for a source. The common element with these roses is that they are on their own root stock. Oh yes, Buck Roses are a favorite there as well. A rose handout was set to be available online at [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org).

A relatively unusual tree that I saw was the Snake Branch Spruce. An article in the *NY Times* indicates that it gets to this "level" of interest after 100 years of growing!

Always carrying a notebook with me, I came home and ordered a book I saw in their bookstore called *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden* by Jeavons and Cox. I also found an excellent source at Forest Farm for the spirea 'Anthony Waterer' and the purple leaved fringed loosestrife (*Lysimachia ciliata*) that mesmerized us with its beauty. The



Lady in Red Hydrangea is on my purchase list too. What a show stopper! My friend grew attached to the heaving arches of golden hakone grass. With several items I jotted down or read about in magazines along the way, I think I have the start to covering the east bank of my pond next year and calling it the NYC garden AKA "I don't want to weed eat."

## Meet the "regulars" of *The Back Fence*

*We thought you might enjoy meeting the "regulars" of The Back Fence publication. As you will see, they are a little shy about sharing their passions in life. We all find it easier to write about others. Each is dedicated, timely, and produces quality work. Through their experiences and research, they hope to make your gardening experiences more fulfilling. If you like an article they write, Stephen's cartoons, or the way Laurie puts it all together, do drop them a note and let them know. If there is a subject you'd like to know more about, tell us that too. We would be more than happy to tackle it. With that said, I hope you enjoy a closer look at our team and their interests. — Becky Peck*

### Becky Peck, Class of 2003

I have been an MG since 2003. My "day job" is CFO for Don Bosco. At night I teach for Park University in the graduate program. As a CPA, I teach accounting or management classes—usually the advanced undergraduate or graduate classes.

I enjoy researching and writing for the *Back Fence* and the *Kansas City Star*. For several years now, I have judged the written papers from the Master Gardener intern class. I help with the Garden Tour in the spring and lend a hand with Garden Angels. This year, I was unable to be an Angel because I needed one myself. Stress fractures in

my heels made it impossible for me to keep up with my vegetable garden, so I am now dreaming of next year's. I am going to continue my foray into heirloom plants. At the spring seminar I will present a Powerpoint on day trips to botanical gardens.

I have lost a number of pine trees to the disease that is slowly killing them all. I decided to have them cut down with four-foot high stumps. Now I have antique bird houses, feeders or vining heirloom morning glories from Bakers Seeds on my mega-stumps. Turning lemons into lemonade I say.

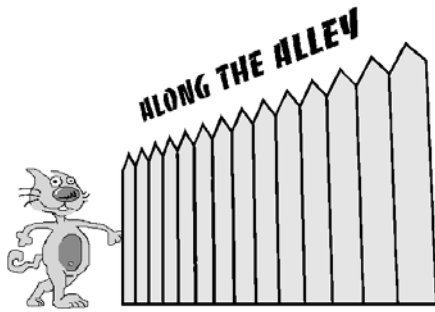
I have a 27-year-old son named



Brandon who works for the North Kansas City School District and is completing his teaching certificate in history. He moved back home this spring. Turning off the lights is still a life goal. My twins, Lindsey and Jeremy, are 25. Lindsey is a nurse in the telemetry unit of Liberty Hospital and teaches electronic charting to the nursing staff there. She will be moving to obstetrics soon. Jeremy is a web designer for In Touch Solutions on the Kansas side.

My friend, Anthony, is responsible for putting me on a horse. I now com-

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by Joanne Couture, Class of 1991

Play GARDEN JEOPARDY—This nut-bearing tree has two groups: one produces fruit annually; the other takes two growing seasons to bear nuts. What is...? (Solution at end of article)

### Garden Gossip . . . from hosts of the 2009 Garden Tour

**Connie Beshore's** garden originally was “a builder’s uninspired rendition of a suburban garden—just grass, no trees or shrubs in 1995.” Now over a hundred roses and crocus, thousands of tulips, over 400 impatiens (grown from seed), plus plants too numerous to mention, bloom from spring to frost. Number one of her top ten favorite plants: Asiatic/Oriental lilies. Sun-loving Asiatics are “the easiest lilies to grow . . . Oriental lilies are great butterfly and hummingbird plants and have giant flowers with breathtaking fragrance. Give them partial shade, plenty of water, humus-rich slightly acidic soil, and mulch.” To add even more garden color, Connie creates stained glass stepping stones—each unique. She gives “thumbs-up” to husband Ray’s lawn; his grass is “so thick that no weeds are allowed.” (The MGs could use you, Ray!)

**Mary Wood's** garden has a very unusual tree: a chestnut! Yeah, a relative of that American chestnut, once a major canopy tree in the eastern U.S., but brought to near extinction by a relentless blight. Mary bought whips—a cross between the American and Chinese chestnut—“20 years ago from a research group.” This year’s crop has been “extra large and plenti-

ful.” (Mary noted that though native American specimens still are planted, or spring up from old roots, they soon succumb.) Also unusual to this are is Mary’s fig tree.”It dies to the ground each year, then sprouts anew.” She usually gets one fall crop, though trees in milder climates, or protected, also bear a spring crop. But disease was a problem with Mary’s tomatoes, beans, berries, and some flowers. Plans for 2010: “We’re putting an arbor made from copper pipe at the end of the front walk. We’ve already planted seven climbing roses to go on the new arbor.”

**Mary Medley** brought back from a California botanical garden a unique idea for a pedestal planter, and her son built four in time for the tour. “The planting base is a 24” plywood circle . . . screwed onto a metal pole hammered into the soil about 18-20” for stability. I placed a coconut liner on top of the circle, then started placing soil and plants a layer at a time to form a dome.” Mary then tucked wet peat moss around the plants and soil. Finally she made large “staples” from coat hangers cut in half, inserting them “throughout the dome of planting material to hold them in/on the platform. I have not had any problems with watering causing the formation to dismantle.” In her shaded pedestals Mary planted “ferns, impatiens, ivies, airplant plant, and begonias.”

Many tour visitors commented on **Fred Markham's** artistic garden design of graceful curves, especially his water feature: a pond 6’ wide meandering lazily down their gentle sloped yard into a 21’ long stream with two waterfalls (“only about 15” deep”) and finally into an 8’ diameter koi pool. The last two years Fred has seen great blue heron checking his pool like fast-food customers. Fred and his wife enjoy this beautiful vista from three bay windows.

### Sowings

After **Susan Smoyer** read Barbara

Kingsolver’s book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, she decided to “seriously grow veggies.” She had good/bad luck with regular veggies, but a dramatic battle with the Cucuzzi, an Italian squash, “in memory of my mother, who grew this monstrous 3-foot-long squash every year and created a delicious meatball stew.” The vine quickly overgrew the poles and wires Susan constructed and vaulted a chain link fence. Susan pollinated the blossoms with Q-tips, attacked the cucumber beetles—then one day noticed the vine was limp: “My neighbor had weed-wacked my Cucuzzi! . . . Luckily, I had planted a second Cucuzzi on a trellis: “The Cucuzzi lives! I’ve had two and three-foot long squash to give away or keep and cook in a meatball stew myself. Mom would be proud.”

Meanwhile, **Constance Jordan** had her own battle with her phlox! Up to this year, they multiplied and thrived. Enter the “phlox bug,” a mysterious, little-known invader. Constance tried Sevin. She tried “the hand method”—“clapping your hands with the bugs between them.” She tried diatomaceous earth. It worked, but the rain kept washing it away. (Note: Sprinkled over her kitchen threshold, it “worked better and faster in keeping ants out of my kitchen than anything else I’d tried.”) So Constance decided to yank out all the phlox—except ‘David’—and “start all over with something else next year. My revenge will be if all the phlox bugs die from starvation. EXCEPT the other day I saw some phlox bugs on my ‘David.’ It’s always something, isn’t it?”

**Kathee Godowski**, like many MGs, had a poor tomato crop, “except for Romas. I think it was the cool, damp weather. I don’t see signs of a virus. . . . Next year I will grow them in tires. We did that in Colorado. The tires held the heat.” To combat the smut

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spores that infected her corn, Kathee's debating the solarization of her entire garden by adding a foot of compost to till in later. Lucky Kathee has access to lots of manure on her country estate. But her potatoes and lettuces "did great."

"Native" isn't always nice. This spring a sign on the grounds of the Jackson County Courthouse proudly announced "NATIVE GRASS." Buffalo grass, to be exact. But the grounds were so "spotty and mostly brown" (compared with the snarky green lawn of the City Hall across the street), that even County Executive Mike Sanders received complaints. According to lawn experts, the problem was a "too shady and too damp" area unsuitable for the native grass. It was replaced with "fescue-mixed sod and seed." (KC STAR, 5-13-09. A1)

No natives wanted here, either: A Fort Worth gardener rejected the manicured lawns of the neighborhood and created his own front yard "cottage" garden—Texas style—with over 150 drought-tolerant and native different plants, some even extinct in the wild. Aswarm with bees, butterflies and hummers, the garden was registered as a "Certified Wildlife Habitat" by the National Wildlife Federation. Alas. Though his home is not part of a restrictive neighborhood association, he was served with a code compliance violation (compliments from a disgruntled neighbor). He explained the situation to the officer and heard no more about it. However, several weeks later, without warning, heavy equipment rolled in and "scooped it to the bare dirt." A small class-action lawsuit is in progress. (swept it away. Dallas Star-Telegram, 3-18-09, B7)

Has anybody spotted a new arrival in the area—the "giant resin bee" from Asia? They "look imposing but are harmless," says an area entomologist—one even buzzed his backyard

BBQ! "They can grow as long as native bumblebees or carpenter bees, but their bodies are more elongated and less chunky," he said. "They are not an aggressive pollinator, so they're not likely to displace any native bee species." (KC STAR, 11-30-08, B6)

Speaking of bees, my three hummingbird feeders were mobbed by honeybees in July. All gardeners are concerned about the mysterious disappearance of the bees. But I also worried that the sugary water might be harmful to them, and consulted "Bob the Beekeeper," AKA Robert Hughes, who teaches beekeeping science at Johnson County Community College. "The nectar flow this time of year is slow," he said. "When the honey flow is strong, the bees will abandon your sugar water for nectar. In no way does this harm the bees and they will not become dependent on it. Keep up the good work, it really helps the bees." Bob the Beekeeper, I have news for you: It's mid-September as I write this, and they're still coming. Hundreds of them, slurping a gallon a day from shallow saucers. I've become their sugar slave. Fortunately, their interest is being drawn to flowering sedum and asters. Soon it'll be tough love, bees!

The 2009 Too-Good-to-Be-True" nominee: Did anyone try the Italian Tree Tomato trumpeted in spring magazines? "Produces over 50 lbs of tomatoes . . . Zooms up to 15 feet in one season! It's like a tomato factory in your own back yard!! Fruits up to 2 lbs each!" Maybe I'm just an old cynic. If you tried one, let me know.

*GARDEN JEOPARDY solution: What is the oak tree? Rounded-lobed white oaks, (includes bur, post, and chinkapin) usually produce acorns each year. Pointed-lobed red oaks (includes pin, black, and blackjack) take two growing seasons to set fruit. (From Trees of North America)*

### Regulars continued from page 7

pete in Academy horse shows riding a lesson horse that is generally a saddle-bred. On page 7 is a picture of me riding Gunner, a Morgan horse. Next spring, I will welcome my first foal that I am part owner in. The foal's sire is Worthy's One and Only. You can find him online. He resides near Wichita.

I regularly take pilates or yoga. Equally as relaxing is playing with Maggie the golden retriever, Jasmine the Boxer, and Bear, the Katrina rescue chow chow mix. Maddie the calico cat keeps them all in line. I also love to travel. One day I hope to make it to Australia and New Zealand. Anyone interested?

I go through phases with my plants. I have been in the peony phase, the bromeliad phase and the African Violet phase to name a few. I have decided I like streptocarpus better than African Violets (sorry grandma). For next year, I plan to work on plantings on the east pond bank in front of my house to work toward not having to weed eat it. I hate that job.

Last year at Christmas time, Family Tree Nursery in Liberty gave out calendars with monthly coupons. I have used most of mine this year, as well as some of their online coupons. I also find good deals online from small growers or places like Forest Farm and High Country Gardens where they sell plants in smaller, cheaper, sizes so I can afford more. I look to Logees for tropicals. For years I have purchased sapling trees from the Missouri Conservation Department in their very affordable bundles of 20 plants for \$5. I also like to order rooted starts for mums from Kings Mums in California. Most run \$2.50 to \$3.50 each. Stark Brothers remains a favorite for my orchard trees. The UPS man has suggested I put up a sign by my front yard perennial bed that says "Plants by UPS."

**Regulars continued on page 13**

# Invite summer to linger

by Marjorie Yates, Class of 2006

As each growing season draws to a close, we seek ways to extend the presence of color, fragrance and texture we have enjoyed for the last few months. Drying flowers, herbs, grasses and seed heads is one way to satisfy this desire. There are several methods for preserving the fruits of our labor and each plant prefers specific techniques. This article will explore air, silica and microwave drying of plants commonly found in our Midwestern gardens and prairies.

Harvesting and drying the flowers are the last steps in a process that starts before the seeds are even sown. Cathy Miller's *Harvesting, Preserving and Arranging Dried Flowers* and Dolly Lutz Morris' *Flower Drying Handbook* are good sources of guidance for planning, planting, and cultivating the garden, through harvesting and drying. Their expert tips will be included for several plants. Both books suggest multiple drying methods for many flowers.

## Air Drying

Most plants respond well to the air drying method which is the easiest and least labor-intensive. If you want summer to linger, pick a bunch of your favorites and invite them to hang around for a while. In general, the best time to harvest is late morning on sunny days. Allow the dew to evaporate and avoid wet conditions. And always harvest more than you need to allow for shrinkage.

For specific plants, the keys to successful air-drying are picking the plant at the right moment and selecting the right "direction" for its drying orientation. Nearly all plants dry best when bundled in small groups with a rubber band securing the stems and hanging upside down. The rubber band will contract as the stems dry, maintaining

a secure hold on your treasures. Some plants, such as golden rod and Astilbe, will form more graceful arches if dried upright. The list below describes the optimal harvest time, recommended air-drying methods and approximate drying time for a few annual and perennial favorites used in wreaths and dried flower arrangements.

**American Bittersweet** - Harvest berries in autumn after they split open, revealing the crimson seed. Hang upside down or dry upright. Dries in two to three weeks.

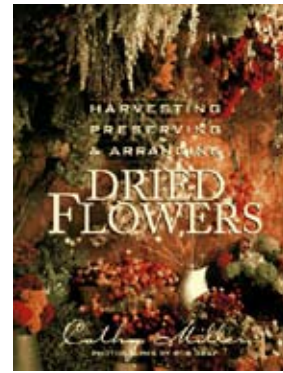
**Annual Statice** - Harvest when flowers are fully open and begin to show color. Hang upside down or dry single stems on a screen. Dries in 3 weeks. Tip: Bundle colors separately for easier use in arrangements.

**Astilbe** Harvest anytime. Hang upside down or dry upright for arching plumes. Dries in three weeks.

**Baby's Breath** - Harvest when flowers have just opened. Be sure the flowers are not discolored and the plant has not set seed. Hang upside down or upright in a dry vase. Dries in two weeks.

**Cockscomb** - Harvest just before flowers are in full bloom. Miller prefers the "Red Velvet" and pink "Floradale" varieties and suggests the following method: "Hang individual stems upside down, taped onto coat hangers, with an open paper bag pulled up over each flower head and taped to the sides of the hanger. Tiny seeds will fall into the bag, and flower color will intensify. After removing the dried cockscomb, gently scrape off any loose seeds from the flower heads so they won't drop after arranging." Allow at least three weeks drying time.

**Globe Amaranth** - Harvest when flowers are fully open to retain color.



Hang upside down in small bunches, well-separated to prevent tangling.

Dry for at least three weeks to allow stems to become firm. Tip from Miller: the whole plant can be pulled up and hung to dry at the end of the growing season.

**Hydrangea, PeeGee** - Cut branches when heads are still rosy pink. Hang upside down in bunches or arrange in a container and dry in place. Dries in two weeks.

**Hydrangea, White Snowball** - Cut stems when flowers turn pale lime green. Remove leaves and hang upside down in small bunches. Dries in one to two weeks. Miller's tips: waiting too long to pick results in blossoms speckled with brown. Also, colors other than white are best dried in a desiccant.

**Lavender** - Harvest before all flowers on the stem open and retain some leaves for fragrance. Hang upside down. Dries in two weeks. Tip: Tie a ribbon around the rubber band and hang where you can enjoy the sight and scent of the drying lavender.

**Oat Grass** - Harvest when the flower heads are fully open. Miller prefers to cut while still a soft green, "which complements spring and fall arrangements and supplies a green accent so necessary in dried creations". Dry at least three weeks to harden off stems.

**Yarrow** - Gather while flowers are bright yellow. Dry upright in a vase with flowers staggered in small bunches. Dries in three weeks. Miller's tip: "To keep the dried florets' pollen from dropping, spritz the heads before and after drying with a clear acrylic spray

**Dry continued on page 11**

## Dry continued from page 10

or extra-hold hair spray.”

Several other annuals and perennials can be air-dried, including Black-eyed Susans, Blue Ageratum, Chinese Lantern, Lamb's Ears, Liatris and many grasses. Air-drying is best done in dry locations that are not exposed to direct sunlight and that do have good air circulation. Store air-dried items away from sunlight, insects and moisture. Place in cardboard boxes with tight fitting lids, using tissue paper between layers.

## Silica Drying

More succulent plants require use of a desiccant to absorb the moisture. Flowers that do best with this method include Bells of Ireland, Dahlia, Daisy, Delphinium, Dogwood, Lilac, Lily of the Valley, Marigold, Snapdragon and Zinnias. Both flowers and buds of Peonies and Roses are recommended. Even herbs such as chives and oregano in bloom or bright green parsley can be desiccant-dried and used in wreaths and arrangements.

Silica Gel is recommended as it is lighter in weight than sand or other desiccants and will result in less damage to blossoms. It can also be reused

several times. A 1.5 pound box can be purchased at most hobby shops or online for about \$10. Start by reading the instructions included with the silica gel, then place about an inch in the bottom of a glass, plastic or metal container. (This is a good way to reuse your gallon or larger Ice cream tubs, metal or plastic coffee cans and fruitcake containers with lids.)

General harvesting requirements are the same as for air-drying. Select the most perfect blooms after the morning dew has evaporated and avoid damp conditions. Cut off the stem about one inch below the flower base. Creative Homeowners Annuals suggests inserting a short wire into the remaining stem before drying. A longer wire can then be attached after drying for placement in arrangements or attaching to wreaths.

Place the blooms on top of the silica with adequate space between and no overlapping of petals. Important! Place double or many-petaled flowers face up; place single-petaled flowers such as daisies face down, place flowers with long stalks such as snap dragons lengthwise. After placing the flowers on the silica, sprinkle enough more to cover all the petals. Multiple layers

may be used, but Morris suggests novice dryers limit each container to one type of flower. From experience, they will learn to judge drying times and successfully mix several flowers in one container.

Cover the container and label with contents and date. Check every three days to avoid over drying. This is very important as silica produces heat, and leaving the blossoms too long can result in over-dried and brittle flowers.

Approximate drying times of some fall favorites are listed below:

Aster- 7 days

Bachelor's Button/Cornflower – 5 days

Bells of Ireland – 7 days

Black-eyed Susans – 6 to 7 days

Calendula – 7 days

Chrysanthemum – 7 days

Delphinium – 7 days

Hydrangea, Bush – 6 to 7 days

Purple Coneflower – 6 to 7 days

Rose, tea-type – 6 to 7 days

Yarrow, pastels – 6 to 7 days

Zinnia, small 4 to 5 days

Miller states “specimens should feel crisp and taffeta-like to the touch” when dry. At this point, remove the flower by slowly pouring off the silica and lifting out the flower with a scooping hand. Turn it upside down and tap to remove silica, then use a small camel's hair brush to remove any residue.

After drying, Miller suggests inserting the stems into a one-inch-thick slice of florists foam for storage. Place in a plastic or cardboard container with a secure lid. Empty cardboard egg cartons are ideal for holding dried roses.

## Microwave Drying

Microwave Drying is the newest kid on the block. Morris states that it is “wondrous in that some blooms can be dried with great results in minutes; frustrating in that some drying times and results are predictably unpredictable.” Experimentation and patience are in order.” With that in mind, consider trying it.

According to the Missouri Extension website, silica gel or other support material must surround the flowers during heating and drying. Flowers are placed in a glass or microwave-safe container as for normal silica drying, then topped with 1 inch of gel. The uncovered dish is placed in the microwave with an 8 ounce glass of water in the rear and the glass must be refilled as the water evaporates.

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Goldenrod

# There's a hawk in the bird bath

By Terrence Thompson, Class of 2006

We gasped when a huge bird whapped against our window. We quickly looked and watched a hawk fly away with a female cardinal grasped in its vicious talons. The hawk had grabbed a cardinal near our window bird feeder. We were startled by the sound and excited at the same time. That was the first we knew that predators had moved into our backyard woods.

At first we could see only one hawk in our woods. We knew it was either a sharp-shinned or a Cooper's hawk. With the help of binoculars and a bird book we deduced it was a Cooper's hawk because of the size of its head and the shape of its tail feathers. Cooper's hawks have rounded tail feathers. Sharp-shinned and Cooper's look so much alike even experts have problems. A female Cooper's hawk can have a wingspan almost three feet. They are big birds.

Later we discovered there were two hawks patrolling our backyard woods looking for prey. Many of our neighbors had bird feeders and the hawks must have found the pickings were easy. It wasn't long before we saw the hawks carrying twigs to the top of a very tall tree at the far backside of our woods. Could they be building a nest in our woods, we wondered?

As someone who specializes in bird photography I was pleased and excited about that prospect. My spouse worried about our small bird friends who had fed at our feeder all winter long. As the hawks continued to add twigs to the nest and fly across the neighborhood looking for prey, our small birds started disappearing. Soon we had only a few small birds at our feeder. Then we had none.

We thought at the time our small

neighborhood birds, mostly chickadees, titmice and finches, were scared away by the hawks cruising through the woods. It wasn't until later that I learned that Cooper's hawks need to consume the equivalent of seven chickadees a day to survive.



We thought that the female hawk would be laying eggs soon because of all the activity. The female generally lays five white eggs that show a hint of blue. Unfortunately the nest was mounted very high and almost hidden among tree branches. I could never get an angle to successfully photograph the nest, let alone see inside it. After awhile the comings and goings to the nest increased. We thought then that they must feeding babies.

Pete Dune, in his book *The Wind Masters*, explains that life is hard in the nest for young Cooper's hawks.

Generally only two of five survive to leave the nest. The weaker, less competitive young hawks do not get their fair share of food brought by their parents. The weaker die and are fed to the surviving youngsters, Dunne says.

As March passed into spring and trees leafed out, it grew difficult to see the nest. We would occasionally see the hawks flying through the woods. Our bird feeder remained bare of birds. The surviving young nestlings

grow rapidly and become almost adult size in a relatively short time, we read. In a few weeks they are helping themselves to the torn-up prey brought to the nest and after a month or so they are hopping around close tree limbs.

Then one morning we saw a young hawk awkwardly land on our backyard deck railing. We spotted another flying clumsily through the woods. Later one of the fledgling hawks flew to the pool at the base of our deck fountain and sipped from it as if it were a bird bath. I slipped out the

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### Hawk continued from page 12

back door to snap photographs of the hawk perched on the fountain edge. It looked at me with curiosity as my camera shutter clicked but made no effort to fly away. We were thrilled to get so close to the hawk.

For several weeks we watched the hawks fly through the woods, sometimes chasing each other as if they were playing tag. We watched as they perched on tree limbs eyeing the frisky squirrels that frequent our woods. Sometimes a hawk would swoop at a squirrel. The squirrel would deftly move to the opposite side of the tree trunk, apparently not bothered by the bold attempt on its life. We never saw the young hawks capture a squirrel or even get a bird as much as they tried. However, they were eating something. Their flights became surer and they seemed to be getting bigger.

One warm spring day, we spotted one of the young hawks standing in our backyard bird bath. It would squat down in the water just like a robin to wet its breast and it would violently shake the water off. I got some photos of that.

As spring changed into summer we saw less and less of the hawks. Then we saw them no more. Chickadees and titmice gradually returned to the feeder. We learned later the young hawks stay near their nest for five to six weeks as the adults continue to feed them. Eventually they leave their birth area to make their own lives.

Now, near the end of the summer, we only occasionally see a far away hawk. We presume even the adults have left for better hunting grounds. Cooper's hawks migrate south to warmer climes before winter arrives. However, we have heard that nest-builders will sometimes return to the same nest year after year adding a new layer of twigs before laying eggs. We will have to wait to see.

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The best thing about being an MG is the people. They are well-grounded (no pun intended), work hard, and love to share.

### Jim Braswell, Class of 2002

Jim has been a Master Gardener since 2002. He currently is co-editor for the Master Gardener's quarterly *The Back Fence* publication with Becky Peck. From 2006 through 2008, Jim coordinated the Greater Kansas City Master Gardener's column ("In the Grow") for the *KC Star*. He has been a mentor for several new Master Gardeners during the Level I training and enjoys working the Cass County Q&A desk.



Jim took early retirement from the pharmaceutical industry in 2007, when the company closed their local Animal Health plant where he worked. Since his retirement, Jim has started his own nature photography business, Show-Me Nature Photography ([www.showmenature-photography.com](http://www.showmenature-photography.com)), and enjoys traveling and photographing wildlife and landscapes whenever he can.

Jim's main gardening interests are gardening for wildlife, growing wildflowers, and plant propagation. Jim has a 200 square foot greenhouse that he fabricated from kit and uses to grow seedlings early in the season for his gardens (Jim and Karen have 0.5 acres in southern Cass County) and for selling at the Cass County Farmer's

Market in Harrisonville, MO, where Karen has a booth.

### Joanne Couture, Class of 1991



I retired after 23 years of teaching high school English and promptly became a MG in 1991--an

MG booth at the annual KC Flower, Lawn and Garden Show snagged my interest. I've been involved in many areas, from Speakers Bureau, Hotline, Steering Committee to community gardening and helping plan the first State MG Conference in KC.

Favorite plant? *Salvia*, both annual and perennial. Beautiful colors, long bloom, easy to grow from seed, no problems, attracts bees, butterflies, hummers. I also enjoy birding and keep records of the species nesting in and migrating through Midtown.

My husband is a retired college teacher. We have two children (both gardeners) and four grandchildren (future MGs).

### Marjorie Yates, Class of 2006



Writing an article about oneself probably falls right after public speaking on a person's list of least favorite activities, but as Master

Gardeners we often venture out onto the proverbial limb. When I applied to be a part of the MG intern class of 2006, I endeavored to learn how to care for my garden and yard. After completing the class I often found it difficult to fit my own yard into the schedule of a full-time job, Gardeners Gatherings, Hotline duty, Garden Tours and workdays at Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary (MLTNS) and Watkins Mill.

Fortunately, I was able to retire from work in December of 2008 and now

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## Regulars continued from page 13

can take a more leisurely approach to life to enjoy gardening and traveling. After 28 years working mainly with federally-funded housing programs, including 24 years as Executive Director of the Liberty Housing Authority, I was ready for something other than Federal Regulations, bureaucracy and meetings. Therefore I chose to participate in the more hands-on MG projects such as digging in the Bird Island at MLTNS and writing for the Back Fence. In the past I helped plant the Harvester's Demonstration Garden and the rain garden in Loose Park. I also enjoyed working in the garden at Watkins Mill and helping others through the Garden Angels. As our travel schedule allows, I hope to get back into those activities again in 2010.

Perennial natives are my absolute favorite plants! A rain garden and a small wild-flower meadow next to our butterfly garden provide year-round pleasure with very little investment of time, money or water. This year I have been adding grasses such as little bluestem and prairie drop seed, along with cardinal flower, blazing star and blue lobelia, to the usual Coneflowers and Rudbeckias. I also enjoy growing herbs, annuals for cutting, a variety of perennials and a few vegetables.

The Missouri Wild Flower Nursery, Bloomers, "Nutrition, Perennials, etc." at the Liberty Farmer's Market, Larrys' in Riverside and Arnolds in Leroy, Kansas are my favorite places to spend money. The gardens of friends and other Master Gardeners provide no-cost plants and I do look for the end of planting season bargains at all the local home improvement and garden shops. Because we were traveling during much of May and June this year, I did not buy plants for my outdoor pots and window boxes. Instead I transplanted yellow creeping jenny from my own yard. It has flourished

and provided some color and texture without costing me a penny.

The recurring theme on my "to do" list this year and next is to correct planting mistakes I made before I learned "right plant, right place". I am seeking autumn crocus bulbs to plant in front of the Liriope edging along my front walk and some good quality gladiola corms to add to my cutting garden. A garden tip I just learned from a UMC website is to divide and transplant tall bearded iris in mid-summer (July and August) to give the divisions time to get established before winter and to reduce the chance of frost heaving in later winter.

When I don't have my hands in the dirt or my nose in a gardening book or website, I enjoy reading novels and non-fiction, traveling, playing with my children and grandchildren and Redmond, our Pembroke Welsh Corgi, attending concerts and learning to use my new digital camera. My husband, Bob Harris, is way ahead of me on this and has taken some wonderful photos of the flowers, butterflies and birds who share our little piece of the earth.

### Terrence Thompson, Class of 2006



I am a master gardener from the class of 2006. When I retired in 2002 one of my goals was to become a master gardener

although I knew little about the organization. I since have discovered that the Greater Kansas City group allows me to combine all my passions: my love of writing and photography and the joy of gardening. I enjoy contributing to *The Back Fence*.

My garden is mostly shady, so naturally I have specialized in shady perennials. My favorites include ele-

gant astilbe, gracious toad lilies with their orchid-like flowers, beautiful bugbane with its spires of white flowers, and dangerous monkshood with its amazingly blue flowers late summer. Monkshood is dangerous because the entire plant is extremely poisonous. That helps keep unwanted neighborhood kids from hanging around.

Late this summer I tore out my sunny garden edges of monarda and daylilies and added hostas for a big change of look. Monarda and daylilies always get tacky and unkempt late in the season and the hostas neaten up the garden edges.

Although I had grown hostas for years I didn't know about the variety and bright yellow colors offered by hostas until I started looking for new plants. Digging deep holes for all the new plants also allowed me to test my brand new right knee that I got Feb. 10 this year. It works great. It bends in the right place and everything.

Before I retired I had been a journalist at *The Kansas City Star* for 35 years after graduating from the University of Oklahoma. (I was The Star's token Okie for years. Everybody else was a MU or KU grad.) I started out as a reporter/photographer and later specialized in writing about local government and politics. I wrote a weekly politics column about Jackson County and Independence for years. After that I wrote the consumer column "At Your Service" for *The Star* for about 10 years. The final 10 years at the paper I labored as administrative manager for the editorial division so everybody else in the newsroom could have a good time being journalists.

Since retiring I have published three photography books, one showing backyard birds, butterflies and my shady perennial garden; a book about the Tuscany, Lake District and Venice areas of Italy; and book on orchids. I grow orchids in my basement. This

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winter I will do a book showing my nature photography and possibly another book of black and white photographs that would show images I took up to forty years ago, including some that were first published in *The Kansas City Star*.

### Stephen Stone, Class of 1998



In 1986 I retired with a disability after a 25 year career in law enforcement. I had been a Detective and a Division

Training Officer for two different agencies and as such I had been quite active. The abrupt stop of retirement left me aimlessly adrift and as a result I spent the better part of the next several years doing absolutely nothing. My wife Ardys suggested I fill that void in my life with gardening.

After reading an ad in the local paper Ardys suggested I share my new found love of gardening by becoming a Master Gardener. I did so in December of 1998 and then convinced her to join in 1999. This past year I "officially" retired when I turned sixty-five.

Before choosing Law enforcement as a career I attended the Kansas City Art Institute and had planned on getting into some artistic endeavor. I started cartooning for *The Back Fence* at the request of Bill McCue who was its editor when I first joined the Master Gardeners. Ardys and I were most active in the Speaker's Bureau but we also volunteered at garden tours and the butterfly festival at Powell Gardens. After reaching emeritus status we have had to cut back on our activities due to some health issues of mine as well as those of both our parents.

Ardys and I garden for wildlife and consequently we have an abundance

of native plants in our garden for their benefit. Her job at "The Wild Bird Center" dove-tails nicely with our philosophy of providing year-round feed and shelter for wild creatures that are affected by declining habitat. We have identified over 60 species of songbirds in our small suburban backyard; the most interesting of which was, a brief visit by, two juvenile

Pileated Woodpeckers. We have created a wild place in our neighborhood that not only provides a sanctuary for us but also one that, to the horror of some, is a safe harbor for all that crawls, slithers, flies or walks.

Last year we lost our little dog Abby to old age but we adopted two new pups to add to our menagerie of two rescued cats and a parrot. We also feed two feral cats and the occasional raccoon and opossum that visit during the night.

This past year a friend gave Ardys a 9' x 12' greenhouse. The only problem was that she had to dismantle it where it was and put it back together again in our backyard. It turned out to be quite a project as the original instructions for installation had long since been lost. She also had to tear down an existing garden shed in our yard to make room for the new addition. I say "she had to" because I had some minor surgery during that time that kept me incapacitated for over three months. Fortunately, she had the help of our son and a co-worker who filled in nicely.

I am a voracious reader of whatever strikes my fancy, but mostly the categories of history, biography, philoso-



phy, theology, mythology and sociology have captured my interest over the past thirty years. I enjoy cooking and watching the Kansas City Chiefs. I can't make it through the day without listening to "the blues" but I have an extensive collection of all genres of music from country to classical. Writing and getting back to painting is a couple of things I would like to do more of in the future. Cartooning was something I stumbled onto and I find it difficult to come up with ideas that haven't already been satirized. I think ideas are universal and there have been times I have drawn a cartoon that was original but by the time it was published in *The Back Fence* I have seen the same thing articulated later in a commercial on television or some other venue.

I appreciate the encouragement and complements I have received from other Master Gardener's regarding my cartoons and I will humbly give anyone who desires it a signed color print of their favorite.

### Laurie Chipman, Class of 1999

I have been an MG for 10 years, but you probably don't see me much

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Illustration by Laurie Chipman

## The Back Fence

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 Extension

### Dry continued from page 11

Drying time is one to three minutes, depending on density of the petals. Use the temperature chart below:  
Astilbe – 160 F  
Bachelor's Button – 150 F  
Delphinium – 170 F  
Hydrangea – 160 F  
Marigold – 170 F  
Rose – 170 F  
Yarrow – 160 F  
Zinnia – 170 F

Test dry one flower of each type separately, then increase or decreases the time as necessary. Use oven mitts when removing the container and set it aside to cool for 30 minutes to 2

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because making a living gets in the way of most MG activities for me. Skills needed to design *The Back Fence* pages overlap

nicely with my professional life as a self-employed graphic designer and illustrator. When I was more active as an MG, I enjoyed the challenge of the hotline and volunteering at the garden shows. I also enjoy giving advice to neighbors and friends and of course, my own garden which I consider my living art project.

For my garden, I prefer plants that like to live in our region. I have a fondness for native plants and I like to grow my own food as much as will fit in a small city lot. My MG paper was on edible landscaping so I'm still exploring that idea but then I get a weakness for roses, lilies, lavender, morning glories and moonflowers. Since I have lots of shade, I try to get color from foliage as much as flowers and I'm partial to fragrant plants.

This year I tried growing vegetables like eggplant and chard in pots. They are doing well and have fewer pests. I find that pots need more fertilizer and

hours. If flowers are still moist, repeat the process.

Whether you choose the slow, old-fashioned air drying method, use silica gel as a desiccant or speed-dry in the microwave, invite your summer friends to keep you company for months and years to come. Cut your most perfect rose, your prize-winning snowball hydrangea or Mother Nature's showiest goldenrod, then preserve it using one of the methods described above. The library and Internet are full of information to help you get started and your garden is waiting to come indoors for the winter.

greater diligence about watering but they are good for keeping plants until you find that perfect spot in the garden. Because I grow food plants, I'm always thinking about crop rotation whether it's in the same season like lettuce and beans or from year to year. Next year I may try tomatoes in the new raised bed on the driveway as it is practically virgin soil or make another raised bed in the same area. I'm getting lots of pests and fungus this year, on my tomatoes, beans and peppers so it may be time for that plot of soil to rest.

When I'm not working or gardening, I enjoy reading, walking and bicycling. I have spent a lot of time in the past 5 years learning about and promoting walking and bicycling as transportation in our region. I lead a bicycle ride every Thursday from Brookside for the Kansas City Bicycle Club and I'm on the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committees for KCMO and Mid-America Regional Council.

Besides myself, our household consists of my husband, Jeff Perry, Iris the cat, Chester the hound/border collie and Mocha the golden retriever cross. We don't have children but the dogs and cats, including the neighborhood animals and children, work out well for us.