

# Over the Picket Fence



The Mason County Garden Club Quarterly Newsletter  
(Since 1926—our 87<sup>th</sup> year)

[www.masoncountygardenclub.org](http://www.masoncountygardenclub.org)

Member

Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc., Central Region, & National Garden Clubs, Inc.

## March, 2013

**Each spring....a gardening instinct,  
sure as the sap rising in the trees, stirs  
within us. We look about and decide to tame  
another little bit of ground.**

Lewis Gannett

Finally spring is right around the corner and our garden club activities are about to begin. We don't know about you but, for those of us who braved the winter in our little corner ready for Spring. There change in season but, if hear birds singing in the are beginning to play. It before the aconites, snow between the melting first robin of the season is calendar to March, a new activities is about to worked hard to plan a fun programs. Thank you Vicki for all your time and effort. Now get ready to find the gloves, pruners and rakes because as the song says "spring is busting out all over".



of Michigan, we are soooo aren't too many signs of the you listen closely, you can morning and the squirrels can't be too much longer drops and crocus pop-up mounds of snow and the seen. As you turn the year of Garden Club begin. Vicki Houk has year of very interesting and



**If you are planning for a year, plant rice;  
if you are planning for a decade, plant trees;  
if you are planning for a life time, educate people.**  
Chinese proverb

Mark your calendar for **March 28 at 1:00 at the United Methodist Church, 5810 Bryant Rd, Ludington** for the first meeting of the new year. Mira Danielovich, former Mason County MSU Extension Agent and doctor of agriculture and horticulture, presents "**Spring Pruning Tips.**" Spring is one of the best times to prune and Mira will share her extensive knowledge on what, when and how.



The MCGC 2013 Yearbook is ready for pick-up at the Cartier Mansion or you can get your copy at the March meeting. If you haven't seen the book, it will really wow you. Sue Ann Hanson with her committee of Deb Gundersen and Suzanne Townsend worked hard to put together an exceptional book using a local printer. If you get a chance, let them know you appreciate their hard work.

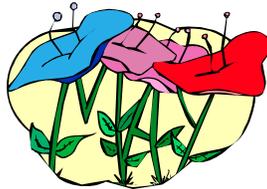
At the popular winter lunches we have had numerous visitors and we are fortunate one of those visitors. Sheila Preston, joined our club. In your new yearbook please add Sheila to the membership page.

### **2013 Yearbook Changes:**

Page 9 – Location of the Fall District Meeting has been changed to the Bridge View Beach Hotel and Convention Center in Mackinaw City overlooking the Mackinac Bridge and Mackinac Island.

Page 34 — Gloria Merchant has changed to full membership instead of Associate. Delete her work email address "epworth@chartermi.net."

## Spring shows what God can do



with a drab and dirty world.

Virgil Kraft

### What to do and not to do in a winter/early spring thaw.....

- **Do** pile whatever snow is left onto the soil of container/raised gardens, or under broadleaf evergreens. It will protect roots from the big, fast shift in temperature that come at sundown of a warm winter day. As it melts, it can help an evergreen replace the moisture it loses to photosynthesis.
- **Do** place evergreen boughs over and around plants and shrubs if you didn't do this last fall. It will limit heaving as the temperature fluctuates.
- **Do** walk through the garden and look for bulbs and roots that were "heaved" during a thaw and gently re-plant them.
- **Do** shade the south and west side of the trunks of thin-barked trees such as Japanese maple and mountain ash.
- **Do** apply a new coat of anti-desiccant to broadleaf evergreens that are exposed to the wind. Ask yourself as you do, "Are these plants really so essential in this spot or can I move them to a more protected place and eliminate the extra work of protecting them?"
- **Do** take a drive through your area to see what looks good right now in others' yards. Plan to replace those badly sited shrubs and plants of your garden with something less needy.
- **Don't** walk on wet, cold beds. If you must, protect the soil, so vulnerable now to the kind of compaction that's very hard to fix later. Spread your weight wide by laying down planks or bundled newspaper to walk on. Snowshoes work too!



**A good gardener always plants 3 seeds....  
one for the bugs, one for the weather  
and one for himself. Leo Aikman**



## **National and State Schools and Meetings**

- April 22-23 Garden Study School, Course II hosted by the Michiana Landscape Study Club. Contact Bobbi Quick [bquick50@gmail.com](mailto:bquick50@gmail.com) for more information
- April 25-26 Environmental Studies, Course I, Pleasant Ridge, Michigan. Contact Stacey Strutcher 248-546-6538 for more information.
- May 9-10 Landscape Design School, Course IV, Ludington. Contact Suzanne Townsend [setownse@aol.com](mailto:setownse@aol.com) for more information.
- May 14-16 Flower Show School, Course IV, Okemos, Michigan. Contact Lois Snover-Hanson at 517-694-8091
- May 24-26 National Garden Clubs Convention to be held in Seattle, Washington
- May 29-31 MGC Convention to be held at the Double Tree Convention Center in Holland, Michigan
- June 6 District V Spring Meeting at the Castle Farms and hosted by the Charlevoix Area Garden Club.
- Sept. 24 District V Fall Meeting, Bridge Vista Beach Hotel & Convention Center in Mackinaw City. Hosted by the Seedums, Perennial, Presque Isle County and Stepping Stones Garden Clubs.
- Oct. 1-2 Landscape Design School Course I, Holiday Inn, 3600 Plymouth Rd., Ann Arbor. For more information contact local chairman Mary Pulick at [marypulick@gmail.com](mailto:marypulick@gmail.com) or 734-476-2453.
- Oct. 7-18 Environmental School, Course II, Pleasant Ridge, Michigan. Contact Stacey Strutcher 248-546-6538 for more information.
- Oct. 21-22 Garden Study School, Course II hosted by Michiana Landscape Study Club. Contact Bobbi Quick [bquick50@gamil.com](mailto:bquick50@gamil.com) for more information.



**I cannot walk into my garden  
without constantly being reminded  
of the friends who shared their plants with me.**

Allen Lacy



## Michigan Garden Clubs State Convention

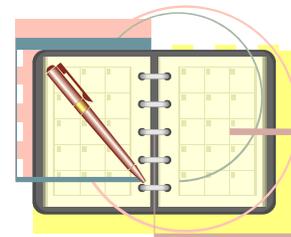
Mark your calendar for the 2013 MGC Convention to be held May 29-31 in Holland. The newly installed National Garden Club President, Linda Nelson, will be attending on the heels of her own installation at the NGC Convention the previous week. This is always an outstanding convention and members of our club always attend. Watch for more information coming soon.

The theme for the 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention (May 29-31) at the Double Tree Convention Center in Holland is "Working Together to Grow Together" and includes speakers (Janet Macunovich is one of the featured speakers!), seminars, a tour of Windmill Island, plus a Standard Flower Show "Creating Joy." Linda Nelson, our new NGC President, will be attending. This is the first convention that she will attend after being installed as NGC President at the NGC Convention the previous week. Registration forms are on the MGC Website. Deadline for registration is May 3.



**I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose  
I would always greet it in a garden."**

Ruth Stout



### Dates and Events of Interest

March	<b>Women's History Month</b>
March 1-April 30	Butterflies Are Blooming, Meijer Gardens, Grand Rapids
March 8-10	West Michigan Women's Expo, DeVos Place, Grand Rapids
March 10	Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 16	St Patrick's Day in Downtown Ludington
March 20	First day of Spring
May 18	Petunia Parade Planting Day in Ludington
May 18	MCGC Spring Plant Exchange and White Elephant Sale, Leveaux Park
May 25	The Garden Club of Pentwater Annual Plant Sale at Bell Park in downtown Pentwater rain or shine.
June 2-8	National Garden Week
June 22	Grand Haven Garden Walk
July 11-13	Spring Lake Garden Club 56 <sup>th</sup> Annual Flower Show "Films and Flowers" at the Spring Lake District Library. Admission - free
July 13	MCGC 17 <sup>th</sup> Annual Garden Walk "A Bouquet of Gardens"
August 9	MCGC Bi-annual Flower Show, Ludington Area Center for the Arts
September 7	MCGC Fall Plant Sale, Leveaux Park

Our president, Sharon Morman, shared a fun email she recently received.



## "Why didn't I think of that...."

- Freeze grapes to chill down white wine without watering it down.
- Take an old CD spindle and turn it into a bagel tote.
- Put a wooden spoon across a boiling pot of water to keep it from boiling over.
- Turn on your seat warmer to keep pizza hot while driving home.
- Use a muffin tin to serve condiments at a BBQ.
- Put pancake mix in a ketchup bottle for a no mess pouring experience.
- Doritos are great for kindling if you can't find any.
- Turn bread upside down and cut it on the bottom side.
- Put your straw through the tab of a can to keep it from rising out of your drink.
- If you're prepping a lot of corn, use an electric knife to remove the kernels.
- You can also use a bundt pan to help hold the corn as you cut and collect the kernels in the pan.
- Cut ground beef into pieces before freezing to make defrosting quantities easier.
- Can't open a pistachio? Insert a used shell into the opening and twist to pry it open.

**No matter how long the winter,  
spring is sure to follow.**  
Proverb from Guinea



We know you enjoy the recipes we include in the newsletters. Here are two that are sure to be your recipe box favorites!!!



## Gratin Dauphinois

(Scalloped Potatoes with Milk, Cheese and Garlic)

This is an adaptation of Julia Child's classic scalloped potato recipe. It's fast, simple and savory. Use any kind of sharp cheese and milk you have on hand—it's no fail.

3 tbsp. melted butter, divided  
6 peeled russet potatoes (about 2 lbs.) cut into 1/8-inch slices  
1 garlic clove, minced  
¾ cup (3 oz.) shredded Gruyere or Swiss cheese  
½ tsp. salt  
1/ tsp. black pepper  
1 cup 2% reduced fat milk-heated

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Spread an 11x8" baking dish or gratin dish with 1 tbsp. of the melted butter.
2. Arrange half the potatoes in dish. Sprinkle with half the garlic. Drizzle with half the remaining butter. Sprinkle on half the cheese and half the salt and pepper. Repeat layers. Pour hot milk over potatoes.
3. Bake 40 minutes or until potatoes are tender, milk is absorbed and top is browned.

Serves 6. Nutritional facts per serving: 260 calories, 11g fat, 8g protein, 33g carbohydrates, 3g fiber, 270mg sodium.

## Hershey's "Especially Dark" Chocolate Cake

Dark...rich...moist...it's absolutely the best you'll ever taste!

2 cups sugar  
1-3/4 cups all-purpose flour  
¾ cup Hershey's Special Dark cocoa  
1-1/2 tsp baking powder  
1-1/2 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
2 eggs  
1 cup milk  
½ cup vegetable oil

2 tsp vanilla extract  
1 cup boiling water

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour two 9-inch round baking pans or 13x9 sheet pan.
2. Stir together sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda and salt in large bowl. Add eggs, milk, oil and vanilla; beat with electric mixer on medium speed for 2 minutes. Stir in boiling water (**batter will be thin**). Pour batter into prepared pans.
3. Bake 30-35 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out Clean. Cool 10 minutes; remove from pans to wire racks. Cool Completely. Frost with “Especially Dark” Chocolate Frosting.

### **“Especially Dark” Chocolate Frosting**

½ cup (1 stick) butter or margarine  
2/3 cup Hershey’s Special Dark cocoa  
3 cups powdered sugar  
1/3 cup milk  
1 tsp vanilla extract

Melt butter. Stir in cocoa. Alternately add powdered sugar and milk, beating to spreading consistency. Add small amount additional milk, if needed. Stir in vanilla. Makes 2 cups frosting.

## A message from MGC President Nancy Stark...

Gardening friends,

This is part of an article from Old Bulbs Gazette, March 2012. I've been wondering about the winter affect on our gardens. Here are some things to watch for.



### Weird Winter? How Will It Affect Your Bulbs?

Warmer, colder, wetter, drier -- weird weather seems to have been the norm this winter. Of course heirloom plants have been taking weird weather in stride for decades if not centuries, but here's how it may affect your plants this spring.

**WARMER?** Mild winters allow the eggs of iris borers and spores of fungal diseases to over-winter more successfully, so it's especially important to remove all of last year's peony foliage and [clean up around your iris](#) before temperatures warm any further. If you mulched your peonies with straw or leaves last fall, loosen the mulch now and make sure it's not starting to mold.

**NO SNOW?** Like a down comforter, snow traps air which makes it a great insulator. If your winter was short on snow, your bulbs and newly planted perennials such as peonies may have gotten a lot colder than usual, which could result in dead or weakened plants this spring.

Snow also protects the soil from the freeze-thaw cycle that occurs when sunny days are followed by much colder nights. Freezing and thawing can break bulb roots and heave newly planted perennials out of the ground. Check now and re-set any plant that's been heaved, putting a brick or rock on either side to anchor it. In colder zones you might even want to add a light straw mulch now to protect your plants through the last weeks of winter when the freeze-thaw cycle is often at its worst.

When snow melts, it recharges soil moisture which is especially important to the mad rush of spring growth. If snowfall was skimpy in your area, water your bulbs and perennials as soon as they emerge this spring instead of waiting till later on.

**MORE RAIN?** If your winter -- or fall -- was wetter than usual, that may lead to better bloom on your daffodils this spring, but it could be hard on other bulbs. The freeze-thaw cycle is most damaging in water-logged soils, and some bulbs such as crocosmia always do best in very well-drained winter soils. Soggy soils are never good for iris or peonies, so if water puddles around yours this spring, drain it away to avoid rot.

**DROUGHT?** Bulbs are built to conserve moisture during dry periods and often bounce back after a drought better than most plants, although it may

take a while for them to recover completely. Some bulbs like tulips and hyacinths actually bloom better after a dry summer, but even they will suffer without good moisture through fall and winter.

No matter how weird your winter was, paying attention to how your plants respond will make you a better gardener. And try not to worry. Most of the time, most plants will be just fine -- and on the bright side, dead plants give you more room for new ones!



## Spring's First "Inexpressably Beautiful" Day!!!

Gardeners love spring more than anybody else, and no matter how mild your winter has been, we bet you'll know exactly what Sydney Eddison is talking about here in *A Patchwork Garden*

(1990):

"Every March, no matter how foul the weather has been for thirty of the thirty-one days, there is one day -- at least one -- so inexpressibly beautiful that you suddenly think you know what it's all about. If you had lived only for this one day, it would be enough. The feel and smell of the air are intoxicating. If you are very young, you want to throw away your jacket or sweater and roll on the damp ground. Your mother will have a fit and say, 'You'll catch your death of cold!' But of course you won't. You are never going to die of anything -- you're immortal. If you are old enough to know better, you forget it for the moment. This day in March is instantly recognizable. The sky is a special shade of blue so pale and translucent that it doesn't really seem to be there at all. And looking up, you understand the meaning of infinity. There are no clouds to set limits in the vastness. The sunlight has no color and seemingly no source or direction. It is just an immense radiance in the even more immense sky."

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Are you a MCGC member who is not already getting access to the Members Side of the Michigan Garden Club web site? It's easy to do. Go to [www.michigangardenclubs.org](http://www.michigangardenclubs.org) and scroll down to the last entry on the left side entitled Member Registration. Find your club by location and click on "Join". Fill in the "Register". Anytime you related question, just look as...

- Where can I go to buy Michigan? Go to Plants Native to Michigan



information and hit have a club or garden for it on the website such

native plants of "Projects" and then to

- What are the benefits of MGC membership? On the Members Side, go to "Facts and Information", then go to "Membership Benefits".
- What are some ideas for planting an herbal garden? On the Members Side, go to "Writers Corner", then to "Herbal Themes".
- What is the botanical name of this or that flower? Go to "Links", then to "Plant Database Links", then scroll down to "Garden Web".

If you have any problem, contact Judy DeJaegher by email at [michigangardenclubs@yahoo.com](mailto:michigangardenclubs@yahoo.com)

**"It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want - oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!"**

Mark Twain

**This year we are adding a new feature to your newsletter. Members are being asked to share "where their love of gardening came from." In this issue Deb Gundersen was asked to share her thoughts. Thank you, Deb for taking the time to share your memories.**



"You asked where I got my love of gardening. I'd have to say my mom was the big influence. She loved the outdoors and had a shaded corner filled with Lily of the Valley that bloomed each spring, a large peony garden filling our yard with fragrance each summer, and, of course, a vegetable garden. Daisies and various other perennials grew among shrubs in and around our yard. She planted petunias and marigolds each summer around a large piece of driftwood in our front yard. Today, we'd call that curb appeal. Mom also had mums she tended faithfully so they lined the driveway with sunny yellow blossoms every



fall. I loved spending time with her so it was natural to help her tend the plants. Now time spent in our gardens brings me pleasure as well as reviving memories of Mom and her gardens.

Thanks for asking. It made me think and took me back 'along memory lane' to our yard on Romence Road. I walked the yard, in my mind, and can almost see the various flowers and shrubs. I recall sitting in the garden swing with mom as we took a break from whatever we had been doing. I don't recall helping in the gardens ever seeming like

a chore (except maybe picking green beans on the hottest of summer days), maybe because Mom never made it seem like work. It's good to look back on my childhood days. And as I look at the present, I know that 2 of our 3 children enjoy gardening. I like to think it's because Jim and I influenced them by our example."

**Take them into the garden young and at eye level.  
Nature will always be part of their world.**

**Janet Macunovich**

Last year we all experienced the affects of the lack of rainwater in our area. Our gardens and flower beds suffered without enough of the rainwater they like, because it's naturally soft, and naturally free of chlorine and other chemicals. We can't control Mother Nature, but collecting whatever rainwater that does fall from the skies can go a long way to relieving the affects of a dry growing season. A rain barrel is a handy alternative to the garden hose. Just a half inch of rain falling on a 1,000 sq ft roof will yield 300 gallons of water. Here's what you need to set up your own rain-harvesting system....

- Gutters and downspouts--If you don't already have rain gutters on your house, this one-time investment is the biggest cost you'll face. Place a rain barrel under the downspout and you are ready to begin.
- Distribution device--For a rain barrel, you need nothing more than a standard spigot or short length of hose installed near the bottom of the barrel with an on/off valve. Then you let gravity do the work. You can attach a longer hose to reach your garden or just use the spigot to fill your watering cans. You can also just lift the screen or lid and dip the watering can right in.
- Debris screen or lid--You'll want to use some kind of debris screen to filter out leaves, pine needles and other debris . If you don't, the debris will accumulate at the bottom of the tank and clog up the outflow. A removable wire mesh screen is all you really need mounted on top of the rain barrel. Some rain barrels on the market come with a lid to serve this same purpose.



The following is very appropriate as we begin the 87th year of the Mason County Garden Club as members and friends.

**I wish you a wonderful journey that will introduce you to many generous and supportive gardening friends. May your gardens be free of slugs, may your soil be rich and organic and may you enjoy equal parts of rain and sunshine.**

Debra Prinzing

See you at the meeting,



Suzanne and Gwen

