



Cross Pollination

September 2008

Coordinator's Corner

When I put my back out in July, I had lots of time to reflect on things. Perennial weeding, edging and games of musical chairs that I usually play with my plants, were replaced with butterfly gazing, bird listening, reflecting and dozing. Although it felt to me like time stood still, in my garden there is evidence to contradict me. Forests of Queen Anne's Lace, Goldenrod and Rudbeckia have surrounded my lush emerald lawn. Branches of my Redbud and Tamarix are forced into a permanent droop by luxuriant monsoon-induced growth. Wood sorrel, Purslane and Herb Robert threaten to take over and given time, they might. So I think it's time I slowed garden time down in Zen-like pruning and weeding.

It's time to thank Larry and Eloise for hosting the BBQ in June and making it such a pleasant day by co-ordinating it with the Georgetown Horticultural Society Garden Tour.



Photos of Larry & Eloise's garden courtesy of Barry Catley

It's time to thank all those who volunteered for the Joseph Brant Garden Tour and the various RBG festivals.

And it's time to return to our monthly Master Gardener meetings!

Claudette Sims



2008 MG meeting dates

- September 3 Rooms 3 & 4
- October 1 Rooms 3 & 4
- November 5 Rooms 3 & 4
- December 3 Rooms 3 & 4

Other dates to note:

Plant Sale September 6th and 7th in support of the Carpenter Hospice in Burlington.

RBG Fall Plant Sale Friday, September 12,
3 to 6 p.m.;

triffids plants Sale (Belinda Gallagher,
Georgetown) September 12, 13, and 14,
10am to 3pm

Guelph Arboretum Plant Sale September 13

Zone 5 Technical Update - Norfolk County Master
Gardeners; Saturday, October 25, 2008

Chrysanthemum Show, Gage Park
October 24 to November 2

Tidbit by Molly Fuller

This year I put **very wet chunky peat** in the bottom of all my planters thinking that the wet peat would wick moisture down...it worked!

I know, I know, it rained almost every day...**BUT** I'm looking at a planter that is under the eaves and gets no water from rain. I watered it no more than once a week, and used to have to water it almost daily.

All planters are spectacular, following my weakly weekly fertilization routine... haphazardly switching between 15-50-10 and 20-20-20.

Chicago, Gardens and Much Much More by Lorne Sparrow

In July, Elaine and I spent 16 fabulous days touring around Chicago, Wisconsin and Indiana visiting 7 gardens in the Chicago area and the lower part of Wisconsin. Each garden had its own special features that distinguished it from the others.

We began on the north side of Chicago at The Chicago Botanic Garden. Near the entrance to the main building is a display showing samples of "What's In Bloom". Behind the blossom samples is a large map showing where the blossoms can be located the gardens. This is a great idea to help visitors find the blooms in the garden. A 35 minute tram ride around the outer perimeter of the garden provides the visitor an overview of the 385 acre property. Despite its young age of only 35 years, one gets the feeling that these gardens have been existence for a much longer period. The garden features a Bonsai collection of 170 plants, a Dwarf Conifer collection, a Japanese Garden, Landscape Gardens to assist home gardeners with garden design and plant combinations, a Native Plant Garden and a Rose Garden with over 500 cultivars. Signage has been placed throughout the Rose Garden to identify and explain the difference between the varieties of roses, e.g. Hybrid tea, floribunda, shrub, etc.

Near Milwaukee, Wisconsin we visited the Boerner Gardens. This garden features a formal rose garden with over 3,000 plants. The garden was opened in 1939. Adjacent to the formal rose garden is one of the All American Trial Gardens. Here new hybridized roses are tested before receiving the coveted "All American" accreditation. Unfortunately this beautiful rose garden was being decimated by Japanese beetles. Thousands upon thousands of these voracious eaters were devouring the rose blossoms. Many of the rose blossoms were barely visible under the masses of munching beetles. Since this a trial garden, no attempt was being made to control the infestation. Nature was left to take its course.

The third garden we visited was the Olbrich Botanical Gardens located in Madison, Wisconsin. Shortly after entering the garden I spotted a Wisteria in bloom. It was in fact the Kentucky Wisteria which is hardy to US Zone 5. Also present were some of the familiar Carolinian trees such as Paw Paw, Redbuds and Kentucky Coffee trees. The garden is in a warmer climate zone than I had expected. The structural feature of the garden is The Thai Pavilion. The pavilion, a gift to the University of Wisconsin-Madison from the Thai Government and the Thai Chapter of the Wisconsin Alumni Association was built in Thailand, disassembled, shipped to Madison and reassembled in 3 weeks by nine Thai artisans. It is the only pavilion in the continental United States and the only one outside of Thailand surrounded by a garden.

Our journey brought us back to the West side of Chicago to The Gardens at Ball. Here the Ball Horticultural Company has established a trial garden for over 3000 varieties of annuals and perennials. Rows and rows of large pots displayed hundreds and hundreds of annuals. Despite the fact there were no marijuana plants, Elaine thought she was in pot heaven! At every turn in the winding pathways you encountered sweeping vistas of blossoms in trial beds.

Just down the road from The Gardens at Ball we stopped to visit the 1,700 acre Morton Arboretum. The sign at the entrance to the parking lot announces "The Bugs Are Here". Walking to the main building you encounter a giant 18 foot long Praying Mantis. Giant Spiders, Ants, Dragonflies, Ladybugs, Grasshoppers, Bees, and Assassin Bugs have been constructed of red cedar, willow, black locust and black walnut and placed along the pathways.

Children are given a Bug Detective Guide to help them to help them identify and learn the truth about bugs. An hour long narrated tram ride takes visitors along the winding roads of the arboretum to learn the history of the tree and shrub collections. Hiking and bicycle trails wind through the arboretum. This is a great place to relax and see both native and introduced trees and shrubs.

On the southern outskirts of Chicago we stopped to visit the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. 7,200 acres of land is being restored back to original prairie. A mix of 350 different grasses and wildflowers will be used in the restoration process. Demonstration plots have been planted near the visitors centre. Some familiar plants in these plots are Carex, Leafy Prairie Clover, False Mallow and Rudbeckia.

The last garden stop was the Allerton Park near Monticello, Illinois. The main interests in this garden are the Oriental and European sculptures and the formal landscape gardens.

We managed to fit several other stops into our trip other than gardens. We visited a Clydesdale horse farm where we got up close and personal with Bud, a huge gentle giant. In Milwaukee we toured the Harley Davidson factory. Near Madison Wisconsin we stopped at the International Crane Foundation where we saw a collection of endangered crane species including a pair of rare Whooping Cranes. In Beloit Wisconsin a visit to the Angel Museum was a must. This collection of over 13,000 angels includes a donation from Oprah Winfrey of 600 black angels. Near Fair Oaks, Indiana we visited one of the largest dairy farms in the USA. This complex is home to 27,000 cows. In the dairy milking barn, 72 cows are milked at once on the milking carousel. In the calving barn visitors can watch a calf being born.

Our last stop before home was the largest outdoor auction and flea market in the Midwest at Shipshewana, Indiana, home to one of the largest Amish communities in the world. Here vendors hawk their wares in over 1,000 stalls. The main part of the town is filled with arts and craft shops and quilting material stores. The hardware store I'm sure has everything you can think of and then some.

Of course, Chicago had lots to offer with the striking architecture of its buildings, the beautiful parks along the lakeshore, the shops along Michigan Avenue (also called The Magnificent Mile), and the free trolley bus system to transport visitors around and the gardens planted along the sidewalks.

I hope your summer vacation was as fabulous as ours!



Dispelling the Myth - Books on Organic Gardening and Garden Remedies

By Belinda Gallagher

This summer I was hired by several townships and the Guelph International Resource Centre (GIRC) to speak to community groups about native plants, gardening during drought (while it rained cats and dogs) and finally about organic gardening and natural pest control.

Having been the ultimate hippie in an earlier life, growing every vegetable under the sun organically followed by keeping **triffids plants** going with no pesticides, I felt I could tackle the seminars without problem. Then I began to do the research on the topics!

I started with all of the saved messages from the Master Gardener Hotline/List that circulated during moderated discussions and at other times over the last few years. I learned about urine to repel coyotes, ammonia for slugs and Bounce sheets for ants. Then I dragged out my dog-eared copy of Rodale's All New Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening, Rodale Press Inc., 1997, in order to refresh my memory of earlier remedies.

I 'googled' organic gardening and natural pest control and started to read. Not too many minutes into this exercise did I rediscover the problem with the world-wide web - too many hits, too much information and too much of the information questionable.

Next stop, Amazon.com. What I needed was a scientific, research-based book on the topics. Not the tree-huggers political tripe. And here I hit gold, or should I say green. Please forgive me if you are clever and already have these books on your shelf. But if you don't, you should. They are The Truth About Garden Remedies and The Truth About Organic Gardening both written by Jeff Gillman, Associate Professor in the department of horticultural science at the University of Minnesota.

Professor Gillman, knowledgeable in plant production, nursery management and pesticide use has an easy comfortable writing style. And his books are witty. Gillman notes for example, in the drawbacks of handpicking insects - "It takes more time to spray or pick a bug off than to poison it, and if you use the handpicking method you may get bug blood on your hands."

The books are arranged in a similar style: In the book on garden remedies he sets out a *remedy*, then discusses the *practice* (how the remedy is used), the *theory* (what compounds or ingredients are at work), the *real story* (the science at work or not) and finally *what it means to the gardener*. In the book about organic gardening topics are **presented**, **benefits** listed, **drawbacks** delineated and he then reports the **bottom line**. In both cases I felt his strong scientific background come forth. Like hypothesis, testing, results.

He doesn't debunk without just cause and he also is fair about both sides of the issues, particularly pesticides. And on top of it all, he demystifies Environmental impact quotients (EIQ's), clarifies dose dependency and frequency of use. "A great example is salt, which when sprinkled lightly on French fries can enhance flavor, but in a dose of only two tablespoons is likely to be toxic to a one-year-old child," he writes.

We as Master Gardeners give advice. It is what we do. And like many MG's, I have passed along anecdotal remedies. But we need to be cautious. Just as when recommending a licensed pest control agent, we need to be sure what we are talking about with natural or organic suggestions. These two books have opened my eyes to the science, and the myth in organic gardening and garden remedies.

