



# The Garden Spray

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

2009, Volume 67, Number 03



## \*MARCH SPEAKER\*

### BECKY RICE FROM METRO BLOOMS TALKS RAIN GARDENS

Have you ever wondered how you could put all that rain water that runs down your gutter into the street to better use? If you have, you're going to enjoy the speaker for March. Becky Rice, executive director of Metro Blooms, an eco-friendly gardening service, will tell us how to install and maintain rain gardens.

Since 2005, Metro Blooms has helped beautify area gardens and protect the environment by educating thousands of residents how to preserve our natural water resources by installing rain gardens.

"I'm excited about the fantastic growth in awareness of the importance of eco-friendly

gardening, especially rain gardens, which not only beautify the urban landscape but also helps heal and protect our environment," Rice said.

"I recognized the significance of rain gardens by watching my own rain garden at work. It just felt right to inform others how this simple change in landscaping could make a difference to our water resources."

Former MGCM president Nate Siegel founded the organization 20 years ago. Since that time, and several name changes, Metro Blooms has established new partnerships with watershed districts, cities and counties across the metro area.

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## March Dinner Meeting: Tuesday March 10th, 2009

Gathering and Conversation -----6:00 pm  
Dinner -----6:30 pm  
Business Meeting ----- Approx. 7:00 pm  
Program ----- Approx. 7:30 pm

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### Dinner Reservations

Permanent reservations for the dinner meeting are in effect. Reservations or cancellations are required by

the Friday before the meeting. Call or e-mail Carole Anne Brekke (952-435-6029, numsix24@comcast.net) for your reservation or cancellation.



# Thoughts from the Prez: Rusty Ramblings

by Denise Rust

A bit of this and that this month. . .First of all to let everyone know that the MGCM Public Tour, by vote of those on the Public Tour Committee who responded to my inquiry, chose to let the tour go until 2010. The committee will meet later this year to choose a date and to begin contacting gardeners to be on the tour. As you work in YOUR garden this season, begin thinking about your possible willingness to be on the tour. This is not only a fundraiser for our club, but a chance to share MGCM with others who might consider joining our illustrious group.

I mentioned awhile back that I lead a red hat group that is part of the Curves where I work. A couple of weeks ago nine of us went to the conservatory at Come Park to check out the winter flower show. It was fabulous! If you are as winter weary as we were, I encourage you to visit this or any other indoor flower show as you dream about getting your own hands dirty in the near future. And plan on joining us for the Macy's Flower Show, which this year is returning to the 8th Floor Auditorium. Our club will be hearing from Dale Bachman and touring the show on April 7. Bus transportation will be available from the Lake Harriet church.

Did you ever get one of those Christmas presents you never requested, but were intrigued by once you got it? I did, this past Christmas. It sat under the tree, a black case with bulging outside pockets, wearing a large bow. I had no idea what it was, so my daughter had to set it up for me. It was a tabletop photographic light studio, complete with two lights, four background color choices and a monopod. It was

so I could take closeups of flowers, she said. Well, Valentine's Day presented me with the opportunity to try out the studio. Here is one of the pictures I took, after the flowers were a week old. They still look pretty good, don't they? I am looking forward to many more future opportunities to make use of the studio.



As you plan this year's garden, make note that the Board would like to see your submissions for Biggest Sunflower and Biggest Pumpkin at the October meeting. And, as always, if you have a few extra plants grown from seed or plant divisions you can pot up, plan on bringing them for our May plant sale. Happy gardening, everyone!



**FFF Committee Will Meet after March Meeting!**

Just a reminder to everyone on the Food, Flower and Foto Committee - we will be having a committee meeting after the March Club meeting. See you there!

## A Note from the Editor

Thanks to all the contributors to the Spray and keep it coming. This month we feature an article on growing prize winning tomatoes by Bob Livingston. Bob has done a lot of research and experimenting and says he grew the best tomatoes he's ever had last year - so for all those members trying to improve their tomato harvest, take his advice. I especially need to heed his advice since I got about five tomatoes last year from my four plants.

Kay Wolfe's article on planning for the Lyndale Garden is thorough and informative. Thanks Kay. And for anyone who hasn't had a chance to get down there - take a stroll through the gardens this summer and admire the group's handiwork.

This month's talk is on rain gardens - a topic with lots of buzz. Metro Blooms does a good job of advocating for environmentally sustainable approaches to our gardens and landscapes. This should be a good talk.

Has anyone else had crazy flooding this winter? I get routine flooding in my small Northeast backyard at least once a winter. When we get a couple 40 degree days the rapid snow melt completely inundates my backyard and will create a pond of 4-5" thick ice. What I don't understand is where does it go? After two days it is gone - and there isn't any place for it to run off to, so it must be percolating into the soil, even though the soil is frozen. Mysteries, mysteries.

Have a great March.  
Jason

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| Treasurer's Report |         |
| Checking           | 3738.00 |
| CD                 | 5662.00 |

## Upcoming Events

| Date | Location | Event |
|------|----------|-------|
|------|----------|-------|

|           |     |                      |
|-----------|-----|----------------------|
| April 7th | LHC | Macy's Flowershow    |
| May 5th   | WLC | Plant Sale & Auction |

LHC = Lake Harriet Church (4901 Chowen Ave. S., Minneapolis)

WLC = Westwood Lutheran Church



# February Program Review

The Club was fortunate to have Bill Swanson from The Botanical Gardens as our guest speaker for the March meeting. Bill and his company specialize in creating beautiful green environments for their clients utilizing plants you won't find anywhere else.

In his presentation he showed many gorgeous slides of plants which you won't find at your local nursery, but which he has found to be completely hardy in his years of experience. He also spoke about techniques and micro-climate locations that might help you push your zone and utilize some of these great plants.

Here are a list of some of the plants he talked about:

\* Korean Maple - *Acer pseudosieboldianum*  
- this small maple has the look of a Japanese maple, with the finely cut leaves and great red fall color.

\* 'Rheingold' Arborvitae on a standard - he showed a slide of this gold foliage arborvitae, with the twist that it was grafted onto a standard.

\* 'Golden Full Moon' Maple - *Acer shirasawanum aurea* - a gold leaved maple

\* Weeping Katsura - *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*



Bill Swanson from The Botanical Gardens in New Germany, MN





## Park Garden Designing

February, 2009

Kay Wolfe

Winter is the time for planning and designing our gardens—and for the Lyndale Park Garden Committee, this is no exception. The committee starts meeting in March—a small group we have dubbed the “steering committee”. This group includes the crew leaders and the park gardeners: Robert Kean, Mollie Dean, Rodg Sefelt, Tim Rosener, Tina Scott, Ada Hegion, and I. We hash out our ideas for the season—and determine what is possible, and what we think we have the “person power” to achieve. In April we have a “Kick-Off Party” for the whole committee, where we organize how we work, and dates and times of major planting events. The rest of the committee’s work is hands-on at the park garden.

Determining plant material for the park is definitely a process of “right plant, right place”. A good part of the garden is on a hill where the sprinkling systems do not reach, so only extremely drought tolerant plants will grow. Lots of people ask if we use “natives”—well, lots of natives have died because it is too dry for them! In these very sunny dry areas we use conifers, barberries, ornamental grasses, perovskia and sedum. After planting, the conifers still need supplemental water for a season or two until they get established, and not all grasses handle the hot dry conditions. Since we are designing for almost four seasons, we pay particular attention to plant texture and foliage color. Blooms are simply frosting on the cake!

### Planting the Dry Gardens

As a backdrop to the garden is a border of old arborvitae. These handle the summer drought well and provide a rich green all season. To these rows of tall mature arborvitae we have added a Swiss Stone pine, *Pinus cembra*, planted in 2005 and recommended by Bob Livingston. In 2006 we added a Norway

spruce, *Picea abies* ‘*Rubra Spicata*’, which when mature should reach a height of 30 to 40 feet, with a very narrow shape. The new spring growth is bright red, thus the variety name. In front of these trees we have planted two ‘Diabolo’ ninebark, *Physocarpus opulifolius* ‘*Diabolo*’, for burgundy bronze leaf color, and three gold barberries, *Berberis* ‘*Golden Carousel*’, for gold foliage. Mixed amongst the “maroon and gold” we needed blue—and added *Panicum* grasses—



*Perovskia*, *Verbena* b., *Calamagrostis* “*K. Foerster*”, blue spruce, red basil, gold barberry in fall color.

which have mostly blue foliage and soft fluffy fall blooms. Two varieties are in this composition: ‘*Shenandoah*’ grows about 3 to 4 feet and has blue foliage with burgundy accents; and ‘*Northwind*’, a 5 foot tall blue-green upright variety. An old grouping of *Calamagrostis* ‘*Karl Forester*’ stands by an original blue spruce. The *Calamagrostis* do like some water—so we water them during the driest times. *Perovskia* are added for a long show of lavender flowers. As we come forward in this section, we have sedum ‘*Bon Bon*’ and ‘*Matrona*’—both with leaves in bluish-purple tones. We also added two small winding rows of common spreading yew, hoping to shape them to

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form a dark green “caterpillar” growing through the garden. The park’s sprinkler systems do reach any plants near the front edge of our gardens—so this area is where the Mammoth Mums from the U of M are planted. We separated these with smaller grasses like *Festuca glauca* ‘Siskiyou Blue’. Last summer we also tried *Pennisetum alopecuroides* ‘Hameln’, a variety that is supposed to be Minnesota hardy. We will find out in the spring! Most of the *Pennisetums* grown here are annuals—*Pennisetum rubrum* is the popular purple fountain grass. In the park we do not use annuals much—but *Verbena bonariensis* is a favorite for dry areas—as well as Red Rubin basil. These add long season color until the mums finally bloom in September.

### Stunning Foliage

One of my favorite groupings in the garden is where we planted three ‘Rose Glow’ barberries, *Berberis* ‘Rose Glow’, back in 1999. These have grown to be the tallest I have ever seen of this variety, and with rich deep maroon foliage. Behind them is the continually green stand of old arborvitae. In 2007 in the midst of the three barberries we added a dwarf globe blue spruce, *Picea pungens* ‘Globosa,’ which has intense blue foliage. We backed the spruce with



Planting the dwarf globe blue spruce in 2007—Tim & Tina

a few *Panicum* ‘Shenadoah’ with blue and maroon foliage. Around the base of the spruce grows a small row of *Spirea japonica* ‘Magic Carpet’. They stay about 1.5 to 2 feet tall, have the gold foliage, but new growth is burgundy-red. Nearby is a patch of blue oat grass, *Helichotrichon sempervirens*, which echoes the blue in the spruce. Next to this composition is a group of three gold arborvitae planted in 2004, *Thuja occidentalis* ‘Yellow Ribbon’. When you walk around the bend in the garden’s border with the afternoon sun shining on this grouping, it can truly take your breath away!

### What’s Next

The next garden sections needing development are also dry areas. Each year we aim to plant and redesign a section of about 30 feet in width, with the depth varying. In 2008 we actually did two sections—one a dry garden, and one a part-shade garden. Next up is an area that again has the dark green arborvitae as backdrop, and gets just about no supplemental water. We are considering using medium height narrow conifers. On the list for consideration is the ‘Golden’ black spruce, *Picea mariana* ‘Golden’. This has blue-gray needles with golden yellow on top of the branches. Possible candidates for complements might be the tall ‘Blue Arrow’ junipers, or some medium size arborvitae with unusual foliage. In this area we already have a smoke bush, *Cotinus* ‘Velvet Cloak’, that provides red foliage. And of course more grasses will add texture and color and movement.

We would love feedback from club members on their favorite drought tolerant species. If you have any recommendations, please let our committee know. And if you have a dry sunny space, maybe you can make use of some of these ideas for plantings! Happy gardening!

Kay Wolfe, Lyndale Park Garden Committee Chair.

# Growing Tomatoes



By Bob Livingston

The purpose of this article is to teach you how to grow exceptional tomatoes in our area. I'm not listing varieties you should grow, the history of tomatoes or recipes etc. I've read many books on tomato culture and sorted out what you need to know.

**TOMATO CULTURE.** (Applies to both hybrid and Heirlooms.)

Tomatoes need sunshine, 6 hours and up per day. They love a light soil and lots of compost or manure. In the fall, turn over 2 to 6 inches of compost into your garden each year. This buries surface plant diseases below ground and improves your soil.



You need sturdy support for tomatoes. I use a trellis system, sturdy posts with horizontal support of metal conduit. The posts are about 6 feet tall above ground, with an additional 15 inches sunk underground. Another system is using construction fencing to form a circular wall around the plants. My trellis is so solid, I leave it up all year. Do Not Crowd Your

Plants. Plants are spaced 4 feet apart.

Between the main stem of the tomato and its branches suckers will grow. There is much discussion on pruning suckers. Keep as many as you can, as the leaves produce food for growth, and the suckers really are separate plants and increase yield and length of the growing season.

On the horizontal support I tie twine vertically. I use strips of panty hose to secure the plant. All this sounds like a lot of work. However, it is a time to inspect how the plants are doing, to prune and look for insect and critter problems. I use a small knife to prune, and I spray the blade with a small sprayer of water and bleach solution.

My actual setting out of plants seems tedious, however I am only planting 8 to 10 plants. I dig holes much wider than needed. I shovel the soil through a screen on my wheelbarrow. I find screening makes the soil

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light and I can amend the soil easier in the wheel barrow than in the ground. I add bone meal, slow release fertilizer and compost. I then fill the hole and put in a small stake to mark where to plant the tomatoes. I am going to dig the holes in April, to avoid work in busy late May.

I roll out landscape fabric and slit the fabric so the plants are in the middle, and use staples to make it neat and tidy. I also install a soaker hose. I really like using the landscape fabric. There is no splash of soil up on the leaves and the black fabric increases soil temperature.

#### ODDS AND ENDS

I only use slow release fertilizer, Osmocote, and two applications of fish emulsion with kelp. The plants love it. I use a hose end sprayer, and apply when the plants are 3 - 4 feet tall and the fruit has set.

Avoid watering the leaves and water in the morning.

Heirloom tomatoes ripen differently. Go by how they feel rather than their color,. Pick them a day or two before they are fully ripe and watch carefully. The skins bruise easily.



I spray on a weekly basis, with Fung-Onit, a multipurpose fungicide.

Cut worm can be a real problem with new plants. Put a roll of stiff paper around the plants 3 to 5 inches tall.

If you see insects, use an appropriate spray or dust.

Sometimes I need to use a box trap for critters.

Watch the weather reports. If it rains, you can delay watering. If it is going to hail - Pray!

Our tomatoes grew 7 to 8 feet tall. I do top them in late August.

Don't let fallen fruit sit around on the ground.

Buy good quality plants. It is better to put them out later rather than earlier.

VERY GOOD READS - I highly recommend these two books:

100 Heirloom Tomatoes for the American Garden - by Carolyn J. Male

The Heirloom Tomato, From the Garden to Table - by Amy Goldman

CATALOGS - Both are on the internet

Totally Tomatoes, 2009 catalog , [www.totallytomato.com](http://www.totallytomato.com)

Seed Savers Exchange, 2009 Catalog of Heirloom Seeds, Books and Gifts, [www.seedsavers.org](http://www.seedsavers.org)

BOB LIVINGSTON QUESTION AND ANSWERING SERVICE - 952 929-6019



## **\* MEET YOUR BOARD \*** **50 YEARS OF GARDENING WITH DON**

The reality that is hard for me to accept is that I have experienced more than a half century of gardening. Where has this time gone since I started to weed the family garden at Pipestone with my 2 brothers and 3 sisters? Two strong memories I have include how terrible the weeds were and how good the new potatoes tasted.

The Northern European German heritage of raising one's own food came to my parents from both sets of my grandparents. Still today cousins talk about both grandmas large gardens with big beds of asparagus etc. My Great Uncle Henry at one time had 95 apple hybrids. He lived only 7 miles away and motivated my brothers and I to join him in showing our garden produce at the Rock and Pipestone County Fairs. Henry was recognized by the Minn. State Fair as a 50 year exhibitor in the seventies.

The 4-H Club program was very strong in SW Minn. when I was a boy. My 4-H projects be they livestock or gardening were my after school focus. 4-H taught me to keep records and to learn to work with others. 4-H demonstrations taught me how to talk in front of a group and to organize my thoughts so that I could share my experiences verbally. My first 4-H demonstration was on propagating African Violets. The violets were my first house plants. My collection could not light a candle though to Aunt Harriet who had some 75 varieties. 4-H'ers learn the merits of competition with their record books at the club, county, and state level. In 1960 my 4-H record book was selected as the St. Of MN winner, which earned

me a trip to the National 4-H Congress in Chicago .

When it came time to prepare for adulthood the 4-H experiences motivated me to want to be a County Extension Agent. At the University of Minn. I studied Agriculture Economics and Animal Husbandry graduating in 1965. One of my college jobs to earn money for tuition and books was working on the Minnesota Vegetable Trials lead by Dr. Orrin Turnquist.

For 30 years I was employed the University of Minnesota and Iowa State Extension Service with assignments at Rochester, MN and Council Bluffs and Clarion Iowa. Every summer the local extension service received dozens of calls about garden problems – and I got to give my best shot in answering them. My three most memorable conversations include: 1) The day when I was questioned about peppers, only to learn that a farmer was planning to raise 60,000 pepper plants commercially; 2) When a lady that moved to Rochester from Florida came to talk about the soils at a home site that she was considering purchasing – after at least 20 questions sensing perhaps my frustration Jerry told me “Always remember everything starts with the soil!”; 3) A conversation with a past member of MMGC the distinguished Dr. Leon Snyder. When I asked him how it was that he came to study to be a horticulturalist he said, “Don I am not a horticulturalist, I am a botanist!” I suspect I was red faced...

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## **Minutes of the MGCM Board**

Meeting date: February 4, 2009

Present: Denise Rust, Don Untiedt, Judy Berglund, Dave McKeen, Sharla Aageng, Elaine Spiegel, and Kay Wolfe. Absent: Larry Larson and Elizabeth Hamilton. The meeting was called to order by President, Denise Rust, and the agenda was passed out.

President's Report: The club is still looking for members willing to chair the following committees: FFF Show, Awards/Trophies, and Valleyfair. The Scholarship Committee has agreed to assist the Vallyfair committee but did not agree to also take on leadership of that committee. After a poll of the Public Tour Committee, it was agreed that that the next public tour would be in the summer of 2010. Denise Rust has agreed to be the chair of that committee.

V President Report: Don is reaching out for a balance on the Nomination Committee of 2 senior members, 2 newer members plus 1 other to serve on the Nominating Committee. Board Members were asked to suggest other members that would be good to serve on this committee. The guest speaker for September's meeting will be Andy Marlow and October's guest speaker will be Peter Olin, retired director of the MN Landscape Arboretum.

Recording Secretary's Report: Minutes of the January 6, 2009 meeting were approved as printed in the Spray Newsletter.

Treasurer's Report: The club currently has \$5662 in a CD and a checking account balance of \$3,630 which includes \$650 of Scholarship Funds and \$790 of Memorial Funds. The audit of the 2008 financial statements is being done.

Membership Secretary's Report: The club currently has 85 members. \$1,480 in membership fees have been collected for 2009. Donations by members include an additional \$210 for the general fund, \$100 for scholarships and \$195 for the memorial fund. The board would like to thank all members who have given so generously. The 2009 Directory has been proofed and will be available at the February general meeting.

Old Business: The Board voted on and approved the Botanical Interests, Inc. As a fundraiser for the club if a chair person could be found. The Green Thumb Awards will be presented at the March general meeting.

New Business: The Member Handbook has not been updated for several years. After the Boards review of the Duties of Officers & Directors, only a couple of minor wording changes were made. Don Untiedt moved to approve the minor changes as suggested. The motion was seconded by Dave McKeen and approved by the Board. The Board reviewed Goals & Duties of Committees through the Duties of the Historian Committee. Don Untiedt moved that no changes be made. The motion was seconded by Sharla Aaseng and approved by the Board.

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Over the years my personal garden pursuits came to focus on flowers, particularly roses. With Jim at our Plymouth home we now have around 200 roses, many perennials, some annuals and as many shrubs and exotic plants that we can squeeze into the property. We enjoy the stimulation of MMGC programs and the friendship that comes from our associations with people we consider to be the best gardeners in the Twin Cities. We also do our best to be active members of 2 rose groups – the Twin Cities Rose Club and the Minn. Rose Society, the MN Hosta Club, the Orchid Society, the Water Garden Society, the Dahlia Club, and the Koi Club.

I approach the time ahead as Vice President of the MMGC with some trepidation. I am relatively new to the group. I enjoy working with your board. Together I hope we all have a good year ahead with our MMGC experiences. My phone (763-553-9192) and/or e-mail (ShannonOaks@aol.com) is always open to your thoughts and suggestions.



FIVE MEMBER  
NOMINATING COMMITTEE  
APPOINTED

Lynda Carlson, Ann LeFlem, Bob Olson, Kent Petterson, and Jason Rathe have agreed to the Board's invitation to serve as our Nominating Committee to select candidates to serve as our Officers and Board Members for 2010.

Please help these fine gardeners and club members identify the people that you think would be good leaders for our club.

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The Board members were asked to act as liaisons for the committees they serve on, to keep the Board informed of the committee's activities throughout the year. The Board members discussed members' input on the pre-dinner beverage and "mixer" at the January general meeting. The consensus was that it was well received and to continue the pre-dinner beverage and "mixer". The Board members would take turns furnishing the beverages.

The meeting was adjourned. The next Board meeting will be March 3rd at Sharla Aaseng's home.



# Men's Garden Club of Minneapolis, Inc.

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### Club Officers:

**President: Denise Rust**  
7933 Girard Court, Brooklyn Park  
**Vice President: Don Untiedt**  
12070 48th Ave. N., Plymouth  
**Recording Secretary: Judy Berglund**  
**Membership Secretary: Sharla Aaseng**  
1025 20th Ave. S.E., Minneapolis  
**Treasurer: David McKeen**  
2834 Vernon Ave. S., St. Louis Park  
**Past President: Larry Larson**  
15225 Wild Wings, Minnetonka

### Directors:

**Elaine Spiegel**  
4814 West 41st. St., St. Louis Park  
**Elizabeth Hamilton**  
8219 Russell Ave. S., Bloomington  
**Kay Wolfe**  
2740 Florida Ave. S., St. Louis Park

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## The Garden Spray

Men's Garden Club of Minneapolis, Inc.  
Mary J. Maynard, Co-Editor  
4375 Dart Avenue  
St. Louis Park, MN 55424

**First Class Mail**

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