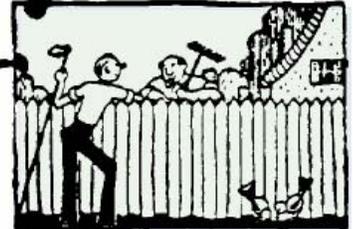




The Garden Spray

Bulletin of the Men's Garden Club of Minneapolis, Inc

2007, Volume 65, Number 6



Upcoming Events

Date	Location	Event
June 12	LHC	Spotlight on MGCM Activities
July 14-15		Public Tour
Aug 12		Club Tour
Aug. 18-19	Arb	FFF Show
Sept. 11	LHC	Steve Risen Tonkadale

*LHC = Lake Harriet Church, 4901
Chowen Ave S., Mpls.
Arb = University of Minnesota
Landscape Arboretum*

Note: Permanent reservations are in effect. Reservations or cancellations are required by the Friday before the meeting. Call or e-mail Carole Ann Brekke (952-435-6019, numsix24@comcast.net) for your reservation or cancellation. For last minute cancellations, call David McKeen at 952-915-1764. If he can sell it, you won't be billed.

June Program:

MGCM Activities in the Spotlight

Our June program will feature MGCM members from three key committees.

- Kay Wolfe and Robert Kean will highlight the development of the **perennial and trial gardens** at Lyndale Park in Minneapolis. These gardens just keep getting better thanks to Kay and Robert's leadership and the hard work of many members.
- Margaret Hibberd, Dave McKeen, Bob Voigt and Mary Maynard will provide some tips for preparing **flower** and **vegetable** entries for the FFF Show. This August, our FFF show will be one of the key components of a big event at the Arboretum that will be all about gardening. This special weekend will give us an opportunity to showcase our club, and we'll need strong participation in the FFF to hold our own.
- Finally, award-winning photographer Chuck Carlson will share his expertise and **advice for garden photographers**. The Foto section of the FFF is always a big draw, and the photography show sets us apart from other flower and vegetable shows.



From the President:

-- Margaret Landry

Club Catering: Some of you have probably heard that our caterers, Don and Ellie Rahman, are retiring after our June meeting. They've done a great job for us, and they will be missed. We're in the process of finding a new caterer to meet our needs, and I would be interested to know what members want -- similar menu, or lighter fare; keep the price the same, or raise the price slightly to upgrade the food accordingly? Please send me your feedback (mlandry@alignforease.com). Thanks!

New Definitions. A fortune cookie, "Attitudes are the forerunners of conditions," spawned a discussion with a friend at dinner, and that led me to thinking of re-defining many words in my vocabulary to nurture a positive attitude.

I invite you to play with this as well! Here's a small sample:

Awe: the smile-generating swoop of the hummingbird as it descends onto the Texas Hummingbird Weed a couple of feet away

Weeding (used in place of 'follow-up'): removing distractions and unnecessary stressors so that conditions are optimum (it's a good thing, not a chore!)

Age of Aquarius: the short spans of time one spends watering the garden (time flies when you're having fun)

'In The Zone' or zone training: being involved in any gardening activity, or having a sensation similar to that of gardening.

Vitamin D: At a recent graduation party, one of the other guests mentioned that Minnesotans get adequate Vitamin D only for about 2 months in the summer. We all agreed that we feel better in the summer. I wonder if the visual feast of gardens and greenery, and the audio feast of birds and bees, don't have some effect as well. Gardening gets me outside, breathing the fresh air, enjoying a bit of exercise, chatting with neighbors, which also contribute to wellbeing.

Cats and Gardening: One of my cats prefers blooming Weigela to catmint! She stands in it, rubs against it, appears to be high...

Do any of you find that your pets are attracted to Weigela? This is the same cat who likes to knock over houseplants and separate the soil from the roots, which makes it very hard to keep houseplants except in inaccessible locations!

Lots of critters enjoy my yard, including neighboring cats -- is it the catmint, Weigela, or other critters that attracts the cats?



Margaret's cat with her Weigela.



Editor's Note

-- Mary Maynard

This is a beautiful time of the year in the gardens. Which is good, because I am exhausted after spending the last week planting and weeding and mulching. And there are still 60 bags of leaves in the garage that need to be shredded up and distributed.

After a long day spent kneeling in the mud, with my hands stiff and my back aching, I wonder, "Am I getting too old for this?". I did hit a milestone birthday last winter, which makes me eligible for the Seniors Menu at Perkins, but I hope that I still have a few years left in the garden.

I may have to do a few things differently, though. I keep thinking I don't need all of the annuals I plant each year, but I haven't come up with any that I don't want in the garden.

And I love all my cannas and elephant ears. And those callas that I got from my neighbor, who got them from his mother back in the 30's. I'm definitely going to keep those. And so it goes.

I considered contracting with Field Outdoor Spaces (Jason's company) for some maintenance support, but I get the feeling that he has all the work he needs right at the moment, since I'm flying solo this month because Jason is buried under his workload during this busy time of the year.

This month's program features some of our own members. The perennial and trial gardens just keep getting better all the time. And this year, our Flower, Food and Foto Show will be part of a large weekend event with other shows, classes and gardening events at the Arboretum. It's a great opportunity to showcase our club, and we'll need as many entries as possible, so several of us will be giving a short clinic on preparing flower, vegetable and photography entries for the show. See you there!

Treasurer's Report

As of 5-18-07:

Checking:	\$7,006.44
Cash:	\$ 100.00
CD:	\$5,662.59

Public Tour Info on our Website.

According to Andy Marlow, Webmaster Extraordinaire, the pages for the 2007 Distinctive Garden tour are now posted to the MGCM website. They can be accessed from a link on the main page (in the news section) or from the July section of the Events page.

Bob Voigt's Sculpture on Display.

One of Bob's creations (**not** shown below) has been accepted for the Bloomington Art Center Members Juried Art Show that opens on June 1. The show continues until June 29 at the center at 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road in Bloomington. 952-563-8587.

How cool is that!





FFF Featured Vegetable for 2007: Onion

Every year, the Flower, Food and Foto committee selects one vegetable and one flower for special attention at the show. The winning entry receives a special ribbon and a place at the front table. Over the years, we've featured many, many different flowers and vegetables. Here is some information about this year's vegetable selection.

Onions. The FFF Show schedule includes four categories for onions: yellow, red, white and other. Each exhibit should include three onions, all of the same variety. Here's what the MSHS Exhibiting and Judging Handbook says about showing onions:

"ONIONS - Have specimens mature and thoroughly cured. The neck should be small. Do not peel to give a slick appearance. Only such outer scales that are broken or discolored should be removed. Small basal roots should be left intact but trimmed to a uniform 1/2". Wipe or brush but do not wash. Trim dried, twisted tips to a uniform length of 1-2". Do not damage dry skins.

"ONIONS, TABLE - These should be exhibited as green onions. Trim the tops to 3" long so the overall length should be 6 - 8". The roots are trimmed to 1/2". In some cases the wrapper skin is removed to expose the long white shank. This is generally done just before showing as it often discolors if it stands too long. The general diameter of the onions should be 1/2" in diameter. They should be straight with a white stem and dark green leaves. The bulbs should not be enlarged. Some of the usual faults include crooked, poor colored stems, dry or discolored leaves and bulbs enlarged or too small."





FFF Featured Flower for 2007: Salvia

Salvia. There are many, many different varieties of salvias -- from the familiar red *Salvia splendens* to *farinacea*, *coccinea*, *guarantica*, and many, many more. Salvias are easy to grow, and both perennial and annual varieties will be considered for this year's award.

To make things a little more complicated, the show schedule calls for three "stems" of annual salvias, but three "spikes" for perennial salvias. A stem can include multiple spikes of flowers, which works well for bushy annuals that can have many branches. And, in my limited experience with perennial salvias in August, we're lucky if we can find three spikes, much less three stems.

If you haven't already, plant a few salvias and some onions and plan to bring them to this year's FFF. It is great fun!



Salvia guarantica 'Black and Blue'



Salvia coccinea 'Coral Nymph'



The many colors of Salvia splendens



Salvia azurea 'Nekan'



North Carolina in the Spring

-- Anne Buchanan

May 1

We just returned from a visit to Asheville, NC. Nestled in the southern Appalachian Mountains, the town sits at an altitude of 2200 feet, where mornings began with cool 50's, rising to 75 or 80 at noon, and cooling down again quickly with the setting sun.

Having lived in NC in the 70's, I knew the azaleas here frequently grew to 6 feet and upwards making a dramatic appearance each spring. Hoping to see flowering dogwood, redbud trees, azaleas, mountain laurel, rhododendrons, (all indigenous to the area) and flowering bulbs, we planned a full agenda for a long weekend—a visit to the NC Botanical Garden, Arboretum, and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The highlight was to be the fabulous Biltmore Estate—a French Renaissance chateau built from 1895 to 1899 by shipping and railroad mogul, George Vanderbilt.



At one time, the Estate owned all the mountains 'as far as the eye can see'--some 125,000 acres.



Today it's the largest privately-owned home in the U.S. Vanderbilt sought to amaze and provide guests with every luxury—including vegetables from their farm, produce from fruit trees and berries, and flowers from the gardens and large-scale plant nursery. A vineyard and winery were added in later years. Some 50,000 tulips are planted annually.

Although some of the property has been sold, the mansion's back yard is 8,000 acres, forested with native hemlock and pine, buckeye and other trees. Here Vanderbilt helped establish the Biltmore School of Forestry, the first of its kind in America.

Vanderbilt decided to create gardens and grounds of gargantuan proportions befitting the mansion. The gardens and grounds were



planned by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, creator of Central Park in New York City. At the Biltmore, the azalea garden covers 15 acres.

In front of the mansion is an Italianate garden, an esplanade with grass and sculptures, an enormous grassy formal garden spanning the distance from a gazebo in the distance--to the mansion, and an English walled garden with a large variety of espaliered vines, bulbs, and perennials.

Unfortunately, in early April this year Asheville was hit by a storm that brought three-inch snow and temperatures in the 20's that lasted several days. At a visitor center on the Blue Ridge Parkway, winds were measured at 100 mph.

As a result, leaves and flowers on dogwoods, Japanese Maples, azaleas, and fruit trees that had begun to blossom ahead of the storm were frozen.

Having to change our anticipated outdoor focus led to plan B. Among other choices, it meant spending a bit more time in the wine-tasting room! We spent more time looking at the indoor winter garden--a monstrous domed conservatory with palms, plants and massive flower arrangements--and the outside conservatory, where philodendron-like leaves grew the size of umbrellas.



Entrance to Biltmore Conservatory

While the estate was grand, we also had the more delicate adventure of finding ephemeral spring-blooming wildflowers on the Blue Ridge Parkway and at the NC Arboretum.

Among the blooming 'wildflowers' espied were clematis, wild bleeding heart, coreopsis, foamflower, and dwarf purple Crested Iris (below).





New to me were the bright fire pinks (*silene virginica*), pink and yellow ladyslippers (*cypridium calceolus*, and Mocassin flower (*c.acaule*), and yellow trout lilies.

lily (*Erythronium americanum*) completed our discoveries.

Another happy find was a yellow trillium (*Trillium luyeuim*). Green and gold is the common name for the lovely *Chrysogonum virginianum* (below).



Pansy Garden at N.C. Arboretum



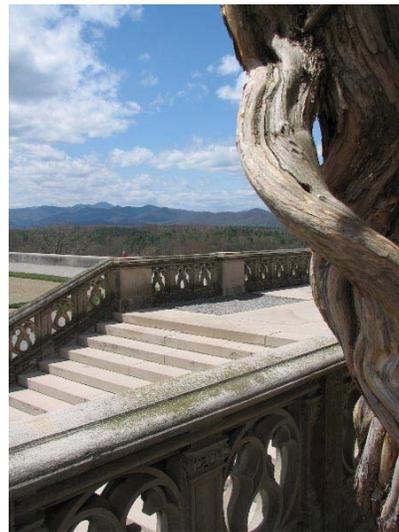
At the airport going home, we smiled to read these two quotes found on one wall:

“He who plants a garden plants happiness” - Chinese proverb
 “A garden is not for giving or taking. A garden is for all.” - Frances Hogson Burnett

Purple toadshade (*trillium cuneatum*), wild columbine, jack -in-the-pulpit, solomon's seal, catawba rhodendron *catawbiense* and trout



Yellow Ladyslipper



View from the Biltmore



The Lazy Gardener's Search for the Perfect Mix

-- Mary Maynard

I miss Jiffy Mix. It was my first favorite seed starting mix. It is fine-textured so tiny seeds don't get buried under big stuff. It has some nutrients in it that give the seedlings a little boost without me having to get involved. And, 20 years ago, it was easy to find at my local haunts, like Lyndale Garden Center.

And then one year it was gone. Not to be found at Lyndale Garden Center, or Frank's, or Hennepin Coop -- or even Bachmans. Other Jiffy products (like their famous pots) were in the stores, but the seed starting mix was gone. So I tried Peter's Professional mix from Lyndale Garden Center. It, too, was a fine-textured mix, and it worked quite well for seed starting, although I had to do the fertilizing myself -- if it got done.

Then one year, that, too was gone, and I didn't see anything else in my usual stores that seemed like a good substitute. So I took a long trip over to J.R. Johnson in Roseville (where the Club has a cash-and-carry account) and got a great big bag of Pro-Mix. Lots of people like Pro-Mix, and I was reasonably satisfied with it, although the texture was not as fine for seed starting. Great for growing things out, though. So the next year, I ordered Jiffy Mix at an exorbitant price from Jung's and used it to start seeds and Pro-Mix for the transplants.

But there's something kind of wrong about having dirt mailed to the house in small expensive packages. So I continued my search. I tried Miracle-Gro with the moisture crystals one year. Not a good idea. Seedlings need moisture, but too much moisture can hasten damp-off. I used Miracle-Gro mix without the moisture crystals for a couple years, and that was better, though kind of expensive. Last year, I almost bought a nice-looking mix from Bachmans, but the bags had holes in them (for ventilation?) and the soil mix would have gotten strewn around the trunk of my car. Somewhere along the line, a family of fungus gnats got established and didn't seem like they were willing to leave.

This year, I was moaning and groaning about the unavailability of Jiffy Mix, and Margaret Hibberd suggested I look at Wagner's, where they sell the mix that they use in their own greenhouses. Eureka! It doesn't have the added nutrients, but it is a fine-textured mix of the usual components -- peat moss, perlite, vermiculite -- with some milled pine bark. Seedling germination has been excellent this year. I am pumped!

And the best thing -- Wagners will probably keep selling it. Maybe my search is over!



Scenes from the Plant Auction and Sale



Bob Stepan inspects the hanging baskets, one of which appears to be wearing slacks





Andy Marlow ran the bidding up for the “Striptease” hosta on the right.



MEN'S GARDEN CLUB OF MINNEAPOLIS, INC.

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