



DOWN TO EARTH



2016
VOLUME 14
10



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FEATURE ARTICLE

NATIVE PLANTS

Native plants are gaining in popularity among gardeners. One of the primary reasons is their ease of culture. You would expect that of a native plant; being “wild” some people would consider them on the same level as “weeds”. Indeed some of the native plants sold as ornamentals are found in the wild, growing in old fields, on hillsides and slopes, in ditches, along ponds, streams and lakes. They have an enduring place in the landscape, and provide some of the backdrop of what we simply call “nature”. When out of doors, hiking in the woods or fields, you will see many of these plants in their natural habitat.

The movement to “bring nature home” has inspired many gardeners to use these easy-care plants in their ornamental gardens, or to create whole gardens devoted to native plants. They also serve well when used as a buffer between the more cultivated parts of the home landscape and the more wild areas of one’s property. We have done this here in our own “native garden” which borders a small pond. Some homeowners have gone so far as to banish the lawn and create a natural meadow in its place.



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Many gardeners are using native plants without even realizing it. The always popular Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is perhaps the best example I can give. This showy orange flower decorates roadsides and well-mannered gardens equally this year. Native over much of the U.S., it has been selected as Perennial of the Year for 2017, by the Perennial Plant Association. Another well known native that has a long history of garden use is the Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), which is often grown in gardens for its red, hummingbird-attracting flowers.

Many of our most popular cultivated perennials are nothing more than selected forms of plants naturally found in the wild. Some ornamental grasses fall into this category and include named varieties of Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and Switchgrass (*Panicum species*). Other cultivated perennials derive much of their genetic material from wild populations, but have been cross-bred in controlled breeding programs, to develop larger flowers, better growth habits, more vibrant flower color, double flowers, and other traits considered desirable by gardeners. Consider the recent breeding advances in the genera *Coreopsis*, *Echinacea*, and *Baptisia* (and many many more!). Even the *Heuchera*, which is now thought to be a totally hybridized garden plant, had its humble beginnings in simple native species that have been bred together to “tease out” the best genetic material from each species.

However, for those whose primary interest is attracting wildlife (songbirds, butterflies, bees, and pollinator insects), the pure natural form of the plant is almost always preferred over cultivated or hybridized forms. Wildlife, particularly the beneficial insects, prefer the native forms because they have evolved with these plants, which provide a source of food in the form of nectar and pollen. Fancy double flowers are more “foreign” to them, and may not provide as rich a source of nutrition for them as the natural wildflower from which it was derived.

Nevertheless, there are many native plants that have entered the world of horticulture on their own merits, with very little intervention on the part of mankind. Sometimes this intervention is as simple as an astute observer noticing that one individual in a wild population of plants has a brighter colored flower, or has more attractive foliage. For the most part, these “native selections” provide the same benefits to wildlife as the less attractive individuals in their species. This type of “cultivar” (more correctly referred to as a “variety”) should not be shunned by the native enthusiast; they are no different than others of its species – just prettier! (as also happens among individuals in the human species!)

Karen Bovio, Specialty Growers, Howell Mi.



HOME GROWN 890

I have a poplar tree in my yard and it has been here for fifty years. In the last several days, short twigs with leaves have been falling all over the ground. There are at least a dozen a day. When I look at the end that was attached to the tree, it looks like it just came off nice and smooth, almost in a spiral. It is not broken or anything. What can I do?

Your tree has met a Twig Pruner. Twig pruners are beetles or more technically, beetle kids. Trees that can be bothered by twig pruners include your poplar, hickory, oak, ash, maple, elm, basswood honey locust and possibly some fruit trees. In the spring, an adult female chews a hole in the bark at a leaf axil near a twig tip and lays an egg there. When the larvae hatches, it bores into the twig and feeds on the wood as it tunnels toward the base of the twig. When the larva is full grown in late summer, it begins working itself to the twig surface. The larvae makes concentric cuts through the wood from the center outwards and stops just below the thin bark surface. Then when the wind blows or it rains hard, the twig breaks off and falls to the ground. When you examine the cut end on the ground, it looks like it was done by a router. There are fine, smooth grooves cut into the wood in a circular pattern, all the way to the center of the twig. The larva overwinters in the fallen twig. This insect is classified as a longhorned beetle because of the length of its antennae. Now for the good news, bad news portion. There is nothing to spray on the tree. But to help control this pest, pick up and destroy the fallen twigs. That's because your little pest is inside somewhere. A burn barrel is a fitting ending; but do this before winter. Don't mow over your fallen twigs because you can't pick them up. Also note that there also is a twig girdler. When you look at the fallen twig end, it looks different. There is a clean groove around the outside of the twig but the inside has a ragged breaking of the wood. This dude works from the outside in, just the opposite of the twig pruner.

I have rotten soil at my house because it is all clay. So this year, I built a raised garden box that is about six inches tall. I then ordered some really beautiful black topsoil and put it in the bed to a depth of four inches. I grew some vegetables in part of the original garden and others in the raised box. I watered well and fertilized all of them and the ones in the miserable clay did much better than the raised bed. How could this be? The ones in the good soil were small and hardly produced much and many of them turned yellow and stopped growing. Why?

Use your imagination and think about brownies with fluffy frosting on top. You have a solid, dense bottom and a soft top. This is your raised bed, but just not as a calorie-laden treat. Your raised bed has a dense bottom, which is the clay and the top four inches is light, soft soil which is your frosting. There is nothing about these two layers that go together. As moisture passes through from the top down, it stops at the clay. When ground moisture tries to percolate upwards, it stops at the topsoil. Roots do the same thing. They are stopping at the clay layer and not moving downwards. Many of the vegetables that you grow could have roots eight inches deep. You have two incompatible layers that are preventing growth and drainage. When the season is done for the garden, you need to fix this. All it involves is digging or tilling and breaking up that layer. This should not look like layers in a parfait glass: there's a green Jell-O layer and there is a red one just below it. You want at least four inches of soil integrated together. And even if you add to the top with more topsoil, it should have normal water movement. If you don't, water will still move normally. Mix it up.

Gretchen Voyle, MSU Extension-Livingston County Horticulture Educator 517/546-3950



COOKS CORNER

Crème brûlée

From Cooking Classy

DIRECTIONS

INGREDIENTS

4 cups heavy cream
 1-1/4 cups granulated sugar, divided
 1 pinch salt
 8 large egg yolks
 1 vanilla bean
 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
 hot water for water bath



1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Pour cream into medium saucepan. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean and add to saucepan along with vanilla bean pod. Heat mixture over medium-high heat, stirring occasional, until it reaches a light boil. Remove from heat and let rest 15 minutes.
2. In a mixing bowl, whisk together 3/4 cup granulated sugar and salt with egg yolks until mixture becomes slightly pale. Remove vanilla bean pod from cream.
3. While whisking, pour cream mixture into egg yolk mixture. Stir in vanilla extract.
4. Place ramekins in baking pans. Divide cream mixture among ramekins, filling each nearly full. Pour hot water into pan and fill water level to about halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake for 30-45 minutes, depending on size of ramekins until set but centers still jiggle slightly. Cool at room temperature for 30 minutes then transfer to refrigerator to chill 3 hours.
5. Remove from refrigerator and let rest 20 minutes, then sprinkle tops evenly with remaining sugar. Holding a hand-held kitchen torch, about 4 inches from sugar, evenly brown sugar. Remove flame just before desired shade is reached. Return to refrigerator and chill 20 minutes. Serve cold



MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

MEETING SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by President Vicki Laurin at 6:55 pm.

Review of Minutes: Motion and 2nd by Nettie Sparks and Sabrina VanDyke to accept the June 16, 2016 meeting minutes as presented. Passed.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle Chockley reviewed the Treasurer's report for August 2016. The beginning balance was \$33,047.49, income was \$163.26, expenses were \$3,254.09 and the ending balance was \$29,956.66 which includes \$10.00 in the Square One account.

Kay McCullough - Projects Reports:

Funded Projects

Desert Oasis

Grow Lab

opportunity for MG hours!

Chairperson

Alicia Ellis (acting)- still meeting Tuesdays, could use more help

Carol Groat- need a shepherd for Brendel school in GB, a good op-

Non-Funded Projects

Chairperson

Crossroads Village (Monarch Way Station) Joanie Snyder- still working on gardens even though the park is closed till October 1. Working on items for Ladies Night-Out.

Easter Seals

Carol Groat / Betty Draper- transformed the rear garden into veg-
gies which worked out good. Hoping to work with schools in the winter.

Farmers Market – Davison

Alan Grove- action is slow, two more Saturdays

Farmers Market – Grand Blanc Beth Fromholz-Davies/Alan Grove- finished, 135 contacts in 2016

GCCARD Gardens

Alan Grove/Gwen Barney- still working till mid-October

Humane Society

Maggie Gregg- only a few work days left this year

Library Gardens

Genesee District (Pasadena) Sasi Vemuri- working on improving, work day on 08OC16

Flint Public

Sasi Vemuri- working on improving, work day on 08OC16

Rest Stop Projects

US-23

Loretta Elwood- looking fabulous!

Alan Grove - Standing Committee Reports:

Banquet (Spring/Awards) Loretta Ellwood / Caroly Malaski- April 20, 2017 is the date!

Bulb Sale

Randy Tatro- The bulb sale is going well.

Clothing Vicki Laurin / tbd- Our next order deadline is September 16, 2016, then the Friday after Thanksgiving (25NO16).

DTE

Vicki Laurin / George Rappold- ALWAYS looking for articles!
Send garden photos and recipes to Vicki or George.

Fall Into Spring
your reservations!

Loretta Ellwood- October 1, 2016 is the day! Send in

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| Holiday Party | (Open) Still looking for a chairperson!! |
| Hospitality
Annette Berry. | Gloria Roudebush- Alicia was in the hospital and a card to |
| Public Relations | Mel Kennedy- Applewood Harvest Fest is next week-end. |
| Tool and Garden Supplies | Dick Moldenhauer – 20% OFF our order of over \$200 by 30SE16. Order deadline is 27SE16. |
| VMS Ambassadors | Ruth Simon / Jim Harrow- Start putting your hours in if you haven't yet! |

Old Business:

Project Chairs: we need each chairperson that hasn't sent in a complete plant list for their project's plant ID stakes to please do so quickly.

- Holiday Party: This year with no chairperson, the Board has formed a committee to plan and conduct the Holiday Party. The first planning meeting will be 23SE16 and all those interested are welcome to attend (at MSUE). This is a good way to get hours!

New Business:

- Kay will announce some newly approved projects next month.
- Members can use any of the MGAGCM purchases (tri-folds, microphone, etc.) for Master Gardener projects only. There is a sign out sheet that must be used when taking anything out of the office and then signing it back in again when bringing it back to the office.
- Nomination and Election Committee – Offices open for election are: 1) President, 2) 1st Vice President, 3) 2nd Vice President and 4) Director-Member Retention - each for a 2 year term. Job descriptions and officer qualification requirements were provided and are available on the MG website. Nominations may be sent to the MGAGCM email (mastergardener2014@gmail.com) to the attention of the Nomination & Election Committee. We'd like to have 2 people nominated for each office by the October meeting. We will open the floor for nominations at the October meeting.
- See Abi if you need to replace a lost or broken badge. We are also trying to get Mary Wilson to come present the 'Gold' badges to members who have earned them.
- There is a Master Gardener outreach opportunity on Saturday 15OC16 at Key-Lore Kanine Kountry Klub. See Maggie for details.

Close of Meeting: Moved and 2nd by Nettie Sparks and Mary Gartland to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 pm. Passed.

PLEASE NOTE

In future issues of Down To Earth the Meeting Notes if no report regarding a project is available the project will be deleted from that months issue of DTE. Many projects are seasonal or the chair person may not be present at the meeting. This action is being taken in the hope that the editors will be able to maintain the 14 pages per issue and at the same time provide additional space for articles. This will not affect the meeting minutes as recorded by the secretary at the time of the meeting. ED.

Growing Tree Fruits at Home

Locally grown tree fruits such as apricots, cherries, apples, peaches and pears are available beginning in midsummer through the fall. Customers love them because of their superior flavor and freshness. As a result of this delightful experience, some home gardeners are encouraged to plant their own backyard orchards. If you are considering growing your own fruits, making some preparations before planting will improve your chances of success. The first consideration is the site. A minimum of eight hours of direct sunlight is required to grow top quality fruits. Light-textured soils such as sandy loams are ideal, but heavier soils with some clay can be suitable as long as they drain well. Standing water on the surface or in the planting hole is unacceptable. The pH, which is a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of the soil, is also important. Fruit trees grow well in soil with a pH between 6 and 7. A source of clean water for irrigation is also a priority. Your plantings will need irrigation during establishment and fruit production.

Most people do not consider protecting their investment from animals such as deer, rabbits and birds. Bucks may rub newly planted trees and will continually trim new growth if it's not protected. Rabbits will gnaw the bark off of young trees, and birds love to eat cherries. Barriers such as netting and fences will be necessary to preserve your produce.

There are a number of things to consider when purchasing trees. The first decision is whether to buy locally from a garden center or place an order via a nursery catalog or online. Buying locally has its advantages. You can examine the trees before purchasing, and in most cases a garden center will have larger plants available than you can get by mail order. Select well-branched trees with wide angles where branches meet the trunk.

One disadvantage of buying locally is that the prices can be higher than those you might find in a commercial fruit catalog. Also, the selection of varieties may be limited depending on how much space is allotted to fruit trees in the nursery area. When ordering from catalog companies that specialize in fruits, you have a greater selection of cultivars to choose from, but you will also have to decide what rootstock you want and available tree trunk caliper. Cultivar selections can be made on the basis of flavor, fruit size, yield potential, plant disease resistance, growth habit, pollination requirements and qualities for processing.

If you want to grow recently released varieties, order early. If possible, submit your order six months before you plan to plant. This will greatly improve the chance that the plants will be in stock, especially the new varieties and those on the most dwarfing rootstocks.

When placing the order, remember to provide information on when the plants should be shipped — otherwise, the company will send the order when it thinks it is appropriate for your area.

When the plants arrive, open the package and examine everything. Moisten the roots and store plants in the shade until planting time. If you are not satisfied with the condition of the plants, send a note to the company. If the plants die later, notifying the company on receipt of the plants should make getting a refund (if the company offers one) less difficult. If weather conditions are not good for planting, place bare-root plants in pots or heel them into the ground. This will buy some time until the weather is more favorable. To heel in, place the trees at a 45-degree angle in a trench deep enough to cover the roots, and cover with soil or peat. Try to plant within two weeks.

Well before planting; test the soil to determine what nutrients need to be added for optimal growth.

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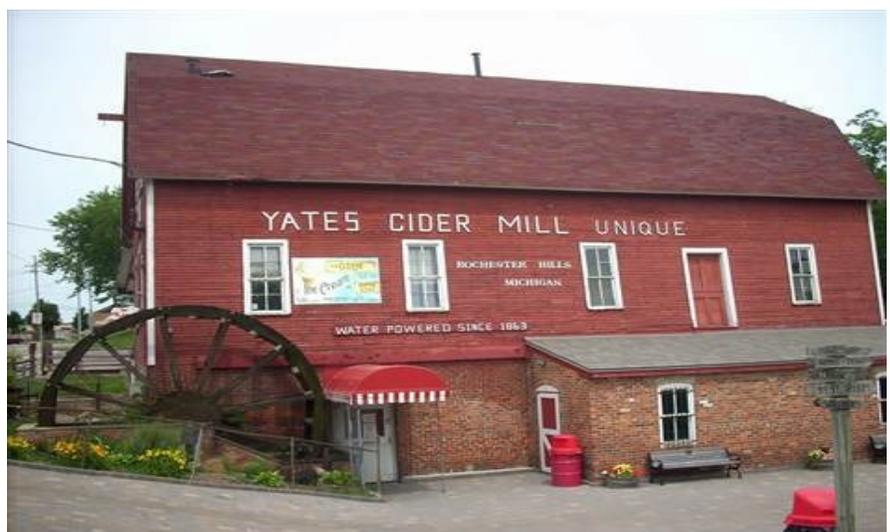


Visit the MSUE Bookstore (www.shop.msu.edu) for information on a soil testing kit.

Plant as soon as the soil can be worked — usually in late April to May. Stake trees, especially those on dwarfing rootstocks, and apply a wood chip mulch to a depth of 4 inches (except next to the trunk) to control weeds and to protect trees from lawn mower damage.

After planting, begin selecting the branches to train the new trees to carry the future fruit. For additional information on tree fruit management, visit the Gardening in Michigan Web site at migarden.msu.edu or home orchard videos at <http://ce.ingham.org/Horticulture>

Gary Heilig, MSU Extension Educator



2016 MGAGCM Elections

In 2016 we directly elect people to a MGAGCM office. The offices open for election this year are: President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President and one Director to serve 2 year terms. Nominations may be sent to mastergardener2014@gmail.com , given to the Nomination Committee or made at the September and October membership meetings. Nominations are open until the end of the October MGAGCM meeting. All nominations will be reviewed by the Nomination Committee.

Qualifications required to serve on the MGAGCM Board of Directors include:

1. Be a certified member of MGAGCM in good standing.
2. Understand and support the purpose and mission of the association as defined in the Bylaws and SOP's of MGAGCM.
3. Be able to attend all meetings, both regularly scheduled and any special board meetings. Absence from a board meeting must be communicated with the board.
4. Must be computer literate and able to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing.
5. Must be able to lead the membership into the future by developing and monitoring long-term goals
6. Must be willing to devote time to meetings, travel, communication with members, attendance at special events, development of agenda, monitor and follow up on committees and projects.

Major responsibilities of the office of President include:

- The President shall preside over all meetings of the general membership, Board & Executive Committees and shall have such other powers and duties as assigned by the Board or Executive Committee.
- Composes agendas for Board and membership meetings.
- Communicates all Board decisions to the membership and informs the membership of any relevant procedures and updates
- Oversees that all Board members are performing their duties effectively and resolves conflicts among members and within the Board
- Works with the local Master Gardener Coordinator/MSUE in the interest of the membership
- Responds to members' concerns that fit the mission of the Association
- Monitors the Association's financial performance, approves the annual budget and oversees that proper record retention occurs
- Is the primary liaison between MGAGCM and MMGA and represents the Association to the public and private sectors.

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Major responsibilities of the office of 1st Vice President include:

The 1st Vice President shall in the absence of the President have all of the powers of the President, as well as such other powers assigned by the Executive Committee or Board.

Oversees all current funded and non-funded MGAGCM projects

Maintains all project updates, records and funding status within the 1st Vice President's handbook.

Communicates with the local Master Gardener Coordinator on active project status.

Reports project income and expenses to the Board as deemed necessary.

Provides every new project chair with information on how to lead their project

Major responsibilities of the office of 2nd Vice President include:

The 2nd Vice President shall in the absence of the President and 1st Vice President have all of the powers of the President, as well as such other powers as assigned by the Executive Committee or Board

Oversee all current MGAGCM Standing Committees.

Creates the MGAGCM monthly meeting speaker and hospitality schedules.

Ensures that the meeting venue is available and setup for each meeting and coordinates building security.

Monitors standing committee income and expenses.

Major responsibilities of the office of Director include:

Assist the Coordinator in new member recruitment and site confirmation for classes
Survey membership for suggestions and feedback on an annual basis.

Prepare an annual outreach flyer with updated MGAGCM information for the public and outreach events.

Late Summer Do's and Don'ts

Late summer is here, can autumn be far behind? Gardeners often find themselves wondering what gardening activities are best done at this time. Here is a list of things to get done now and some things to put off for a couple of months.

Do:

Keep up with watering. Water is always important, but especially so when the heat is on. Fruits and vegetables need water to develop their crops properly. Perennial and annual flowers will perform better with adequate water. Don't forget the trees and shrubs. Even mature trees grow better when given supplemental water. For most plants, a good rule of thumb is one inch of water per week. Remember to water infrequently and deeply; avoid shallow watering.

Deadhead flowers. This is simply removing faded flowers. Deadheading annuals will keep them blooming throughout the whole growing season. Deadheading perennials will channel the energy that would have been spent on seed production, into root growth. When you deadhead, remember to remove the whole flower, not just the faded petals. The part that forms the seeds is usually at the base of the flower and that's the part you need to remove.

Plant, transplant and divide perennials; plant spring flowering bulbs. As September rolls around, air temperatures will be cooling off, while soil temperatures stay warm. This makes for good planting. There will be less heat stress in newly transplanted plants and the warm soil encourages root development.

Don't:

Don't prune trees and shrubs yet. Woody plants need to slow down and prepare to harden off so they can survive winter. Pruning in late summer can stimulate growth that may not harden off properly and can be damaged by winter. If you want to do a late season pruning, wait until autumn is really here and the leaves are changing color and falling off the trees (usually around early October). Evergreens should not be pruned at the end of the season, wait until spring.

Don't fertilize trees and shrubs. Just like pruning, fertilizing is a stimulus. It should wait until autumn is truly here. You can fertilize in autumn (very late September or early October), because the soil temperatures are still warm and the roots are actively growing.

Don't mulch yet. Winter mulch can be very beneficial to perennials, trees and shrubs. Winter mulch helps to moderate soil temperatures and prevent freezes and thaws that can lead to soil heaving. Soil heaving can be detrimental to shallow rooted perennials. If you are going to apply mulch, wait until there have been a couple of light freezes, then apply the mulch.

FALL BULB SALE

Our Fall bulb sale has been very successful and will continue during Hotline hours, Fridays, from 8:30 am-1:00 pm. The bulbs will be at our October 20 membership meeting and then the sale will be closed. If you have any questions, call Randy Tatro, 810-232-2018

CLOTHING ORDERS

Our Winter clothing order will be taken until Friday, November 25, 2016. This would be a great time to order a Christmas gift for you or a master gardener friend. This order will be back in time for Christmas.

As past orders, payment needs to reach PO Box, 34, Flushing, Mi. 48433 by the deadline to be ordered.

If you are looking for something that we haven't offered please let us know so we might find the item for you.

We do have two denim shirts that you can purchase at any time. We have a Men's size Medium, short sleeve dark denim shirt and a Ladies, size Large, long sleeve, faded denim. Cost is \$21.00 for each shirt. If interested in either shirt, please call Vicki Laurin, 810-744-0725 or Kay McCullough, 810-635-0545.

DATES TO REMEMBER

For our October MGAGCM membership meeting we will be meeting at the GCCARD building. Social hour starts at 5:30 pm. And at 6:00 pm. our speaker, Elly Maxwell, who is an entomologist from Dow Gardens will talk on Butterflies, After a short break we will begin our business meeting. Snack providers are: Vicki Laurin, and Christy Jones and Alan Grove.

HOLIDAY PARTY AND ELECTIONS MEETING

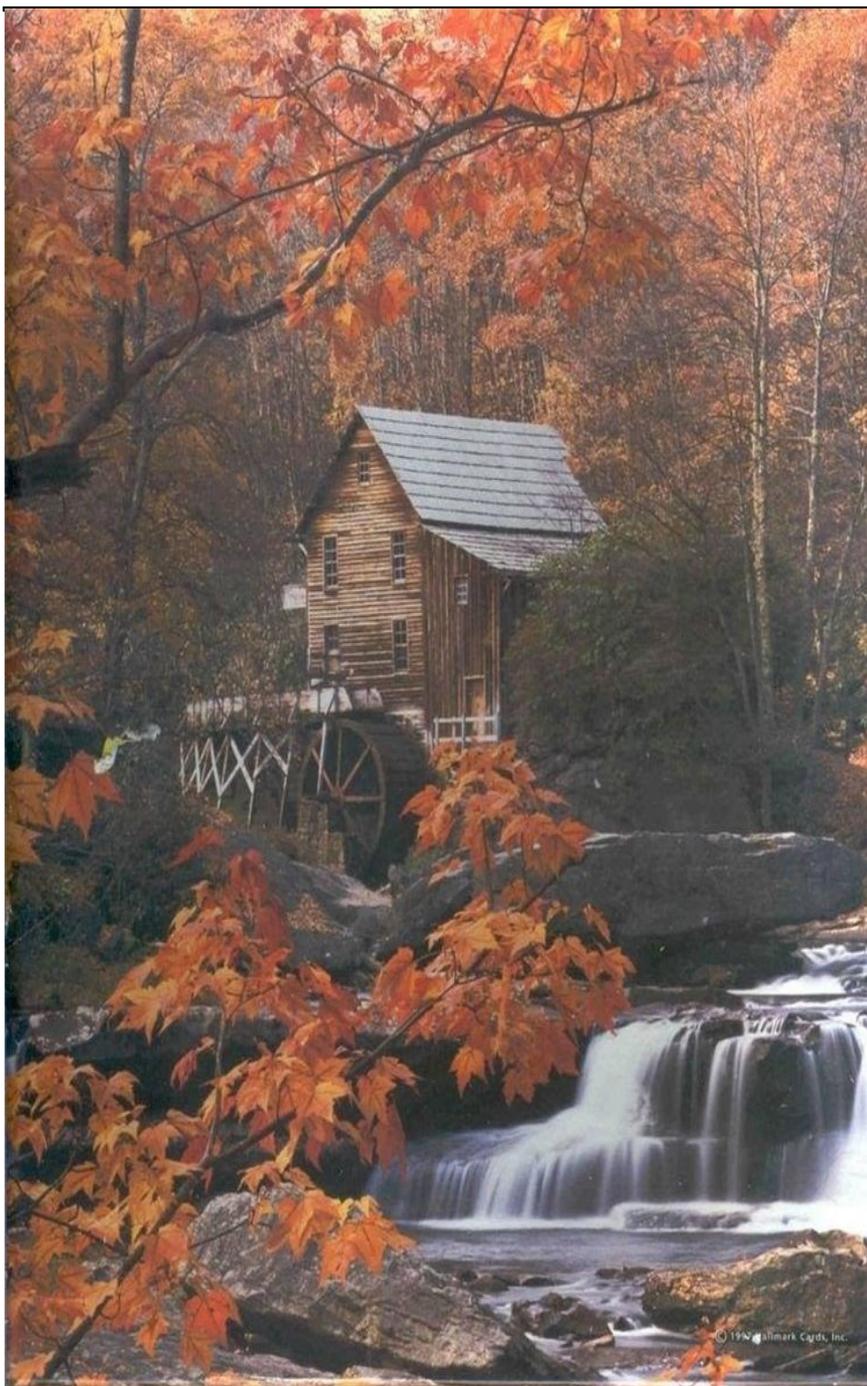
On November 17, 2016 we will be meeting for our annual Holiday Party as well as our Election of Officers. The elections will take place first and then we will proceed with dinner. Everyone is asked to bring a dish to pass. Table service, drinks and meats will be supplied. A sign up sheet for food will be available at our October membership meeting

Thank You

To Mel Kennedy, Alan Grove, Sandy Johnson, Loretta Ellwood and Diana Callion for providing snacks for our September meeting.

MGAGCM OFFICERS (2016)

President	Vicki Laurin
810-744-0725	laurinvicki@gmail.com
1st Vice President	Kay McCullough
810-635-9341	birdieball@aol.com
2nd Vice President	Alan Grove
810-922-8776	plantdoc049@outlook.com
Secretary	Dick Moldenhauer
810-695-2649	rnmold1050@aol.com
Treasurer	Michelle Chockley
810-659-8014	chockleym@gmail.com



THIS NEWSLETTER PREPARED BY:

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**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITES**

MMGA Inc Website at:

www.michiganmastergardener.org

MMGA Inc Facebook Page at:

www.facebook.com/MichiganMG

**MGAGCM Website at: Genesee
County MG.org**

MGAGCM Facebook Page at:

**[http://facebook.com/groups/2169046
232310/](http://facebook.com/groups/2169046232310/)**

Link to VMS: [https://](https://michigan.volunteersystem.org)

michigan.volunteersystem.org

Abiya (Abi) Saeed

Consumer Horticulture Program Instructor

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MSU Extension-Genesee

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Plant & Pest Hotline:

(810) 244-8548

Hours: Friday Only - Fall/Winter Hours

8:30 am-1:00pm

geneseeplantpest@anr.msu.edu

Public Office Hours:

8 am - 1 pm Monday through Friday.

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