



Inside this issue:

FEATURE ARTICLE

HOME GROWN

COOKS CORNER

MEETING MINUTES

EDITORIAL

INVITE HUMMING-BIRDS

PERFECT EDGES

WOODY PLANTS

DATES TO REMEMBER

BOARD OFFICERS

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Genesee County Master Gardener Newsletter

DOWN TO EARTH



2015

VOLUME 13

5



FEATURE ARTICLE

11 Ways to Fight Drought

There are several things you can do to ease your plants through a dry summer and even improve your landscape at the same time.

1. Assess your priorities. Survey your landscape: What areas or individual plants do you want most to save? Give top priority to irrigating established trees and shrubs; they're virtually irreplaceable. Consider perennials a second priority.

2. Identify root zones. The roots of various plants grow to different depths; the trick is to apply just enough water to moisten the roots. Most tree roots are located in the top 2 feet of soil. The drip line of a tree or shrub, which runs around the perimeter of the canopy, outlines much of the root zone. Focus water there.

3. Try a root irrigator. The hose-end device has a needlelike shaft that injects water into the ground, irrigating roots directly so no water is lost to evaporation. Check garden centers for root irrigators like the one from Hound Dog Products (about \$20; 800/694-6863). Insert the shaft 6 to 12 inches or deeper into the soil around trees and shrubs. After watering in one spot along the drip line, move the irrigator to another spot until you complete one round-trip.



4. Check soil moisture. Dig down 1 foot with a trowel or spade and feel a handful of soil. An even easier way to test moisture is to use a sampling tube to "read" the soil. When you push the metal tube into the ground and twist it back out, it extracts a 12-inch or longer core, showing in cross section how wet or dry the soil actually is. If the top 2 inches of the soil sample are dry, it's time to water.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



5. Irrigate slowly. Slow soaking limits runoff and encourages plants to develop deep root systems that are better able to tolerate drought. The heavier your soil, the more important slow soaking is in preventing runoff. Using an oscillating sprinkler to water large areas helps reduce runoff. But if you see puddling, turn the water off for an hour, before starting again. To minimize evaporation, irrigate in the early morning or evening.

6. Build watering basins. Mound soil berms around young trees and shrubs such as roses to concentrate water on the root zones. Fill the basin with a slow-running hose so water soaks in.

7. Use soaker hoses. These porous hoses ooze water along their length. Run them among flowers and shrubs or along hedges or rows of vegetables. Coil them under the driplines of large trees; a good average length is 50 or 100 feet.

8. Apply mulch. Drought or not, spreading a layer of mulch over the soil around plants is simply good gardening. Mulch reduces evaporation, insulates roots from extreme temperature changes, and helps prevent weeds, which steal water needed by desirable plants. Spread a 3-inch layer of organic mulch such as compost or shredded bark around trees and shrubs; for flowers and vegetables, apply 1 to 2 inches. Gravel and other mineral mulches are also effective.

9. Modify lawn care. If local restrictions allow lawn irrigation, there are some things you can do to reduce the amount of water you apply. Set your mower to cut at the high end of the recommended range: 1 1/2 inches for bent grass; 2 inches for bluegrass and perennial ryegrass; 3 inches for tall fescue. Taller grass shades the soil, reducing evaporation. In early June, fertilize with 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of turf to strengthen grass before it becomes stressed. In July, cut back to a 1/2 inch of water every week; under this regime, lawns turn the color of straw and go semi dormant through summer but bounce back after the weather cools.

10. Be water-wise with pots. Use glazed terra-cotta or plastic ones, which hold water better. For extra insulation, nest smaller pots inside larger ones, or bury pots up to their rims in the ground.

11. Harvest rain. Even in summer months, some rain usually falls on the Northwest, and roofs catch a lot of it. Channel runoff into a rain barrel, then use it to water container plants.

Sunset.com, Dick Bushnell & Jim McCausland

Photos by Thomas Story

13 Best Tools

- Trowel
- Spade (for digging and transplanting)
- Shovel (for moving earth and mulch, flipping compost, etc.)
- Hoe
- Pruning shears
- Narrow digging tool
- 5-gallon bucket
- Cart or wheelbarrow
- Sharp knife
- Watering can
- Hose
- Gloves
- Hat (sun protection)

HOME GROWN 811

I have a young crabapple tree that has the bark missing at the bottom of the trunk right above the ground. It goes all the way around the trunk. The bark that is missing only comprises about fifteen percent of all the bark on the tree. How bad could this be and how do I fix it? Will pruning sealer take care of it?

Thinking that pruning sealer will fix this problem is like thinking that a Band-Aid will fix leprosy. All you have done is cover it up. Let's go back to Trees 101. Under the bark is an area called the cambium layer. It is made up of two kinds of cells. The phloem takes produced food from the leaves down the tree to be used by the tree for growth and also stored in the roots for spring start-up. Think of the phloem as a bunch of drinking straws standing upright with liquid going downwards. The xylem is another imaginary drinking straw layer that takes minerals and water from the roots up the tree. This layer of drinking straws is interspersed with the phloem except the direction is upwards. This paper-thin layer of phloem and xylem or cambium layer directly below the bark is the entire transport system for the tree. How a tree recovers from bark damage has little to do with the percentage damaged and everything to do with the direction it is damaged. Up and down damage is nowhere as bad as side to side damage. Think of how many drinking straws have been cut. The more cut, the worse the outcome for the tree. If a tree has fifty percent or more damage, it is going to be very bad but if the damage exceeds seventy five percent, the tree will probably die. You could take a box cutter and put a horizontal cut all the way around the tree and kill it. That's called girdling. That narrow cut is not even one percent of the bark but it is in the critical direction which is horizontal. Your tree is dead and you have starving voles or rabbits to blame. The crab will grow from the roots but will never be what it was. It is a grafted tree with roots from something hardy and the top from something that has cute flowers. When the rootstock grows into a tree, it will be big, weedy and not make nice flowers. The only fix would be if you knew someone that does bridge grafting and that is not really likely anymore. Or remove the tree and plant another.

My yard backs up to a lot of trees. Moss has crept out of the woods and killed my lawn. I have used weed killers and the moss does not die. I have put down more grass seed and the moss killed it.

Moss has a reputation of being as dangerous and deadly as a ninja. But the truth is nowhere as entertaining. Moss does not kill anything. It is an opportunist that will grow with little light and compacted soil. It is Mother Nature's little mechanic for shaded, bare areas. This is what it takes for moss to grow in order of what is the most common: less than eight hours of full sun, wet soil, compacted soil or the wrong soil pH. When grass gets under eight hours of full, uninterrupted sun, it starts to die back. At six hours, it is looking thin and weak. Moss now volunteers to fill the empty areas. If the area is continually wet, grass cannot handle this. If the soil in the area has been pressed so flat that roots cannot penetrate, seeds just do not germinate. Grass is a happy little simpleton that can grow with a soil pH that is between 6.0 to 8.0. This is about the distance from here to the moon. Grass wants eight or more hours of full sun, moist, not wet, soil and soil loose enough to root into and minimal nutrients. Cut it high at three to three and a half inches tall and it makes its own food. Moss is an ancient plant and weed killers do not work. It needs to be raked up and removed. Look at the moss list and see what you can fix or choose plants for a garden bed that are shade-loving.



COOKS CORNER

Grilled Asparagus in Dill Butter

Makes: 4 servings **Prep:** 10 mins **Grill:** 7 mins

Directions

Snap off and discard woody bases from asparagus. On a platter, drizzle asparagus with butter and sprinkle with dill, garlic, and pepper. Toss to combine.

For a charcoal grill, place asparagus on the rack of an uncovered grill directly over medium coals. Grill for 7 to 10 minutes or until asparagus is crisp-tender, rolling asparagus occasionally to ensure even cooking. (For a gas grill, preheat grill. Reduce heat to medium. Place asparagus on grill rack over heat. Cover and grill as directed.)

To serve, transfer asparagus to a serving dish. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Soy Glazed Chicken Breast with Scallion Ginger Oil

Prep Time: 40 minutes **Cook Time:** 20 minutes **Total Time:** 1 hour **Yield:** 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1/2 teaspoon dark mushroom soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon hoisin sauce

4 chicken breast pieces or 2 full chicken breasts cut in half

2 tablespoons oil

For the Scallion Ginger Oil:

- 2-3 scallion stalks, white and green parts
- 1 3-inch piece of ginger
- 1/3 cup oil

Preparation

Mix the soy sauce, honey, sesame oil, dark soy sauce, and hoisin sauce in a bowl. Add the chicken breasts and let marinate for at least 30 minutes or overnight.

Now make the scallion ginger oil. Cut the scallions in half lengthwise and then slice roughly. Mince the ginger. You can also run it through a Microplane or grater. I did half and half so as to improve the texture of the sauce. Heat 1/3 cup oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the ginger and immediately turn the heat down to low. Cook for 5-10 minutes. Add the scallion and cook for another minute. Turn off the heat and season with salt. Set aside.

MASTER GARDNER ASSOCIATION REGULAR MEETING April 16, 2015

The Master Gardener Regular Meeting was called to order at 7:20 p.m. by President Vicki Laurin.

Review of Minutes: The March 19, 2015 minutes were presented. A motion was made to accept the minutes by Dan Kah and seconded by Randy Tatro. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: The March beginning balance was \$31,582.30 with income of \$854.84 and expenses of \$362.68. March's ending balance was \$32,074.46 plus the \$10 Square Up balance for a total of \$32,084.46. Alan Grove made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report with Randy Tatro supporting it. The motion carried.

Old Business/New Business

There were no project and committee reports given this date. No announcements were made so the banquet/award festivities continue.

President Vicki Laurin announced the meeting as closed at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Loretta Ellwood



(Left) Millie Daron received the Distinguished Master Gardener of the Year



(right) Carol Groat was awarded the Outstanding Master Gardener of the Year.

EDITORIAL

HE At times I felt like Moses wandering in the desert as the search for a MG Coordinator/Horticulture Educator went ever so slowly. Now it is time to welcome Abi Saeed and wish her a hearty welcome so roll out the red carpet.

There was an article in the newspaper recently and we have all heard the statement to the effect that this is Michigan, wait a minute and the weather will change. The thrust of the article was to earn the right to make that statement you have to spend the winters here so forget about Florida and all those other warm places. Nodding my head I agreed with the authors statement especially after hearing from a friend who had returned early this year lament about the lousy March. Groaning to myself I thought well you should had been here in February.

Yes the weather has been topsy tervy lately and I have lost some direct sows in the garden much to my dismay and spent several hours today replanting. Perennials that were in full bloom last year are looking like they didn't make it through the winter. It took three days to be able to return to my volunteer job mostly due to high winds, snow (?) and rain. I tried to turn over the garden earlier this month and couldn't get through the frozen ground but when I look outside at the front border the tulip bulbs are three inches tall. How do they do that? Mother Nature will never cease to amaze you.

Like the man said you have to earn the right to complain about Michigan weather.

SHE Finally Mother Nature is giving us some nice warm weather which makes the gardener in us want to get out and play in the soil. With warm weather warming our bones and sun shinning on our faces this also is the busy time at the Hotline. Our hours have extended to Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 8:30-1:00pm. It seems that our hotline is a forgotten Master Gardener project at times. This is a project that needs the memberships attention as well as any of the other projects that Master Gardeners represent. Genesee County is one of the few counties that receive out of county calls on Fridays and it is not uncommon to have other counties call us for information. Genesee County is very respected as having one of the best hotlines in Michigan, but we need your help! Let's keep the hotline running like it should.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Heat a skillet or griddle over medium-high heat and drizzle on a couple tablespoons of oil. Lay the chicken breasts evenly in the pan. Let sear for 4-5 minutes per side, until cooked through. If you like, you can use the leftover marinade to brush the chicken breasts as they cook. But this step isn't strictly necessary.

When the chicken is cooked through, plate and spoon the ginger scallion sauce over the top. Serve with rice or noodles with some green veggies on the side and you've got an easy, healthy, and satisfying weeknight Chinese dinner!

By Kaitlan

Invite Hummingbirds to Nest

Temperatures Count: Hummingbirds can only nest where the eggs can remain at temperatures below 96 degrees. Because of this, they'll frequently choose shady areas. They often choose broad-leaved trees where the evaporative qualities of the leaves make the temperature up to 6 degrees cooler.

Hummers Need Shelter: Hummingbird eggs are so very small that they are easily blown around by the wind. For this reason, nests must be located where they'll be protected from gusts.

Spider webs? Yes, Spider webs! The tiny hummingbird nests (often no more than an inch or two wide) are often built from a base of spider webs. Their sticky nature allows the birds to shape the bowl that they'll cover with seeds, pieces of bark, and other materials to camouflage the nest among the branches

Downy Soft: Hummingbirds line the insides of their nests with soft materials like moss, leaves, and cotton. The small eggs are only half an inch in diameter and need all the protection they can get. It takes hummingbirds about a week to build a nest, and they will frequently steal from other hummingbirds nearby.

I'm sure it goes without saying that hummingbird parents will only build where they have a steady source of food, so be sure you're offering a garden full of hummingbird nectar plants or hummingbird feeders that are cleaned and filled regularly. Don't be discouraged if you don't see nesters your first year – the nests are tiny and very hard to spot, but they may be there all the same. By Jill Staake Birds and Blooms

Deterrents For Deer

Most gardeners agree that a strong, tall tilted outward at a 45-degree angle, or two the longest-lasting solutions to a deer problem. If your budget or doesn't fit in with your garden alternatives:

- Dangle strips of Mylar or compact discs near deer.
- Poke a hole with a needle and fishing line and soap (wrappers on), and hang several on trees in your garden. A Smithsonian Institution research team found that this be the best.
- Make your own deer repellent. Rotten eggs in many commercial deer repellents. In a bucket, add 4 cubes of beef bouillon, and 2 cups of water. Cover it with a lid, and let the mixture sit for 24 hours. Add 2 tablespoons of liquid soap per gallon of liquid, and mix well. Spray bottle. Then hold your nose and spray directly on plants that you will consume; to create an invisible barrier.



Sharon Lovejoy Fine Gardening

fence (preferably electric), fences about 5 feet apart are recommended. But if a fence isn't in your budget, here are some alternatives:

from tree branches to alarm

through tiny, scented bars of soap. Each shrub or tree in your garden found Lifebuoy soap to be effective.

Eggs and beef bouillon are good repellents. Break 1 dozen eggs into a bucket with water, and let them sit until it stinks. Add 2 tablespoons of liquid soap and pour the mixture into a spray bottle. Spray it around the plants. Do not spray it directly on the plants; instead, spray it around them.

Perfect Edges for Your Beds and Borders



The first step is to cut the edge. If you are creating a new bed, you'll need to use a garden hose to mark your desired lines. If you are freshening up an existing bed, you can jump right in.

Method 1: The traditional way to do this is to use either a spade or a half-moon edger to move along the line you've set out. Neither tool does a great job of cutting curves, and it can be difficult to evaluate the course you're taking as you move along.

Method 2: I use Black & Decker's Edge Hog, a tool with a circular blade on wheels. I simply walk behind the tool as it rolls easily along, cutting a continuous 1 1/2-inch-deep line into the soil. The wheels give the tool the mobility to make nice curves, and you can clearly see as you cut, making it easy to evaluate and revise the line of your bed. The edger sells for under \$100, and it simplifies the daunting task of caring for my four-acre garden, with its 5,000 linear feet of edging.

STEP 2: REMOVE THE TURF

Once you've established your edge, refine it with a spade, deepening the cut to 4 to 6 inches. If you are cutting a new bed, you also need to cut the turf on the inside of the bed with the spade. The loosened turf can then be removed easily by hand. The goal is to create an edge at a 90-degree angle.

STEP 3: HONE THE EDGE

I like my edges to be razor sharp, so I place hand shears vertically along the trench wall and

(Continued on page 9)

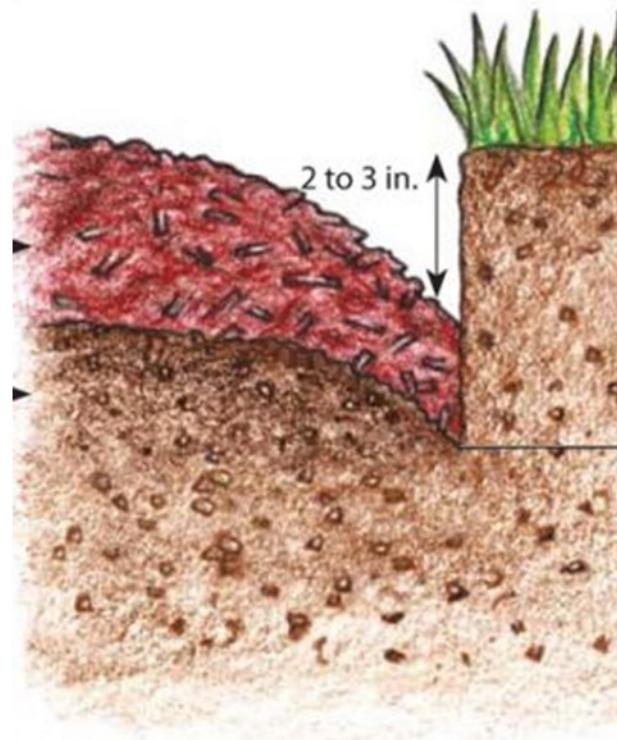
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cut any remaining grass blades from the edge. Care should be taken not to hold the shears horizontally to avoid destroying the right angle of the edge. I repeat this step two or three times during the growing season to keep my edges looking groomed.

STEP 4: MULCH THE BED

The final step is to put down 2 to 3 inches of mulch on the bed. The mulch not only suppresses weeds but also adds a rich, dark color to the edge. I mulch right up to the edge of the turf to create a gentle slope from the bottom of the edge to the top of the bed

Fine Gardening Magazine Ray Baker



PLANT WOODY PLANTS

Planting can be done throughout the growing season, yet some planting is best done in the early spring once the ground has thawed. This is the preferred time for planting bare-root shrubs, trees, and roses as well as many container-grown shrubs and trees.

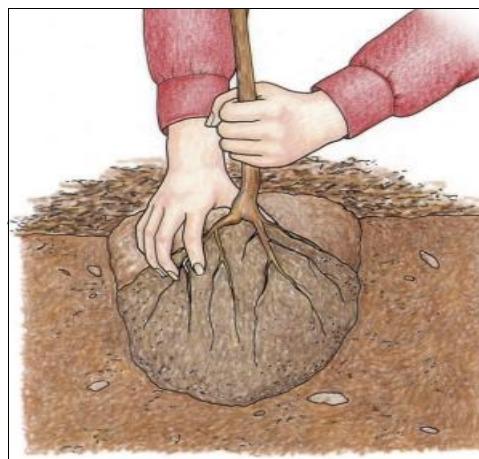
To plant a bare-root rose, shrub, or tree, dig a hole about twice the diameter and depth of the root ball. Mix the excavated soil with compost in a ratio of 3:1. Fill the hole, creating a pyramid of soil with the peak of the mound almost level with the lip of the hole. Gently press the plant into the mound of soil so that the roots are evenly fanned over the slope. Fill the hole with the remaining soil and compost mixture.

When planting roses in colder regions, area of stem near the base of the plant) warmer regions, the graft should be an

Leave a shallow depression around the low the moisture to seep into the soil er of mulch, such as bark chips, around water-soluble fertilizer once every two

For container-grown roses, shrubs, and diameter of the root ball and slightly root ball. Position the plant in the hole about an inch below the level of the excavated soil with compost in a 3:1 mixture. Complete the process by fol- root plants.

This is also a good time to relocate shrubs and trees, using the same guidelines. Be sure to dig up as much of a root system as possible and keep handling of a root ball to a minimum to avoid root damage.



be sure the graft (the swollen is covered by an inch of soil. In inch above the soil.

root area to catch water and al- rather than run off. Apply a lay- the plant and fertilize with a weeks through July.

trees, dig a hole about twice the deeper than the height of the so the top of the root ball is surrounding soil. Again, mix the ratio and fill the hole with the lowing the guidelines for bare- root plants.

Fine Gardening Charles W. G. Smith

Flint Farmers Market is in need of volunteers. If interested please call Joyce Bellaire at 810-487-1237.

Davison Farmers Market is looking for volunteers. If interested call Gloria Roudebush at 989-871-4627

Grand Blanc Farmers Market opens May 17, 2015. To volunteer please call Beth Fromholz-Davies at 810-288-3253 or Alan Grove at 810-922-8776.

GCARD building work will start in early May. Those interested in helping please call Pat Seals at 810-7309939. Tuesday is the workday.

Work days at Carriage Town are Wednesday's at 9:00 am in the Children's Garden and then move to Denny's Memorial Garden at 11:00 am. Planting day will be Memorial Day. Contact Marilyn Nichols, 810-687-3235.

Crossroads Village work days are Tuesdays at 9:30-12. Call Joanie Snyder for more details, 810-631-6640.

MDOT will be delivering 10 yards of mulch to I-69 Rest Area on May 13th, 2015 and planting day is May 20th, 2015. Volunteers are needed for both days. Please call Brenda Monty for more details if interested at 810-735-7425.

HOTLINE VOLUNTEERS NEED-ED. Office is open Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 8:30 am –1:00 pm.

Come in and look at the calendar or call during business hours and see what days are available. 810-244-8548

DATES TO REMEMBER

May MGAGCM membership meeting is May 21, 2015. Social hour begins at 6:00 pm. Business meeting starts at 6:30 pm and the speaker follows at 7:30. May's speaker is Brad Meehlee and he will be speaking on the topic of 5 basic steps for an eye appealing landscape

Master Gardener Association Genesee County Garden Tour 2015, Sunday, June 28, 2015. Rain or Shine. Adult tickets \$10. Available at sites or at the following locations: Bordine Nursery, 9100 Torrey Rd, Grand Blanc. Piechnik Greenhouse, 13172 McCumsey Rd, Clio. Walker Farms and Greenhouse, 5253 Atherton Rd, Burton. Check out the garden tour website at GCgardentour.weebly.com.

Kay McCullough 810-610-0545.

GCMG Bus Trip, June 25, 2015, includes Fredrick Meijer Gardens and Wooden Shoe Herb Farm, ending with dinner at Brody hall on MSU Campus. Bus holds 56 people and registration will be first come first serve. If we fill the bus your dinner will be covered at Brody hall. Deadline for registration is Monday, June 1, 2015 and Master Gardeners will earn 5 education hours. Price for the trip is \$65.00. For more information call Sabrina VanDyke at 810-736-4536.

Spring bulb sale is currently running and you can shop for bulbs during regular hot-line hours. Sales have been fantastic, but this project will be ending at the membership meeting, May 21. So, don't let this opportunity end without you purchasing new bulbs for your gardens. The price is right, you will be making your gardens colorful and beautiful and you will be helping your membership with this yearly fundraiser.

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