



over the picket fence

Spring, 2014

March, April, May

The Mason County Garden Club Quarterly Newsletter

(Since 1926-our 88th year)

www.masoncountygardenclub.org

Member: Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc
Central Region and National Garden Clubs, Inc



Think Spring



It's been a long, cold and snowy winter and yet, even though March opened like a lion, there is no doubt in the minds of gardeners that spring is right around the corner. The song ***It might as well be spring*** sung by Frank Sinatra sums up how we are all feeling right now as we anxiously wait for spring..



*I'm as restless as a willow in a windstorm
I'm as jumpy as puppet on a string
I'd say that I had spring fever
But I know it isn't even spring.
I'm as giddy as a baby on a swing
I haven't seen a crocus or a rosebud
Or a robin on the wing
But I feel so gay in a melancholy way
That it might as well be spring.*

Shortly we will be enjoying the first song of the robin, the delicate crocus poking through the snow and the sound of frogs croaking in the pond. April showers are coming, the garden centers will be open and the weeds will be growing. Yes, spring is right around the corner!



MCGC Meeting

Another rite of Spring is just around the corner. Our President Mary Ann Ferguson will open the first meeting of 2014 for the MCGC on Thursday, March 27 at 1:00pm. at the United Methodist Church, 5810 Bryant Rd., Ludington. Jordan DeVries, Program Administrator for the Mason-Lake Conservation District, will present a program on Organic and Natural Fertilizers.

Organics fertilizers are derived from animal or vegetable matter (e.g. compost, manure). Naturally occurring organic fertilizers include manure, slurry, worm castings, seaweed, humic acid and guano. There exists a supply of commercial organic fertilizers but "home grown" fertilizers are just as effective. Jordan will describe composting, show us how to create our own bins and explain how composting works hand-in-hand with natural disease and pest control. Bring your questions and open minds to composting in your own back yard!



MGC Schedule for 2014

- ✧ **April 21-22** Garden Study School, Course IV at Fernwood Botanical Garden near Niles. Contact Bobbi Quick bquick50@gmail.com
- ✧ **April 24-25** Environmental Studies School, Course III and Course IV October 23-24 at Pleasant Ridge. Contact Stacey Stutcher fstutcher@yahoo.com
- ✧ **April 26** -Tri-refresher (landscape, environmental, garden) W.K.Biological Station Hickory Corners (near Kalamazoo). Contact Lynn Dinvalid ydoublelne@aol.com
- ✧ **April 30 - May 1** - Landscape Design School, Course II , Course III October 1-2, Course IV May 7-8, 2015 at Ann Arbor. Contact Mary Pulick marypulick@gmail.com
- ✧ **May 13** - Spring District V Meeting at Boyne Mt. Resort
- ✧ **May 17** - Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary ribbon cutting
- ✧ **May 24** - Pentwater Garden Club Annual Plant Sale, Bell Park next to Village Office
- ✧ **June 3** - MGC State Convention at Eagle Eye Golf Club in Bath
- ✧ **August 27-28** - Flower Show Symposium, at McGuires Resort in Cadillac. Contact Lynn Dinvalid ydoublelne@aol.com
- ✧ **September 25** - Fall District V Meeting, Little River Casino Resort. Manistee
- ✧ **May 2-6, 2016** - National Garden Club Annual Convention at the Amway Grand Hotel, Grand Rapids



Did You Know?

- ✧ The Garden Therapy Committee has been meeting each month through the winter with the lovely ladies of Ludington Woods. Diane Davis and Peaches Throckmorton have led this group with fun ideas assisted by Gwen Jackson, Mary Quillan and Mary's daughter, Bonnie Barclay. Soon they will be able to get back outside again and share the love of gardening with the ladies. There's always room for more. So even if you didn't sign up for this committee, contact Diane or Peaches if you're interested.

- ✧ Julie Tews and her Garden Walk Committee have been hard at work already planning for July's Garden Walk. New ideas are coming from this group and you will be impressed when you hear about their efforts to this point. Help is always needed so contact Julie if you're interest and save Sunday, July 13 on your calendar to do your part that day to make our major fund raiser a big success

- ✧ Deb Laiskonis has signed up her employer WLDN News 98 as the media sponsor for the 2014 Garden Walk. A media sponsorship includes radio commercials, interviews, mention on the community calendar and mention on the WLDN Facebook page all at no charge. Thank you Deb for your efforts to make this happen.

Calendar of Local Events



March

20-Vegetable Garden Know-How Course
231-843-5510

27-MCGC- First meeting of the year.
United Methodist Church – 1:00 p.m.



April

8-Canning & Jamming for Beginners
231-843-5510

22-Earth Day Celebration
Ludington Library
231-832-8465

25-27-West Michigan Home Builder's
Association Home and Garden Show
Mason County Fairgrounds – Ludington

25-Mason-Lake Conservation District
Spring Seeding Sale
Mason County Fairgrounds – Ludington
231-757-3708

26-AFFEW Earth Day Celebration
Location to be announced

Calendar of Local Events (cont.)

May



3-Opening
of White Pine Village

9-Flower Sale at Spectrum Health
Ludington Hospital
231-845-2222

9-Farmer's Market
North James Street Plaza, Ludington
(every Friday thru September)

17-Petunia Parade
Ludington Avenue

17-Mason County Garden Club
Spring Plant Exchange
Leveaux Park, Ludington

23-Mason-Lake Conservation
District Native Plant Sale
Mason County Fairgrounds
Ludington

31-Petunia Weeding Day
Ludington Avenue



National Garden Clubs



National Garden Club

National Garden Clubs, Inc. announces a partnership with Crown Bees to increase native bee awareness, and encourage gardeners to add gentle, rarely stinging mason bees for food and flower pollination. Creating edible landscapes and bee-safe habitats in backyards can help save the food supply threatened by declining honey bee pollinators.

NGC President Linda Nelson says that “**MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE**” in our environment is the goal shared by this newly formed partnership”. Crown Bees is a mason bee pollination and education company and National Garden Clubs, Inc is the largest worldwide nonprofit organization of volunteers pursuing gardening's best practices and education for a sustainable environment.

President Nelson says that, “The hallmark of National Garden Club activities is to protect and conserve our natural resources, and to promote education so we may all be better caretakers of our beautiful planet.” She also says that, “Increasing bee awareness and promoting the use of bee safe products allow us to be part of this powerful solution”.

Dave Hunter, founder of Crown Bees, said, “This is a groundbreaking alliance to reach communities everywhere with an easy backyard garden solution to the declining honey bee population. Nearly 1/3 of our food supply is threatened by lack of pollination. We need more alternate bee pollinators to keep food on tomorrow's table. Bees flourish in an edible landscape, and that is a great solution in which we all benefit.” For more information related to this subject, you may visit NGC at www.gardenclub.org.



Want to plant something right now and watch it grow. Save the base of that bunch of celery or a head of lettuce, rinse it off and place it in a small saucer or bowl of warm water on or near a sunny windowsill. Over the course of a week, the surrounding stalks/leaves begin to dry out but tiny little yellow leaves from the center of the base begin thickening, growing up and out from the center and turning a dark green. After that first week you can transfer the growing plant to a planter and cover it completely, except for the leaf tips, with potting soil. Water it generously after planting. Not only will you see celery or lettuce leaves growing from the base but you can clearly see stalks from the celery making their way up and out. **A note** - be sure to change the water every couple of days and rinse off the base of the celery/lettuce while in the saucer.



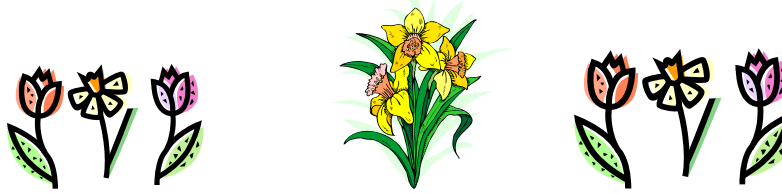
2014: Year of the Echinacea

Echinacea was chosen as the 2014 perennial of the year for the National Garden Bureau because of the vast assortment of flower colors and shapes available to today's gardener and also because they are such an American staple. The classic flower shape continues to be a favorite in home and public gardens. Also known as the coneflower, it is a native to central and eastern North America. Besides its native landscape and prairie appeal, the herbal and medicinal use has been documented through the years. It is said to offer a general boost to the immune system and has antidepressant properties plus is used to treat or ward off various infections and maladies.

Echinacea are generally low maintenance. Plant in full sun, or light shade in hotter areas. No additional fertilizing is necessary as heavy fertilization leads to tall, leggy plants that flop. It is affected by slugs, Japanese beetles, Bacterial Leaf Spot and Powdery Mildew. This plant is often seen in our Spring Plant Exchange so pick one up to enjoy in your garden this summer.



While we wait for this winter to end, a ray of sunshine could be in your mailbox. The Proven Winners Garden Book is available. Contact www.provenwinners.com or call 815-895-8130 for your free copy.



Perennials

Perennials wear out the soil just as any crop does. They are said to be "low maintenance" because soil renewal and replanting isn't an annual affair. Yet maintenance still has to happen. You have two options - do a major periodic renovation every 6 to 7 years or maintain the bed so the soil constantly renews itself.

Fall and early Spring are both good times for major renovation. To renovate, dig up all the plants and bulbs and set them aside. They will be fine above ground for a few days or even a few weeks, so long as they're in the shade and have enough soil or mulch on their roots to keep them from drying out. Weed the bed well and loosen it to a depth of 18 inches. Spread a 4 inch layer of compost or peat and mix it in. Water it to let it all settle and then replant.

A constant renewal starts with organic mulch applied on a regular basis. You can start renewing your beds this spring by applying compost or peat and weeding thoroughly with a garden fork. This loosens the soil to the full depth of the fork, and creates cracks in the soil so the organic matter can filter in more quickly. If you're like most perennial gardeners, you divide and move plants a lot. Every time you do, mix in compost or peat to bring the disturbed area back up to level.



Spring Plant Exchange and White Elephant Sale

While working in your perennial gardens and deciding which ones need to be divided or moved, remember the **Spring Plant Exchange on Saturday, May 17 from 10 to 1 at Leveaux Park**. The committee is coming up with some new ideas to enhance this annual event and will share them at the next meeting.



In Memory

Julien Pleiness, a member of the MCGC since 1962, passed away February 27, 2014 at age 86 in her home in Custer. She was presented an Honorary Membership in 1982 and recognized by Michigan Garden Club, Inc with a Life Membership in 2006 at the celebration of the MCGC 80th anniversary. Her love of flowers and gardening was not only apparent in her various activities within the Garden Club but she was also an award winning showman and arranger in the Horticulture Division at the Western Michigan Fair for many years. The condolences of our members is offered to her husband Harlan and family.

Ideas and suggestions are always welcome for the Newsletter . Don't hesitate to contact Gwen or Diane with your thoughts.

See you at the meeting.....Gwen Jackson and Diane Davis