Down to Earth

Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener Program—Genesee County

March-April Early Spring 2021 Volume 18, Issue 12



Letter from the Program Coordinator

Barslund Judd (juddbars@msu.edu)

This spring I was extremely lucky to team up with Wayne County for an online Extension Master Gardener training. I am happy to announce that we will be doing so again this fall! If you know anyone interested in taking the class, it will be held on Wednesday nights from 5:30-9:30pm starting on August the 18th.

This spring we also picked up two excellent projects in Flint at My Community Resource House and Garden, along with a project at the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Flint. Both projects have a strong focus on community food access and gardening education.

I'd also like to announce that we have a new site for listing projects with updated contact information. Michelle Chockley has been working hard to help me fill it out with up to date information and photos. The site is called Project Connection. You'll be receiving a link for the site in the next week via VMS, so be on the lookout!

Barslund



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Newsletter Committee

- LaDonna Gamble (Project Report)
- Amy Lazar (Article Liasion)
- Mary Yelland (Article Liaison)
- Marie Luck-Allard (Ask Extension)
- Joanne Gensel (Association Page)
- Michelle Chockley (Vol Central Coordinator)
- Carol Pittard (Editor)
- Cheryl Borkowski (Format Editor)

Feature Article

New Annuals and Perennials for 2021-presented by George Papadelis

by Loretta Ellwood

Our April speaker was George Papadelis who is the owner of Telly's Greenhouse in Troy and Shelby Township. His topic was "What's New for 2021." As a nursery owner, George spends a lot of time visiting various plant expositions around the country during the winter. This gives him a chance to see what new plants have been developed and are available for the upcoming season. After reviewing them, George purchases the varieties for his own business to sell.

This past year, even with the shutdowns, was a great one for the nursery business. According to George, sales for him were almost double from 2019. This spring, so far, it's been 2 1/2 times greater than last year! In 2021 houseplant sales have been on fire. Millennials, who he calls kids, are buying houseplants like crazy. Some buy common plants, but some are also buying some very unique hard-to-find rare plants that are very expensive! He has invested his profits in greenhouses including an acre of them at the Shelby location and some at the Troy location to help with rose production. They are now operational and full of plants.

Before going on to new plants for 2021, George told us about a couple of big hits from last year. The first one was the Top Hat series of wax begonias. This particular series had the largest white flowering fibrous begonia available. (Later in the presentation he pointed out that the new Begonia Big White now is the largest!) Another one was the Caladium Burning Heart noted for its unique burnt orange with salmon flecks. It is suitable for full shade or full sun if it is adequately watered.



A noteworthy perennial for 2020 was a new Hibiscus variety called Summer Carnival, noted for its variegated foliage, large blooms and easy maintenance. Unlike other variegated varieties, it displays excellent vigor. The foliage adds interest even when it's not in bloom with its seven inch magenta flowers.

Here are some of the new 2021 annuals that caught my eye during George's presentation. I would like to purchase these plants just to see what they will do.

Alstroemerias are often found in the bouquets you buy at Kroger, for example. They are noted for their longevity and lily-like appearance. In fact, they are

often called Peruvian lilies as that is where they originated. They are great in beds and containers making excellent cut flowers for your bouquets.

Inca Ice is hardier than most and may make it through the winter if sited in a good location.

Petchoas are a cross between petunias and calibrachoas. They are low maintenance (no deadheading), vigorous growing, and tolerate a broad temperature range. That is my kind of plant and I hope I am able to find some to try this year. These plants have large blooms in bright, vibrant colors. This particular variety is called SuperCal Royal Red.



The last plant that I hope to try this year is an **annual phlox**. George has the Gisele series with several new colors including Gisele Light Pink Eye, Purple, Red, and Scarlet. It is heat tolerant, blooms spring through summer, and is deer resistant. It is a sun tolerant plant. Hopefully, it will be bunny resistant for me as well. However, this is the last new plant I hope to try this year.

MG Loretta Ellwood, Class of 2007

For times and locations of George's two nurseries—one in Troy and the other in Shelby Township, etc., go to: https://tellys.com

Project Report

The Edible Flint Educational Farm is Rolling!

By LaDonna Gamble



It did not take much cajoling or begging to get the Edible Flint Educational Farm team to come out and begin the harvest season. With the pandemic safety precautions over the winter affecting us all, it was sweet relief to be outdoors in the fresh air with our friends! We are still following all precautions possible to keep our volunteers and community safe and amazingly, our 2020 harvest

during the pandemic netted a whopping 1.5 tons

of produce-our largest haul ever!

Before closing the farm in fall of 2020, we planted seeds in one of the hoop houses and with the aid of a frost blanket, we grew an assortment of veggies including spinach, lettuce and early peas. It was a huge success and we followed with an early

spring crop of spinach and peas in the other hoop. Our outdoor crops will be planted in late May but there has been plenty to do before then. We have been distributing compost and wood chips like crazy and of course, being an organic farm, weeds love us!



A large part of our success can be attributed to a crew of MSU Extension Master Gardeners who chose the farm to be one of their regular projects. In years past (since 2013), EMGs have participated in several approved Edible Flint initiatives including the Demonstration Garden, Educational Farm, Plant Distribution day and the Garden Tour to name a few. But having a dedicated and consistent core of EMGs has made a world of difference and we are so grateful they have chosen us! With our additional manpower we've been able to add two new large plots, transplant and maintain our herb garden, transplant and maintain 10 raised beds from the Demo Garden, and have a beautifully maintained perennial garden. Talk about curb appeal!

Last season we formed a partnership with the Hurley Food FARMacy, a program where patients identified as food insecure are actually given a prescription by their primary care physician to access healthy food and other resources. No matter the size of our bounty on any given harvest day, the Hurley Food FARMacy has been ready and able to distribute our vegetables to those in need. Of course, our harvest is still available free to neighbors of the farm and the community at large.

More great partnerships are brewing (to be discussed later) and there is excitement in the air for all initiatives in the business of growing food in community gardens and helping citizens understand the importance of sustaining our own food supplies.

At the Edible Flint Educational Farm this season we plan to grow a variety of tomatoes, okra, a variety of squashes, watermelon, lettuce, kale, radishes, strawberries, a variety of herbs, a variety of potatoes, garlic, rhubarb, greens, cabbage, carrots, stevia and ginger among others. Needless to say, we're excited!

If you want to see the impact of a dedicated crew, set your GPS to 1628 Beach Street, Flint, Michigan. We're right in the city, just south of downtown Flint. Our farm days are Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays but the view is there seven days a week.

Outreach News, Birth Month Flowers

Outreach News

By Kay McCullough

At this time, there are no upcoming events that need EMG volunteers. Stay tuned!

Birth Month Flowers by Michelle Chockley

May Birth Month Flowers – Lily of the Valley & Hawthorn

Lily of the Valley (Convallaria majalis) is a fragrant perennial in the Asparagaceae (formerly Liliaceae) family. This plant is a good example of right plant, right place as it loves to spread! All parts of this plant are toxic to humans and animals, although you would have to take in a lot to feel its effects. To learn more see these links:

https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/convallaria-majalis/

https://csuvth.colostate.edu/poisonous_plants/Plants/Details/123

Hawthorn (Crataegus) is also known as thornapple and is a small tree or shrub

in the Roseaceae family therefore they are subject to some of the same diseases and pests as crabapple. This



is a valuable plant as a host plant to some butterflies, provides fruit for songbirds, and nesting protection in its dense branches. Doug Tallamy, **Bringing Nature Home** and **Nature's Best Hope**, recommends using the National Wildlife Federation Plant Finder for finding plants in your area that host the highest numbers of butterflies and moths to feed birds and other wildlife in your area. According to that site, the hawthorn attracts 160 butterfly and moth species that use it as a caterpillar host including the hummingbird clearwing! To learn more, please go to these links:

https://michiganflora.net/genus.aspx?id=crataegus

https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/66887/crataegus-res-orn-NYSIPM.pdf

https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/crataegus-phaenopyrum/

If you're visiting Minnesota, the U of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum has 17 species: https://www.arboretum.umn.edu/hawthorncollection.aspx

May is Oak Wilt Awareness Month in Michigan

Oak Wilt is a deadly disease that affects oak trees. The month of May is during the highest risk period for oak wilt infections. Preventing oak wilt is the best strategy for preserving Michigan's Oaks. https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/oak-wilt-awareness-month-in-michigan

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the-best-sampling-procedures-for-accurate-oak-wilt-testing



Prune Oaks between November 1 and March 14 when Possible.

Gardening with Kids... Planting a Pizza Garden

By Amy Lazar

In over thirty years of working with children of all ages, I have often asked them, "What is your favorite food?" The nearly unanimous response each and every time has been, "I like pizza!" So what better way to get your child interested in gardening than to plant a giant-sized pizza garden in the shape of a good old pizza pie!

You will need:

- 6 ½ by 6 ½ foot bed of prepared soil
- 3 foot string tied to a wooden stake
- Large rocks (to form the "crust")
- 3 seedlings each of plum tomatoes, basil, garlic, onions and 1 seedling oregano for sauce ingredients
- bell pepper, eggplant, spinach and cherry tomato for pizza toppings
- 6-8 seedlings dwarf marigolds (for "cheese")

Activity: photo from HGTV.com

1. Place the stake in the center of the prepared bed. Let your child grab the end of the attached string, stretch it to full length and walk in a circle placing small rocks around the perimeter. Use more rocks or string to divide the circle into 6 or 8 "slices" (depending on how many toppings you will be planting).

- 2. Next plant your seedlings, placing the vegetables that will grow taller in the northernmost sections of your garden. The small herbs can fit into one slice. You might also like to leave one section (or slice) empty to aid in accessing and caring for your plants. Finally scatter the marigold plants in various sections to look like cheese.
- 3. After the planting is completed, it's time to teach your child how to care for their pizza garden by watering, weeding and fertilizing until the plants are big enough to have a pizza party.

The following links can be used to find pizza dough and sauce recipes:

https://www.superhealthykids.com/recipes/best-homemade-pizza-crust/

https://www.theparentspot.com/recipes/easy-peasy-homemade-pizza-sauce/

Books about pizza:

Pete the Cat and the Perfect Pizza Party by Kimberly and James Dean I Love You More than Pizza by Nicole Tonelli



Time to Harvest Bananas!

By Mary Yelland

When is it time to harvest a banana? Anytime. Banana harvest occurs in tropical climates continuously as they ripen. Most bananas that we get in the United States come from Guatemala. The sweet banana has two different species *Musa acuminata* and *Musa balbisiana*. *Musa paradisiaca* is a related species, is not as sweet, is cooked, and you



may know them as plantains. The common banana you find in the grocery store is of the Cavendish subgroup of the Musa acuminata. While most bananas we see are long, curved and yellow, they come in several different shapes, sizes, and colors including red and one that is somewhat blue.

Bananas do not grow on trees but on large herbaceous perennial plants. Botanically bananas are berries. The plant grows from a corm or underground stem with many growing points. The growth will produce many leaves that have a tubelike sheath, a petiole and a leaf blade. The tightly packed leaf sheaths produce what appears to be a stem (pseudostem) or sometimes thought of as a trunk of the banana plant. From the base of the pseudostem will grow suckers that can be used to propagate a new plant. The plants prefer hot temperatures, and a lot of

water. They can tolerate some shade and like protection from wind as high winds can shred the leaf blades and topple plants.

Banana plants vary greatly in size but generally range from 10-40 feet tall. About 9-12 months after planting, the corm will send up a flower stalk through the center of the pseudostem. Female flowers spiral around the stalk followed by a few neuter flowers and lastly the male flowers. The flowers are parthenocarpic meaning they will develop fruit without pollination. Fruit will mature in 2-3 months. As the fruit develops, the weight of it causes the flower stem to fall and hang upside down. A flower stem can produce over 200 bananas. After the fruit matures the pseudostem dies and another sheath cluster will grow up to take on the role of producing more fruit.

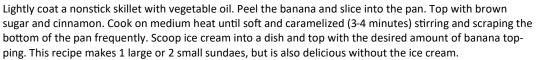
A banana plant can grow, die down from frost, and send up new shoots in the spring. The frost may not kill the corm, however, for a fruiting stem to be sent up the plant must have 9-12 months with no frost. Bananas grown for fruit are grown in zones 9-11. Some banana varieties grown for ornamental purposes can grow in as cold as zone 5 especially if protective mulch is applied to overwinter the corm. Japanese Fiber Banana (*Musa Basjoo*) can be grown in Michigan to give a tropical look to the garden. Bananas can also be grown in pots indoors.

Bananas can be eaten raw or cooked. They are processed in numerous ways, pureed, canned, dried, sliced, or even processed into flour. Here are a couple recipes to use them other than the popular banana bread.

Hot Caramelized Banana Sundaes

1 banana vegetable oil 2 teaspoons brown sugar pinch of cinnamon

ice cream





Monkey Muffins

(small batch, recipe can be doubled)



½ cup vegetable oil (or butter) ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup sugar 1 cup flour

1 egg ½ teaspoon baking soda

1 banana mashed (½ cup) ¼ teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large bowl mix vegetable oil, sugar, and peanut butter. Add egg, banana and vanilla and stir until combined. Add remaining ingredients and mix just until combined. Fill greased or paper lined muffin cups ¾ full. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until done (a toothpick inserted In the center comes out clean). Cool for 5 minutes and remove from pans. Good served warm or cold.

*If making mini muffins use mini chocolate chips. They will bake in about 15 minutes.

VC – Volunteer Central Corner (Formerly VMS)

Michelle Chockley—Ambassador (Cell: 810-210-6685) – chockleym@gmail.com VC Log in: https://msu.samaritan.com/custom/502/volunteer login



MSU Extension | Volunteer Central

Volunteer Central

Ambassadors have not had training on the new system, yet! I logged in to Volunteer Central recently and can now see my volunteer and education hours. I encourage everyone to log in and start getting used to the new platform. Tips and information will be shared when we learn more. If you have questions or problems logging into Volunteer Central, please text or call Barslund at (810) 337-8290.

What do you do if you want to volunteer?

Volunteer hours are again waived for 2021. However, you can volunteer if you want as long as you follow the Covid guidelines provided by MSU. Permissions are automated this year, so you do not need to send Barslund an email. New forms are to be completed for 2021.

If you wish to volunteer, please complete this link:

https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV 74nZSlb5bWkq5Dg

If you are volunteering at a food donation garden, please complete this link: https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3mw0cEsYU3HYoxU

Project coordinators have a separate link to get site approval. Please make sure the site has been approved before you start volunteering.

EMG 2021 required hours = 10 education
Trainees have until December 2021 to complete 40 hours

How do you enter hours?

We are to continue manually tracking hours until instructed to enter into the Volunteer Central system. Volunteer hours for 2021 will count towards recognitions.

Can you still use VMS?

The VMS is still available for you to access free educational webinars under **State Links** plus other information you previously accessed there. Only **Your Information** including "Your Profile," "New Hours" and "View Your Hours" has been disabled in the VMS. Your "Service History" (volunteer/education hours) and "Profile" are in Volunteer Central.

2021 Master Gardener College Virtual Event: August 19, 20 and 21, 2021

This educational opportunity will be at a reduced cost this year. The goal is to have registration open sometime in May. Details are firming up. There will be awesome speakers and vendors for shopping opportunities. Please check this link for updates as the keynote speakers are listed along with a schedule, but the Breakout Sessions are not showing, yet. https://www.canr.msu.edu/master gardener volunteer program/master gardener college/

Ask Extension

A reminder from the last two issues: Ask Extension is the new name for Ask the Expert; it has a new URL, too: http://ask2.extension.org. If you go to various gardening websites, including the Smart Gardening site at http://migarden.msu.edu, you might not find it, yet! You can still use the old links, but if you want to be on the cutting edge, use this one: http://ask2.extension.org! Earlier we told you that once you're at the new site, you can search the database of previous questions and 'Ask a New Question.' It looks like the option to search the database isn't there for the general public anymore, but you can still ask a question!

This may be helpful to you since the Genesee County hotline is still not open due to COVID-19 restrictions. This issue's questions and responses were submitted by one of our Genesee County experts, Marie Luck-Allard.

Question:

Sarracenia purpurea is the plant I want to seed. How do I sow this? Do you think it's cold enough outside to stratify them outside or just in the fridge for a month. How do I know it's time to pull them out in the light again?

Answer:

When starting from seed the Sarracenia purpurea otherwise known as the Pitcher Plant, can be grown both inside and outside. These plants however need less nitrogen with a medium draining soil. They also require full sunlight to part shade. Depending on where you will sow the seeds, there are different requirements to successful growing. Currently our outside temps fluctuate for effective stratification to occur. I would put them in the fridge in order to maintain the cold temperature. The following link will assist you in sowing the seeds, germination, to growing juvenile plants.

https://www.carnivorousplants.org/grow/propagation/SarraceniaSeed

Question:

Hello, My perennial hibiscus which we planted this year was doing great but then suddenly the leaves are turning yellow and falling off. It has slowed it's blooming. I sprayed it with a Bayer 3 in 1 product and now I'm seeing a white film on the leaves. Is this leftover fungicide or is this mildew? How should I treat it? I have some Captan would that be effective?

Answer:

The yellowing may be due to too much or too little moisture. This is a stress sign. Check the drainage and water deeply during dry periods. Also, the spots could be the beginning of fungal leaf spots due to the wet weather and/or too much moisture. Make sure there is good air circulation, and water only at the base of the plant. When adding mulch, make sure it is positioned away from the base of the stems. It also needs soil that drains well. I would rake the fallen foliage and discard. No need to add further fungicide. Listed below are links that will guide you in providing healthy growing practices for the hibiscus. https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/healthy_soils.pdf

 $\underline{\text{https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/2018/07/hardy-hibiscus-or-rose-mallows-iowa}}$

Master Gardener Association Genesee County

The Master Gardener Association of Genesee County Michigan (MGAGCM) is an association of Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs). Membership is optional for certified Extension Master Gardeners. The MGAGCM provides support to local EMGs through project funding, plant signage, and extra educational opportunities.

Note from MGAGCM President—Joanne Gensel

Happy Spring Gardeners!

It has been a long winter and now it's time to get outside and into the garden.

It is possible to work at approved project – here is an excerpt from Barslund Judds email:

MSU extension is still permitting Extension Master Gardeners to volunteer at approved projects if they abide by COVID safety guidelines, if they so choose. Face-to-face events are still restricted which means that projects such as Farmer's markets are still on hold.

Each volunteer who plans to volunteer in person will need to electronically sign the document that is applicable to their project site.

- Please use this link for volunteering at food for donation gardens. https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV 3mw0cEsYU3HYoxU
- If you are a project coordinator at a food for donation garden, please also read and electronically sign the following. https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_Oukh9rsikZQnhfU
- Use this link for volunteering at any other type of project. https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV 74nZSlb5bWkq5Dg
- If you are a project coordinator and have not yet requested permission from the site owner, please share the following agreement with the site owner. https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV Oukh9rsikZQnhfU

Clicking the link, reading the guidelines, and entering your name are all that is required.

Fellow Extension Master Gardener Tina Imeson would like everyone to know that the Open Gate Garden Club will be having their garden tour this year. The flyer is on the next page.

If you are looking for more Gardening Fixes consider registering for International Master Gardener College.

And/Or Master Gardener Conference (Michigan's): August 19-21, 2021 watch email for registration!

We are still doing speakers on the 3rd Thursday of the month- Loretta has lined up some great speakers.

Watch for email notices from Barslund announcing the Zoom link and speaker info.

I recommend getting out to project sites if possible this summer...try to get some "normal" back in our lives.

"Newbies" - please feel welcome to join in at any of the projects you are interested in. If you are not sure about dates and times, reach out to me or Michelle Chockley. We can get you connected.

See you outside!

President	Joanne Gensel	jhgensel@gmail.com	(810) 339-0764
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Communication Director	Mel Kennedy	mkennedy60@charter.net	(810) 275-8822

Master Gardener Association Genesee County

This event is not affiliated with MSUE and has not been approved for

education or volunteer hours.



2021 Open Gate Garden Club Tour Sunday, July 25th 10 am – 4 pm

Please join the Open Gate Garden Club for our 22nd Garden Tour on Sunday, July 25th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This year's light-hearted theme is "Celebrate the Joy of Horticulture – Wings Welcome!". Children of all ages are encouraged to wear their wings (and antennae) for extra smiles as we make our way along featured garden stops. We hope you will find our event a true merging of local heart and spirit.

The Garden Tour showcases diverse local habitats and highlights:

- woodlands
- farmland
- rivers and lakes

All sites are within minutes of our lovely small town brimming with parks, award-winning streetscapes, tranquil neighborhoods and unique shops and restaurants.

Experienced gardeners and homeowners will be available to answer your questions, and many plants will be labeled. Admission includes garden descriptions and directions, light refreshments, and a raffle entry to win gift cards from local nurseries.

Advance sale tickets for \$8 (children 12 & under FREE) will be available at these fine merchants:

- Bordine's Grand Blanc, 9100 Torrey Rd, Grand Blanc
- Gerych's Flowers & Events, 713 Silver Lake Rd, Fenton
- Yard 'N Garden Center & Florist, 603 W Silver Lake Rd, Fenton

On July 25th, tickets will be \$10 (children 12 & under FREE) and available for purchase at the A.J. Phillips Fenton Museum, 310 S. Leroy St, in Fenton.

For more information visit us on Facebook Open Gate Garden Club of Michigan

Master Gardener Association Genesee County

Websites

MGAGCM website-www.geneseecountymg.org

MGAGCM Facebook—<u>www.facebook.com/groups/216904628327310/</u>

MMGA, Inc. website-www.michiganmastergardener.org

MMGA, Inc. Facebook- www.facebook.com/MichiganMG/

MGAGCM Events:

Jan. 21: Galls – Lori Imboden, Consumer Hort Educator from Oakland County

Project ID: Environmental Stewardship - Integrated Pest Mgmt (IPM) - General

Feb. 18: Gardening for Pollinators – Jay Blair

Project ID: Environmental Stewardship: IPM - Pollinators

Mar. 18: Comfort, Ease & Simplicity – Jan Bills

Project ID: Community: Beautification - Public Areas

Ap. 15: - What's New for 2021 - George Papadelis

Project ID: Community: Beautification - Public Areas

May 20: Growing a Mostly Perennial Cutting Garden – Jane Giblin

Project ID: Community: Beautification - Public Areas

June 17: Eating the Weeds in Your Garden - Darren Bagley

July 15: Turf Alternatives and Ground Covers – Barslund Judd

Aug. 19: -TBA

Aug. 19-21: Master Gardener College – Registration is now open!

Sept. 16: - Gardening with Nature - Gretchan Giles

Oct. 21: - Native Plants topic, title TBA - Angela Nelson

Nov. 18: Holiday Party or speaker depending upon restrictions

2021 MGAGCM meetings and or presentations are held on the third Thursday of each month via Zoom until MSUE gives permission for in-person meetings at which point, they will be held at the GCCARD Building, 601 N. Saginaw Street, Flint, MI 48502-2009 (except December & unless otherwise noted).

The MGAGCM board met Monday, May 24, 2021, to discuss plans for the year should MSU EMG restrictions change. The board has discussed the following:

Elections - Mandatory per bylaws

We need an election committee for our November election. Think about running for a board position. Fill out the survey below to let us know if you are interested in being on the election committee or running for a position. You are invited to attend board meetings to get a feeling for the jobs. Meetings will be announced via MGAGCM email.

Holiday party - Tentative

We need a chair and committee for our November holiday party (based on Governor Whitmer's announcement that restrictions will be lifted in July).

Website -

Our website address is <u>GeneseeCountyMG.org</u>. We will be keeping our Association information on this site. There is a downloadable directory in the passworded section. An email was recently sent via the Association which contained the password.