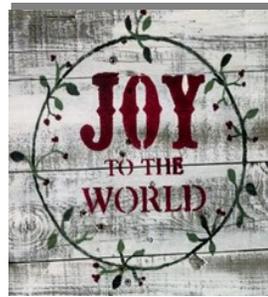




Genesee County Master Gardener Newsletter

DOWN TO EARTH



2017

VOLUME 15

12



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FEATURE ARTICLE

The secret to getting a Christmas cactus to bloom: temperature and light

Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*) is also known as Thanksgiving cactus, holiday cactus or crab cactus.



The crab name refers to the leaf-shaped stem segments that have curved, pointed teeth or claws along the edges. The Easter cactus (*Schlumbergera buckleyi*) has rounded edges on its leaf segments. They all originated in southeast coastal Brazil in shady, humid forests. They are classified as epiphytes because they live above the ground in the trees, in areas where branches meet and decomposing fallen leaves and mosses collect.

Even though this plant bears the name of cactus, the care that it requires has nothing

to do with its desert relatives. It is classified as a forest cactus. Its needs trace directly to its origins. Christmas cactus grows best when it is “pot bound.” That means leaving it in a small container for as long as possible and then moving up to just a slightly larger pot. They prefer a rich, organic potting mix and should not be allowed to dry out. Increase the amount of water when the plant is blooming. They prefer bright, indirect light. Full sun can cause the leaf segments to turn dark red as the plants begin to burn.

The “trick” to getting Christmas cactus to bloom in the following years after purchase comes down to two things: light and temperature.

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

These two are the keys to the flower kingdom. Christmas cacti produce flowers in a cool, environment-short day cycle. To initiate the production of flower buds, there needs to be at least eight days of 16 hours of dark and eight hours of light each day. Wherever the plant is placed, do not turn on the lights at night, even for a short period of time. That breaks the dark cycle required. The temperature should be around 61 degrees. Avoid placing the plant where it receives either cold or hot air drafts.

Placing the Christmas cactus on the window sill in a cool room and not turning on the lights is all that's needed. If the plant was in a lighted room, often the side to the window develops buds, but the lighted side of the plant does not. If the plant sets flower buds and then they fall off, it usually has to do with either receiving too much or not enough water or lack of air humidity. The good news is that Christmas cacti are considered relatively easy to get to bloom again if their temperature and light requirements are met.

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](http://www.msue.msu.edu). For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>



December Gardening Checklist

- Scout the yard for evergreen cuttings, holly berries, dried pods and any other natural materials that make nice holiday decorations – both inside and out.
- When shopping for a poinsettia, look for ones that aren't wilting, are fully colored and aren't being displayed in the store with sleeves on. (Those are for outdoor transportation only.) The store should protect your poinsettia with plastic or paper sleeves for the ride home. At home, remove any foil liner or at least poke holes in the bottom so root-rotting water doesn't back up into the pot.
- Don't overlook other great plant choices for holiday color. Poinsettias aren't your only option. Consider kalanchoe, cyclamen, bromeliads, 'Diamond Frost' euphorbia, Christmas cactus, orchids, or even blooming mini-cactus.
- Pot up amaryllis, paperwhites or pre-chilled hyacinths so you'll have winter blooms inside for the holidays and beyond.

Assess how your gardens fared this past year. Jot down what plants you liked (and which you didn't) before you forget. Make note of plants that need to be moved. Think about improvements or changes you'd like to make. The notes will be a big help when it comes to seed- and plant-buying time.

Preen.com, monthly gardening checklist

January Master Gardener Volunteer Training Classes

Hello MGAGCM members,

The time has come once again to recruit students for our Flint Master Gardener class! We will be having a class at the MSU Extension Office location, on Mondays (from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm).

The classes are scheduled to begin the week of January 15th and will run until the week of April 23rd (which includes a make-up class in the case of a cancellation).

The registration needs to be completed online:

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/mgvpflintsp18/>

Location: GCCARD Building
605 N. Saginaw Street (Suite 1A)
Flint, MI 48502

When: Mondays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
January 15, 2018 - April 23, 2018 (including makeup date)

Cost: \$300, including 1,000-page training manual.
There are no other out-of-pocket costs.

Payments: Check or credit card.

Deadlines: Registration: Jan. 5, 2018
Payment by check: Dec. 29, 2017
Payment by credit card: Jan. 5, 2018

There are 6 scholarships (valued at \$150 each) available through the MSU Events Management system, and can be accessed through the same registration link. The cost of the course is \$300, and spans 14 weeks of the most up-to-date horticultural knowledge, taught by leading experts in the state.

PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD!!

I will also be looking to recruit volunteers to assist with calling our waiting list of interested participants, and will be sending out more information on that in the next week.

In addition, I will be recruiting Class Aids to assist with weekly class duties, and will be hosting a training for interested individuals in December.

This will be our 4th class since January 2016, and we are excited to meet a new cohort of interested Students to join our amazing county in all the work that they do for the community and the state of Michigan!

Keep up the great work,
Abi Saeed

Genesee County Master Gardener Coordinator
saeedabi@anr.msu.edu



COOKS CORNER

Winter Squash with Polish Sausage

Ingredients

2 medium acorn or butternut squash

1 package polish sausage (stick) divided into 4 equal parts and chopped into $\frac{1}{4}$ "pieces

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp black pepper

1 tbsp. butter, divided into 4 equal parts

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Slice stems off squash and cut into half lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds and slice a small piece off the bottom of each half so it sits flat.

Place each half cut side up in a 9x13 casserole pan. Place 1 piece of butter, salt and pepper (to taste) in each squash half. Fill each with cut sausage pieces.

Fill pan around squash with about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches of water. Cover with foil and bake for about an hour or until squash is fork tender.



“Leaf” Me Alone

If you are a believer that “less is better” when it comes to landfills, then this article just may be for you. I’m talking about leaving the leaves on the ground and just mulching them. This plays right into my wheel house, in that I much prefer to drive the mower over them anyway. Plus, this is much quicker and easier. The results may intrigue you to the point of utilizing this smart gardening practice to a



healthier lawn. There are multiple benefits attached to this practice. According to Rebecca Krans of MSUE, they have found that you will not need to apply as much fertilizer, organic or inorganic, due to the decomposition of the leaves. If you have a bagging mower, you can also alternate between mulching into the turf one week and collecting the ground leaves to use as mulch in landscape beds and vegetable gardens the following week. This will also save your leaves from the landfill. Composting leaves have been found to be very important as a soil amendment. According to James Kea of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, when in the form of humus, mulched leaves can turn sandy or sandy clay soils to rich loamy soils. Did you know that it takes over 500 pounds of leaves to equal one 50 pound bag of 8-8-8 fertilizer? Loamy soils will remain moist, but well drained, while allowing for good aeration. Humus holds on to nutrients like a magnet. This hold is strong enough to keep water from washing the nutrients away while not too strong for roots to absorb. Hu-

mus will not turn wet, mucky soil into loam. Sand must be added to these soils to increase aeration and drainage. Rebecca Finneran of MSUE shared that the decomposing pieces of leaves cover up bare spots between turf plants that are an excellent opening for weed seeds to germinate. It has also been discovered that nearly a 100 percent decrease in dandelions and crabgrass can be attained after adopting this practice of mulching leaves for just three years. This mulch will also reduce the chance of topsoil erosion and will add valuable organic material that microorganisms will continue to use throughout this fall, winter and spring as shelter and food.

There are, however, some things that should not be included in your compost pile. Some examples include walnut, cherry leaves or other plant parts that may be toxic to other plants or diseased plants. Kea goes on to say that newsprint may be shredded and added, but not glossy, magazine type paper. The ink may contain chemicals toxic to plants. Small amounts of animal or vegetable grease or oil can be added if it is well mixed with fine sized organic matter such as corn meal. Such a mix is used by commercial fishing worm operators. Nitrogen sources could include grass clippings (avoid seed heads), green leaves or needles, blood meal, cottonseed meal, manure, or chemical fertilizer. The more nitrogen added, the faster the breakdown will occur.



References Finneran, R. 2013. Smart gardeners mulch fallen leaves into lawn to save money. Michigan State Extension.

Kea, J. 2006. Composting and Mulching. North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

Krans, R. 2016. Don’t sweep your leaves to the curb! Mulch them back into your lawn or garden. Michigan State University Extension.

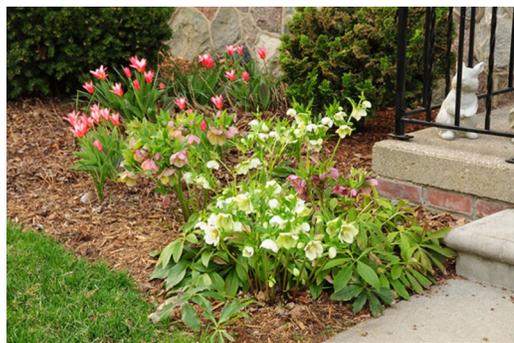
Article written by Glen Perry (MG 16)

Best and Easiest Perennials

Guest Speaker, Janet Macunovich

“Each spring when Mrs. Gardener dug out her iris and laid them across the sidewalk, we kids all knew to ride our bikes on the Charles side of the street.” Opening the October MGAGCM meeting Janet Macunovich captured the group immediately. Further explaining, it was in her young years she began her appreciation for gardening and one of the first things she learned was, “Mrs. Gardener laid out her iris on the sidewalk to heat up after she dug them out and divided so the sun would cauterize and sterilize. After a few days she would replant and we would ride our bikes past her house again.”

Helleborus



As the “Best and Easiest” presentation unfolded Janet explained the progression of the perennial gardening into its thriving popularity today. “Until 1980, nursery records showed that ornamental plant sales, like perennials, rotated in a 20-year cycle; 10 years increasing and 10 years decreasing. It was such a predictable rise and fall they would plan accordingly.

In 1980, when the nursery growers predicted that sales would peak, instead, they just kept climbing until 2003 - when it didn't decline, it just leveled off.” What that means, for the first time in modern history, we had a generation of people gardening, who kept gardening. Up until that time, the median age to start gardening was 55, at that age people had retired or were experiencing an empty nest - they could dedicate time to their yards and gardens .

What changed - in the 1980's the 30 and 40-year-olds were introduced to the perennial. It was easy to care for and was a money-saving alternative to annuals. Adding perennials to landscape gardens could provide years of enjoyment without much care. It was also during the 1980's, for the first time in US History a generation of first time home purchasers, were buying houses that were already landscaped. It was the perfect storm for the perennial; its interest to the home gardener continues to maintain the market today.

Often referred to as "the lady at the flower house, the one with no lawn" Janet began, while she removed her own lawn, transforming into a lot filled with perennials, she does not recommend this for others, “lawn is a great relief for the eye” it is a great way to walk around the yard and also allows others to share in the care.

Throughout the past 30 years Janet and her husband Steven have researched, through study and practice, what they find are the “best” and “easiest” perennials. Wishing to share their findings with other gardeners they created a detailed chart identifying their favorites that meet these qualifications. The evenings' talk highlighted these areas and gave gardeners both a way to view their current gardenscape as well as plan for future designs.

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The “best” offer lots of color, have longer than average bloom season, and are good looking after they bloom.

Members were mesmerized as Janet virtually walked through her gardens sharing her wealth of knowledge and light-hearted wisdom on the plants that thrive with little. “*Helleborus*, the Lenten Rose, looks good all season . . . I want things that look good after they bloom. Even though it blooms early April it will still look like it is blooming in June. The center of the Lenten Rose flower is the fertile part, the big part that we see around it, is like the leaves of the Poinsettia, showy but they don’t fall off. At the end of summer the foliage still looks good, the seed pods don’t look ugly, and there is no browning. That to me is a plant this is easy.”

The “easy” are low care, look good in and out of bloom without special attention, need only weeding and watering, can grow vigorously for 4 or more years without division and are naturally pest-free or pest-resistant.



Meadowsweet

“I like things that are reliable, stay put year to year”, Janet shared, as she continued through the list of more than 40 plants of various heights, color and culture. The Meadowsweet related to “Dropwort” (*Filipendula vulgaris*) (named for dropsy), has a fern-like foliage similar to Queen Anne’s Lace, 2 ½ feet when it blooms, pink/white buds, no scent. What we like to grow it for is its foliage, it looks like a Boston fern, it likes to be in a place that is wet, or in the shade. We call it our grow anywhere plant.”

The presentation took the group through the seasons, winding into the fall, Janet shared that the “Turtlehead” (*Chelone obliqua*) is one of our natives, a bushy mound of green foliage, it bears upright stems of bright pink hooded flowers - the white is an endangered species. It belongs in the shade but will grow in the sun if it is wet. They bloom a long time starting in July blooming into October and November. In the winter they form a nice copper color.”

This article gives but a glimpse of Janet and Steven’s favorites. For a complete chart of the easiest and best perennials visit their website: GardenAtoZ.com; in the search prompt type: **easiest and best**; within the document you can select the information to be viewed by **light requirements**, by **bloom** or as a **chart** for easy navigation.

Janet is a professional gardener, designer, author and educator with time spent as a columnist, radio host, and founder of the Michigan School of Gardening. If you are interested in reading more, Janet and Steven have published several books and magazines that can be ordered from their website.

Janet’s joy and passion for perennials, inspired gardeners new and practiced. Her stories, antidotal delivery and expertise are a gift to our gardening community.



Twinkling lights glimmering through the trees, "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas" being sung by Bing Crosby and store windows filled with Christmas cheer, created a perfect night for the annual Ladies Night Out event. Ladies from near and far strolled through the streets chatting and enjoying the spirit of the season – and, again this year, the Crossroads Master Gardeners Shoppe of garden inspired art and products was the main attraction for visitors.



Joanie Snyder and her very talented volunteers from Ladies Night Out at Crossroads Village, November 13, 2017

Herbal Greetings Re-visited

(Inadvertently dropped from last newsletter)

There would not be enough room to list all of the recipes or instructions in this brief newsletter but you can find resources and ideas at Pinterest, your local library or from your fellow Master Gardener.

For some quick references below are a few links if you are anxious to try something new.

Herb Harvest Wreath: <https://hearthandvine.com/make-harvest-wreath/>

Herbal Fire Starters: <https://www.gardenbetty.com/homemade-herb-and-spice-fire-starters/>

Warming Bags: <https://organized31.com/diy-rice-heat-packs/>

Seasoning salts:

Bath bombs: <https://beautycrafter.com/lavender-oatmeal-bath-bombs-recipe/>

Lavender dryer bags: <https://gardentherapy.ca/lavender-dryer-bags/>

And finally, it is all about presentation ... ribbons, lace, colorful fabrics, lace hankies, and herbs tied around items. Use left over scraps and even brown paper bags to add to the homespun look. Jars and containers can be thrift store items that you dress up.

What is Emeritus Status for an Extension Master Gardener?

When can you apply? November 1st – December 15th of each year

Who do you get the form from? Local VMS Ambassador or Coordinator

The title, 'Master Gardener Emeritus' is used to designate active Extension Master Gardeners who are no longer able to fully meet the volunteer service requirement for annual recertification. (In the VMS, this status is the same as the "**Limited Active**" designation.)

Emeritus status can only be granted with concurrence by the local VMS ambassador/coordinator and the MSUE State MGP Designee. This designation is not intended for individuals who elect to pursue other interests or activities (i.e. job/career needs, raising a family, serving in other organizations, etc.).

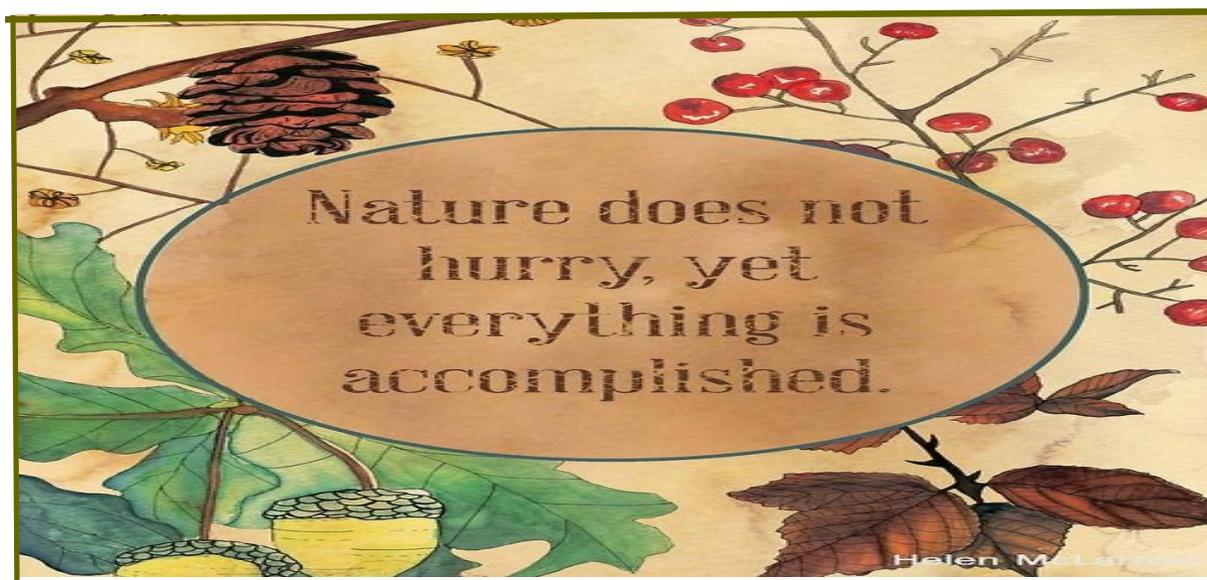
This designation is not considered a lifetime status but rather is approved to those EMGs who have greatly contributed to the program in the past and are still currently active in the program but unable to complete the required hours.

It is not intended for individuals who elect to be less active in the Michigan Master Gardener Program.

Criteria:

- Minimum of 500 hours of volunteer service
- 10 continuous years of volunteer service
- Exemplary service to the MSU Extension MGP
- Have limited ability to remain active

If you would like to apply, contact Michelle Chockley, VMS Ambassador, chockley@gmail.com or call at 810-210-6685



MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION OF GENESEE COUNTY MICHIGAN**Membership Meeting Minutes – November 16, 2017**

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by President Vicki Laurin at 6:05 pm.

Review of Minutes: Motion and 2nd by Cheryl Borkowski & Nettie Sparks to accept the October 19, 2017 meeting minutes as presented. Passed.

Treasurer's Report: The beginning balance on 01OC17 was \$24,315.27. October income totaled \$801.88 and expenses were \$2,985.40. The ending balance on 30OC17 was \$22,131.75, including the Square account of \$300.10. Members who volunteered to perform an audit of the Treasurer's books are: Sue Crisp, Patricia Witte and Sue Byron. Thank you!

Due to the Holiday Party and Elections, there will be no project reports.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

Review and accept the 2018 budget. There were questions about the 2018 Bus trip figures in the proposed budget. They will get straightened out at the next Board meeting with discussion with the Bus Trip Committee. Moved and 2nd by Alan Grove and Sue Crisp to adopt the proposed 2018 MGAGCM budget as presented except for the 2018 Bus Trip figures which will be settled by the Board in their December meeting and reported to the membership in January 2018. Passed.

Thanks to: Pam Kvasnicka, Colleen Putinsky and Sandra Johnson for serving on the Nomination and Election Committee with Vicki Laurin.

We are having our 4th Master Gardener Volunteer Training class in two years, starting the week of January 15, 2018. Publicize the class to your friends and acquaintances. They can begin to enroll.

A special thanks to Michelle Chockley for serving 4 years as Treasurer and Christy Jones for serving 2 years as Director.

Announcements:

The election results are as follows: Dick Moldenhauer-Secretary, Bobbie Parkhill-Treasurer and Micah Hutchinson-Director.

Close of Meeting: Moved and 2nd by Christy Jones & Alan Grove to adjourn the meeting. Passed. The meeting was adjourned by President Vicki Laurin at 6:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted: Dick Moldenhauer, MGAGCM secretary

2018 Re-certification Timeline

December 31, 2017 All 2017 (and prior year lapsed) education and volunteer hours must be entered into the VMS

January 1, 2018 VMS Hours access is closed - no hours can be viewed or entered until Feb. 10, 2018

January 8, 2018 ☑ Log into the Volunteer Management System (VMS) at <https://michigan.volunteersystem.org/> ☑ Click on "Complete Agreement Now" notice at the top of the VMS Home Screen ☑ Complete 3-step process (including payment of \$20 re-certification fee)

January 26, 2018 2018 Re-certification Period Closes

January 27, 2018 ☑ Log into the Volunteer Management System (VMS) at <https://michigan.volunteersystem.org/> ☑ Click on "Complete Agreement Now" notice at the top of the VMS Home Screen ☑ Complete 3-step process (including payment of \$30 re-certification fee)

February 9, 2018 2018 Late Re-certification Period Closes

Special Note: MICHIGAN MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION (MMGA) membership will be a separate process from re-certification.

Once re-certified, you will receive an email with further details about becoming an MMGA member. All MMGA memberships must be completed by March 1, 2018.

January 2019 Next Re-certification period will open. 2018 Re-certification timeline 2018 Re-certification Period Opens



CAMG's Symposium

Are you looking for a special gift for yourself or a gardening friend? Then consider registering for Capital Area Master Gardeners' Annual Winter Symposium – *It's All About...The Ins & Outs of Gardening*.

The four topics with the speakers are:

Compostponics—making, amending, or blending compost for gardening in containers and beyond / Dr. John Biernbaum, Professor of Horticulture at MSU

Admitting You're Hooked—wintering-over perennials / Janet Macunovich, Professional Gardener, author and educator

Pearls of Herbal Wisdom—uses of herbs in our daily lives & garden to table ideas / Scott Alan Stokes, Co-Owner of Southern Exposure Herb Farm

When Trashing the Landscape is a Good Thing—incorporating recycled & found materials into your landscape / Janet Macunovich, Professional Gardener, author and educator

Where: Plant and Soil Sciences Building on MSU's Campus in East Lansing

When: Saturday, January 27, 2018

Earn: 5 Master Gardener education hours

Cost: \$40.00 for CAMG members / \$50.00 for non-member Active, Certified EMGs / \$55.00 all others

A link to the association web site can be found at:

<http://mgacac.wordpress.com>

There you can find a link to the brochure, information about hotel rooms, vendors who will be at the conference (as they become available), a link to an area map, etc.

If you have questions, you can email: mga.cac@gmail.com.

Dates To Remember

2018 DTE Subscription

If you enjoy receiving a hard copy of the DTE each month it is time to renew your subscription. You can do so by sending a \$10.00 check to PO Box 34, Flushing, Mi. 48433. Make the check out to MGAGCM and mail by Jan. 15,

Words from the President

As the holidays are fast approaching and the gardens have been put to bed for the winter I would like to say a heartfelt Thank You to each one of MGAGCM volunteers to let you know how much I appreciate your dedication and time that each of you spend volunteering at your projects throughout the year. We have been fortunate to have three Master Gardener classes in the last two years with another class starting in January 2018. With these new classes we have increased our membership with members who have the same desire and love for gardening and teaching that is found in the hearts of our members who have been in the program for many years. I am excited to see many new members taking responsibility for chairing a new project or being a faithful volunteer. I would also like to thank each member of our MGAGCM Board for your commitment to our membership. And thank you to Abi for your efforts and diligent hard work on behalf of our membership

Happy Holidays and the Happiest New Year



MGAGCM OFFICERS (2017)

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| President | Vicki Laurin |
| 810-744-0725 | laurinvicki@gmail.com |
| 1st Vice President | Mel Kennedy |
| 810-275-8822 | mkennedy60@charter.com |
| 2nd Vice President | Alan Grove |
| 810-922-8776 | plantdoc049@outlook.com |
| Secretary | Dick Moldenhauer |
| 810-695-2649 | rn mold1050@aol.com |

GARDEN

The man who has planted a garden feels that he has done something for the good of the world.... It is a pleasure to eat of the fruit of one's toil, if it be nothing more than a head of lettuce or an ear of corn.

One cultivates a lawn even with great satisfaction; for there is nothing more beautiful than grass and turf in our latitude.... the world without turf is a dreary desert.... To dig in the mellow soil... is a great thing. One gets strength out of the ground.... There is life in the ground; it goes into the seeds; and it also, when it is stirred up, goes into the man who stirs it. The hot sun on his back as he bends to shovel and hoe, or contemplatively rakes the warm and fragrant loam, is better than much medicine.

~Charles Dudley Warner, "Preliminary," *My Summer in a Garden*, 1870



THIS NEWSLETTER PREPARED BY:

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all_4_adventure@hotmail.com and of
counsel Ruth Simon.



CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITES

MMGA Inc Website at:

www.michiganmastergardener.org

MMGA Inc Facebook Page at:

www.facebook.comMichiganMG

MGAGCM Website at: Genesee

County MG.org

MGAGCM Facebook Page at:

http://facebook.com/groups/2169046232310/

Link to VMS: https://
michigan.volunteersystem.org

Abiya (Abi) Saeed

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1:00pm

geneseeplantpest@anr.msu.edu

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AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

