



December 2006. *The only conclusion I have ever reached is that I love all trees, but I am in love with pines.* Aldo Leopold

## Coordinator's Comments

By **Bev Lillie**

The end of 2006 is approaching with alarming speed! With that said, please send me your hours for this year. My report will go in to ISU on December 29<sup>th</sup>. We want to make sure Linn County gets credit for all the hours you have volunteered; so let me know what hours you have given to the MG program.

Here is another opportunity for you to "Experience Learning". Diane Baker, Youth Development Specialist, University of Illinois Extension will present a workshop on **Tuesday, January 23, 2007**. The workshop will be held at the Extension Office, and there is no charge for MGs. The time: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. This workshop will help us learn by using as many senses as possible. After attending we will be more able to share with youth that "Learning is Fun...When You Experience It. Contact me at 377-9839 if you plan to attend.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday season – filled with moments that make happy memories for years to come.



## Terra Cotta Fountain Class

Don't forget – Deb Walser is giving a class on **Saturday, December 9, 9:00 am - 12 pm** at the Extension Office. Using terra cotta pots, and fountains you can learn to create a fountain for your deck or patio. The fee is \$25.00. We are always looking for volunteers to help at WGF. You could use the knowl-

edge you have learned from this class to help with the WGF class, if you wish. We do need to know how many are coming – call the office, 377-9839, to register.



## Service Record Report

We are at the end of our MG year and need you to complete your final report of education hours and volunteer service for 2006. Please submit your service record report to Coordinator Lillie by **December 10**. (You should include an estimate of your volunteer hours through December 31.) Your prompt report will enable Ms Lillie to meet the ISU deadline for her composite Linn County report.

A report form is attached or can be downloaded from [www.extension.iastate.edu/linn/info/mastergardener/Info+for+MG+and+Interns.htm](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/linn/info/mastergardener/Info+for+MG+and+Interns.htm).



## 2007 Garden Calendar

Container gardening is the monthly feature in the 2007 ISU garden calendars. In addition to having beautiful photos, these calendars provide useful monthly garden tips and a list of horticulture publications that are available from ISU Extension. No MG should be without one. They also make great Christmas stocking stuffers for your gardening friends. Calendars are available at the Extension Office for the nominal price of \$8.00.

# GERMINATOR

Prepared by and for Master Gardeners in Linn County, Iowa

Vol. 18, No. 12. Editor: Roger Strohhenn



## December

	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	

## MASTER GARDENER EVENTS

Dec. 5, 6:30 pm. *Steering Committee Meeting.* Extension Office.

Dec. 9, 9 am-12 pm. *Terra Cotta Fountain Class.* Extension Office.

**Office Painting**—The MG office will be closed for painting on Dec. 14, 15 and 18.

The Extension office will be **closed** on Dec. 26.

## THINGS WE LOVE

### Adding Interest to your Flower Bouquets

By Judy Stevens

The joy of spring and summer flower gardens is creating a cut flower bouquet for yourself, at home, work or maybe even to give to someone who is unable to have a flower garden of their own. If you are one of many people who are forced to spend more time at the office or in your home than in your flower garden, you will appreciate the value of having cut flowers close by. The challenge of this project is to add something of interest to the bouquet and make sure that you are not just stuffing flowers into a vase.

Editor's Note: Please file Judy's multi-season suggestions for use during your 2007 garden season.

Your bouquets can start long before spring if you elect to force some blooms before Mother Nature lets them bloom outdoors. Cut a few of your forsythia or pussy willow branches and put them in a vase of water. You may want to do this every week starting about the first of March to ensure that you hit the peak time for forcing this bright yellow burst of spring. The comment is always, "How do you get your forsythia bush to bloom so early?"

Starting in the spring don't forget the mini arrangements you can make with scilla, glories of the snow and dianthus pansies. Arranged in a small liquor measuring glass (a shot glass) they can be held in place with their own leaves and small twigs from barberry, forsythia or bridal wreath. Don't forget to save the twigs of your red twig dogwood when trimming, the red is a great addition to your bouquets.

The larger blossoms of spring are daffodils and tulips. A few daffodils arranged in something as small as a bud vase with spirea (bridal wreath) will give the arrangement an "early spring" look, plus the comment, "Your bouquets continue to grow". The branches will continue to grow

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## Big Time Goof—I Apologize

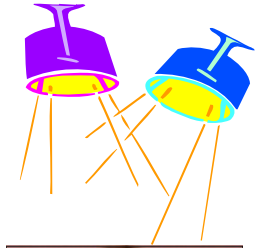
By Roger Strohbehn

You may have noticed last month that the photo in the Volunteer Spotlight article about Barbara Brown looked like Carol Bruch...it was! (Your editor is getting a bit careless in his old age.) My sincere apology to both ladies. Please note the correct photo of Barbara.



## Volunteer Spotlight on — RAY JONES

Banana tree....orange tree....lemon tree ... in Iowa? Yes, if you are standing in Ray Jones' back yard. Ray enjoys tropical plants as a change of pace from his work as an engineer at Rockwell. His backyard is divided into two parts. He is planning a small fruit garden to join an existing greenhouse on one side. The other side is mostly tropical plants, ornamental grasses and some perennials surrounding a circular lawn. The tropical plants include elephant ears, dahlias, cannas, caladium, coleus, Persian shield and castor bean plants. The plant names do not begin to describe the vibrant color and design achieved by Ray.



Ray selects plants to attract birds and butterflies to his garden. While he had some hummingbirds visit the garden this summer he hopes to have more next summer. He also moves many of his houseplants outside for the summer. Ray enjoys experimenting with tropical plants in the landscape, such as using Wandering Jew as a ground cover. Ray propagates many of the plants used in his garden from seeds and cuttings grown in the spring under fluorescent lights.

Ray is starting a collection of succulents hardy to zone five. His collection includes hardy agave, sedums and over 40 varieties of hens and chicks. The succulents are grown in the rock garden in Ray's border.

His interest in gardening is rooted in his early years. Ray's interest in plants was piqued, as a child, when his brother brought home a houseplant from the local department store. Ray worked at a greenhouse in high school where he learned plant propagation techniques. He also enjoys landscape design and was responsible for the design at Ausadie apartment building in downtown Cedar Rapids. He considers his own yard a work in progress.

Ray's master gardener activities include *Winter Garden Fair*, the *Steering Committee*, *Farmer's Market* and the *Eastern Iowa Garden & Landscape Show*. He was a graduate of the MG class of 2003.

What is Ray's favorite plant? He says it is the variegated lemon and orange tree. So, to escape to a tropical paradise, or to view some different plants, visit Ray's garden.

Interview by Nancy Sutherland.

## NEWLY CERTIFIED MGs

Congratulations to the 12 MG interns of the class of 2005 who have completed their required volunteer service and received their permanent MG name badges at the Fall Celebration on November 2. All were glad to upgrade from the provisional paper badge to the permanent plastic badge. We look forward to presenting name badges to the remaining five members of the class of 2005 when they complete their 40 hours of volunteer service.

Back row L to R: Devon Dietz, Dustin Hinrichs, Wil Carew, Claire Smith, Lori Smith, Nancy Lekin. Front row L to R: Maureen Tanury, Susan Long, Cathy Ginther, Kay McWhinney, Dolly Brown. Insert: Nancy Sutherland.



## THANK YOU, Germinator contributors

By Roger Strohbahn, Editor

Our newsletter would not be successful without the fine contributions of our intrepid Coordinator, Bev Lillie; Steering Committee Secretary, Roxie Goetz; numerous project leaders; plus the authors of Volunteer Spotlight, Hot Topixs and Things We Love articles. Also, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the volunteers who collate and post the Germinator and Connie Benesh for reproducing the postal copies and posting the electronic version on the Linn County Extension web page.

THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL!

Project leaders – Laura Appleget & Ray Jones, Thea Cole, Carol Bruch, Devon Dietz & Cathy Ginther, Pat Ervin, Shelby Foley, Kay Harrison, Dustin Hinrichs, Gloria Johnson & Brenda Garbe, Karla McGrail, Karmin Mullins & Roxie Goetz, Jerry Schmidt & Darrell Hennessey, Deb Walser and Charlene Woeste.

Volunteer Spotlight – Dolly Brown, Nancy Lekin, Jackie MacLaren, Peg Moore and Nancy Sutherland.

Hot Topixs – Denise Fouts, Gene Frye, Darrell Hennessey, Dianne Johnson, James Kurtzleben, Nancy Lekin, Susan Long and Nancy Sutherland.

Things We Love – Dianne Johnson, James Kurtzleben, Nancy Lekin, Marilyn Malloy, Sue Matthews, Carol Sears, Judy Stevens and Sharon Weiss.

Circulation staff – Doris Hardt, Louise Harn, Betty Johnston, Terry Kemme, E.B. Kunkle, Jo Osing, Fran Potratz, Pat Ryan, Eileen Sargent and Doug Smith.

It has been a pleasure working with this great staff in 2006.

## Continued - Flower Bouquets

and produce leaves. The same can be done with tulips and lilac branches. This will bring rave reviews.

Although the showy orange California poppies are short lived they do create a true Georgia O'Keefe picture. Cut the stem long and singe the cut end with a flame then immerse the stem up to the flower in water overnight. Arranging a few stems in a cylindrical clear glass vase you will be able to observe and appreciate the crooked stem in true Georgia O'Keefe style. The comment is always, "Are those real?"

The annual Oriental poppy also does not make a good cut flower. This is one you should enjoy in bloom in your garden and then add the seed pods to bouquets of lilies, fever-few and daisies. The pod can be used green or dried for added interest. Also, do not despair if you missed a few flowers of iris, daylily or tulip when dead-heading, add the big seed head to a bouquet for the usual inquiry, "What are these things?"

Another flower that is usually not used in cut flower arrangements is clematis. The flower can be used as a cut flower but what adds interest are a few sprigs of the clematis vine with whirls of seed pods attached. Great with fever-few, mums and zinnias.

Even after your sweet peas have dispersed their sweet smell and formed seed pods the pods make an enjoyable yet unusual addition to a bouquet along with graceful tendrils. Another possible addition to a bouquet is the green ferny top growth found on asparagus. In fact as a young farm girl some of my favorite memories are of my Aunt's arrangements of zinnias and asparagus greens.

For a culinary friend arrange a bouquet of herbs. Basil, thyme, curly and flat parsley and purple basil will excite the recipient if told they can use the arrangement over the

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**Steering Committee Minutes 11/7/06**

Members present: K. Carew, T. Cole, K. Dearborn, G. Frye, D. Gladson, D. Hardt, D. Harrison, R. Jones, K. McGrail, J. Robinson and W. Schmidt.

Guests present: L. Azeltine, D. Dietz, S. Foley, G. Johnson, and B. Lillie.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Lowe Park Gardens: Foley reported that the bed clean up and restoration was a great success. There is some interest by the Parks Dept. to install a dwarf conifer bed on the east side of the building adjacent to the water garden. The first year presented lots of challenges, but the gardens have been a huge success.

Winter Gardening Fair: Dietz reported that 4,000 brochures have been printed. The Extension website now provides the schedule of classes and links to Kirkwood for registration. Thanks to Connie Benesh for the design of the brochure and website. Brochure distribution will be after January 1 to a three county area surrounding Linn Co. A press release will be sent to media organizations in January.

2007 Spring Banquet: Dustin Hinrichs will chair this event.

Expert Ed./MG Continuing Education: McGrail reported that Hennessey will contact Mark Shour to do a presentation on pesticides and that Frye would be do one on the Emerald Ash Borer. There was some discussion about doing a "brown bag lunch" series, at the library or the Extension Office, lasting about 30 minutes. Lillie will look in to the possibility of opening up the classes to the public.

**OLD BUSINESS**

4-H "Junior MG Program": Lillie reported that four interns had signed up to assist in this potential activity. Their names were turned over to the 4-H specialist and the Horticulture Club leader who will determine the best way to integrate them into the 4-H program.

2007-09 Steering Committee Election: The election was led by Cole and Frye. Seven candidates were nominated for six vacancies. Since the by-laws do not specify a set number of Steering Committee members, the Committee voted to accept all seven nominees. They are Laurie Azeltine, Barbara Brown, Larry Dawson, Devon Dietz,

Kay McWhinney, Joni Michels and Doug Smith.

MG Financial Assets: Cole reported that the special financial committee recommended that 25 percent of net profits from Linn Co. MG income producing projects be allocated to the Linn County Extension Office to help defray the costs involved in supporting the MG Program. The Committee approved the recommendation.

**NEW BUSINESS**

2007 Event Participation: It was noted that the MGs will be participating in the *Winter Garden Fair*, the *WMT Lawn & Garden Show*, the *Spring Plant Sale*, and the *Eastern Iowa Garden & Landscape Show* (Bruce more).

Request to reprint "Getting your Feet Wet...": Johnson and Azeltine presented a request to reprint the book. The matter was referred to a special committee chaired by Robison to investigate and present a recommendation at the December 5 meeting for a final decision.

Request for MG Credit Card: Foley asked that the MGs consider using a credit card for major purchases so individuals would not have to wait for reimbursement. Lillie stated that she already has a credit card for this purpose and would work with L. Bigley on getting the limit raised.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Miracles in Motion requested assistance on where to place plants and shrubs that were donated. Eileen Sergeant provided assistance with this project.

The City of Hiawatha has requested MG assistance regarding types of plants to be planted at the Faye M. Clark Memorial Park. Lillie stated that this assistance might be construed as competing with private contractors. The Committee decided that MGs could instruct other volunteers about planting after the city has decided on a landscape plan.

The City of Hiawatha also requested that MGs present a series of four gardening lectures at the Hiawatha Community Center in 2007. Quarterly lectures would be presented on either a Tuesday or Wednesday from 10:30 to 11:30 am on topics that we submit. Dates will be determined as we acquire speakers.

Next meeting: Dec. 5, 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted: Deb Gladson, Acting Secretary.

**Continued - Flower Bouquets**

next few days in their kitchen creations. (They may even return the favor with a gift from their kitchen).

As the summer fades into fall don't forget to add a variety of fall grasses and even roadside weeds if you have no weeds in your garden. Even small dried or fresh gourds, skewered with a dowel rod, add a harvest theme to your arrangements. (If using dried gourds they can be recycled and painted for use at another time.) Try cutting an ear of dry corn into 1 1/2" thick discs with a band or scroll saw,

then skewer with heavy wire and add even more appeal to fall bouquets. Try the seed pods of small coneflowers. Sunflowers are also beautiful additions if you can get them before the birds do.

Along with creating interesting bouquets it is fun to arrange them in unusual containers, but we will save that topic for a later column. In the meanwhile walk around your yard and look at what you may not normally use, especially what you may just add to your compost pile, it may make a great addition to your next floral arrangement.

## Care of Seasonal Houseplants after the Holidays

By Richard Jauron, ISU Extension Horticulturist

Flowering houseplants associated with the Christmas season include the poinsettia, Christmas cactus, amaryllis, and cyclamen. After the holidays, the fate of these plants becomes a dilemma for some people. All can be kept to bloom again another year. The Christmas cactus, for example, is an easy to grow plant, which can be kept for many years. Others are best discarded.

### Poinsettia

If given proper care in the home, poinsettias should retain their colorful bracts for 2 or 3 months. Toss the poinsettia when you grow tired of it or it becomes unattractive. For those home gardeners who enjoy a challenge, it is possible to get the poinsettia to bloom again next season. Cut the stems back to 4 to 6 inches above the soil when new sideshoots develop below the bracts or when the bracts fade in March or April. The poinsettia may also be repotted at this time. When new growth appears, place the poinsettia in a sunny window with temperatures of 65 to 75°F. Water the plant when the soil surface becomes dry to the touch and fertilize every 2 weeks with a houseplant fertilizer.

In late May, move the poinsettia outdoors. Harden or acclimate the plant to the outdoors by placing it in a shady, protected area for 2 to 3 days, then gradually expose it to longer periods of direct sun. Once hardened, dig a hole in an area that receives 4 to 6 hours of sunlight (preferably morning sun and afternoon shade) and set the pot into the ground. To obtain a compact, bushy plant, pinch or cut off the shoot tips once or twice from late June to mid-August. Continue to water and fertilize the plant outdoors.

The poinsettia should be brought indoors in mid-September. Place the plant in a bright, sunny window. The poinsettia is a short-day plant. Short-day plants grow vegetatively during the long days of summer and produce flowers when days become shorter in the fall. To get the poinsettia to flower for Christmas, the plant must receive complete darkness from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. daily from early October until the bracts develop good color, usually early to mid-December. Protect the plant from light by placing it in a closet or by covering with a box. During the remainder of the day, the poinsettia should be in a sunny window.

### Holiday Cactus

Holiday cacti include the Christmas cactus, Thanksgiving cactus, and numerous hybrids. After flowering, place plants in a cool area (60 to 65°F) and water sparingly. Water the plants more frequently during their active growth period from spring through summer. Also, fertilize holiday cacti approximately once a month during the growing season. Flowering of holiday cacti is controlled by temperature and day length. In the fall, place plants in a cool location (60 to 65°F) that receives only natural daylight.

Flower initiation will occur under these conditions and plants will bloom sometime between late October and January.

### Amaryllis

Amaryllis bulbs are often given as Christmas gifts. While many people discard the amaryllis after flowering, it is possible to get the bulb to bloom yearly.

After the flowers fade, cut off the flower stalk with a sharp knife. Make the cut 1 to 2 inches above the bulb. Don't harm the foliage. In order for the bulb to bloom again next season, the plant must replenish its depleted food reserves. The long, strap-like leaves manufacture food, which is stored in the bulb. Place the plant in a sunny window and water when the soil surface becomes dry. Fertilize every 2 to 4 weeks with a houseplant fertilizer.

The amaryllis can be moved outdoors in late May or early June. Harden or acclimate the plant outdoors for a few days. Once hardened, dig a hole in an area that receives partial to full sun and set the pot into the ground. Outdoors, continue to water the amaryllis during dry weather. Also, continue to fertilize the amaryllis once or twice a month through July. Bring the plant indoors in mid- to late September. Plants left indoors should remain in a sunny window.

Amaryllis bulbs need to rest before blooming. To induce dormancy, place the amaryllis in a cool, semi-dark location and stop watering the plant in late September/early October. Cut off the foliage when the leaves dry and turn brown. Then place the pot in a dry location with a temperature of 45 to 55°F and allow the bulb to rest for 2 to 3 months. The length of the rest period for amaryllis bulbs varies. After several weeks of rest, periodically check the bulbs for signs of new growth. When a bud or foliage appears, place the amaryllis in a warm, bright location and water to start the growth cycle again. If repotting is necessary, do so before watering.

### Cyclamen

Like the poinsettia, the cyclamen is best discarded after flowering. However, it is possible to get the plant to reflower.

After the cyclamen has stopped blooming, gradually withhold water. Remove the foliage after it has died back and then store the pot in a cool (45 to 50°F), dark area for 3 to 4 months. In late summer, provide warmer temperatures and begin watering to encourage new growth. If repotting is necessary, replant the tuber into fresh potting soil at the end of the rest period. The top of the tuber should be slightly above the soil surface. The cyclamen needs cool temperatures (50 to 65°F), high humidity, and bright light for maximum growth and bloom.

Horticulture & Home Pest News—December 6, 2002.



