

THE GARDENER'S DIRT

The Latest Scoop from the Scott County Master Gardeners

October 2009

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Submitted by Vito Fiore

I am speaking for the Board when I say that our mission would be difficult to fulfill if it were not for the work that the individual Committee Chairs perform. A special thanks to all the Chairs for their dedication and hard work. We couldn't be effective without them. However, it had been some time that all the Chairs were gathered to review their roles. The Board decided to bring in all the Chairs and review their roles, responsibilities and to review the procedures to make their Committees more effective and to increase communications with the Board.

On September 3rd the Board met with the Committee Chairs to review duties, procedures, forms, and to answer questions. Duane reviewed the roles, procedures, and forms, all of which are included in the Committee Chair Handbook. If you are Chairing a Committee and don't have a handbook please contact Duane. The Board also answered questions concerning procedures. Copies of the presentation are available at the office for all Board and Committee Chairs for future reference. (In your committee folder.)

The one change that was introduced was that all Committee Chairs will be required to be a part of the Plant Sale Committee. The Plant Sale is the largest revenue source for the Master Gardeners and we need everyone's help to continue this event. Look for future details concerning this change.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate in contacting any of the Board members or Duane. Thanks again for your dedication, commitment, and hard work. It is noted and appreciated by the Board.

Thank You from Vander Veer Botanical Park!

To all Master Gardeners and volunteers that helped with our Fall Festival, thank you!



Your contribution to our mission based event with the pot a plant booth and the plant zoo hunt and find game and insect craft activity were perfect for our visitors. We appreciate the partnership that has been developed over the years and all the volunteer hours that you have donated to further the educational aspects of horticulture in the community.

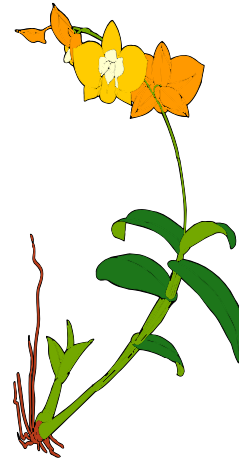
Paula S. Witt, Volunteer Coordinator, The Friends of Vander Veer

Our Mission

To provide home horticulture information and education to the citizens of Scott County consistent with Iowa State University recommendations. We also strive to increase members' knowledge of horticulture through educational programs.

Illowa Orchid Society Annual October Plant Auction

- When:** Wednesday - October 7, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.
- Where:** Deere-Wiman Carriage House
817 11th Ave., Moline, IL
- What:** Divisions of awarded plants, Orchids of all shapes, colors, sizes and varieties must go to new homes.
- Why:** Annual fundraiser to support Illowa actives.
- How:** Live auction by renounced Illowa auctioneers.
Refreshments will be served.
- Warning:** Bring your checkbook!!! Many beautiful plants will tempt you.
- Disclaimer:** Illowa members will not be held responsible for persons succumbing to the "Orchid Fever".
No known cure available, but support groups are provided.



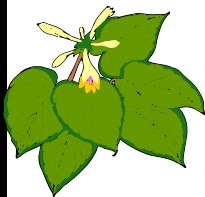
Mississippi Valley Hosta Society Presents

Speaker—Mark Zilis

Author of the Hostapedia and The Hosta Handbook

- When:** November 8, 2009—2:00 p.m.
- Where:** Scott County Extension
875 Tanglefoot Lane, Bettendorf, IA
- No Charge:** Compliments of the Mississippi Valley Hosta Society

Mark is a nationally known expert on hosta and author of the most current hosta resource book. He has introduced dozens of hosta—Sugar and Cream, Pineapple Unpsidedown Cake, Summer Breeze to name just a few.



Topic: 'Hosta Highlights' .. Will cover hostas from Japan, hybridizing, tissue culture, hosta sports (new variations), current problems and will be open to audience questions.



Don't know about you, but it's been a busy summer. Lots of places to go and things to do. Graduation parties, garden walks, county fairs, weddings, vacations - not to mention upcoming school activities, football games and the holidays. It doesn't take much to get my wires crossed and forget where I need to be.

It not only happens in our personal life but with the Master Gardener Program as well. But no worries, there is a great resource available that will keep us all, committee chairs and volunteers, up-to-date on committee meetings, events and MG opportunities. The MG calendar is a useful tool and can be found at the link below or by going to the Extension website and navigating to the MG page and finding the link to the calendar.

Both Marilyn and I encourage you to use this as a resource to keep current on committee meetings, events or open dates in the hort clinic for volunteering. We are requesting that all committee chairs utilize the calendar for meetings and events by dropping Duane Gissel an email at gissel@iastate.edu. He will put your item on the calendar for all to see. And remember that is NOT ONLY for the meetings that are held at the Extension Office but for any meeting, work activity or event that is happening, any place, anywhere.

The calendar's goal is to provide information to all fellow MG's so they can get involved in volunteer activities or catch a committee meeting that seems interesting. Committee chairs, please utilize the calendar as a tool when planning your meetings or events. Don't book your activity on the same day as another committee. This will provide more opportunities for those MG's who want to get involved in more than one project. You may lose out in getting the volunteers you need if they have to choose between your committee and another.

So, don't FALL behind, post your events on the calendar and use it as a tool when planning your schedule. It's a win-win.

Til next month, Peggy Dykes & Marilyn McCallister, Co-Volunteer Coordinators

"An addiction to gardening is not all bad when you consider all the other choices in life." -
Unknown

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/scott/info/scottmg.htm>

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/scott/info/mgcalendar.htm>

**News articles are needed for the Gardener's Dirt
Please have articles to the Extension Office by October 15th**



Thoughts From The Belly

By: Dan Mays – Ironbelly1@aol.com

This month I am going to recommend a book that has just been released within the last few weeks. It is simply titled: Deep Nature, by Linda and Robert Scarth. This is the type of book I never would have thought I would be recommending to others. It could, at first perusal in a book store, be easily be mistaken for just another coffee table book – heavy on “eye candy” but of little substance.

Yes, the largess of this September 2009 release from University of Iowa Press is photographs – seventy-five dazzling photographs revealing miniature beauties discretely nestled into patches of prairie, wetland and woodland of Iowa. In the Scarth’s own words, “*Our mission is to produce works with grace and emotional resonance.*” Mission accomplished! The full extent of written words by these shutter buffs from Cedar Rapids, Iowa consists of less than three and one half pages. They have chosen instead to let their images speak.

However, they have also wisely chosen to include a prefacing essay by one of Iowa’s premier naturalists, John Pearson. Mr. Pearson works for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. His essay provides a very personal, introspective look which imparts a comfort of gratefulness that people with his vision are caretakers of our natural resources. It is a refreshing change to actually enjoy reading the first few pages of a book that does not consist of boilerplate and publicist hype. This essay is a deeply personal, evocative celebration of rarely appreciated facets of our Midwestern lands.

You will find photos that match the elegance of the essay; photos which capture the diminutive delights we tend to overlook. The old saw about “not seeing the forest for the trees” does not apply to this book. It might be more accurate to say, “not seeing the subject hidden behind or underneath the tree leaf.” The photo subjects are things like Candy-striped leaf hoppers, small birds, and detail revealing close-ups of flowers and fungi. To be certain, one will not look at these subjects the same the next time you encounter them in the wild.

To be fair, I must admit that I know both Robert and Linda Scarth – not well, but well-enough to garner mutual recognition. For perhaps the past five or six years, I have been running into them on various nature hikes. The group will take off and the Scarths (cameras in hand) will typically have already forged on ahead or will eventually be straggling along behind. They are “easily distracted” and wander away from the group in constant pursuit of that next great shot. In all truth, they usually have spotted something the rest of us remained oblivious to.

For you photo buffs, I highly recommend their blog, [Field Guide](#). It includes not only numerous shots of natural beauty but also offers a fair amount of insight into the featured bird, plant, insect, etc. I especially enjoy the accompanying paragraph or two used to offer insight into the habits and life cycles. Before retiring, Linda was the reference librarian at Mount Mercy College. It shows. Unquestionably, the Scarths perform their due-diligence in researching subject material. In addition, tidbits of photographic technical issues are usually offered. Often the technique used to perfect each displayed image is revealed.

Perhaps, even more interesting is the cutting-edge approach that Robert & Linda Scarth have taken with their publishing endeavors. Considerable efforts have been made to embrace the Internet as an active companion to augment their book. A [thumbnail library](#) of each photo is available online. One merely has to click on each small image to garner more background information and personal observations about each photo.

Unquestionably, this book is so much more than just another book filled with pretty pictures. Quality, depth of background knowledge and technical prowess are evident. This book exudes a genuine quality that sensitively embraces our natural world of the small. I shall be using it as a Christmas gift to loved ones.



HORT CLINIC NEWS

Submitted by Bob Krush

- **CLIENTS:** During August 2009, the hort clinic assisted 197 clients. MGs handled 100 of the 197 clients (51 %). For April through August combined, MGs assisted 691 out of 1141 total clients (61%). Tree and insect questions continue to be the most popular, and many times overlap (i.e. insects on trees and trees on insects). Ok, maybe not the latter.
- **STAFFING:** Between August 16th and September 15th, MGs staffed the hort clinic on 25 of 42 available sessions or 60%. The MG staffing rate in the hort clinic for the year so far is as follows:
 - April 1-15 = 21/22 = 95.5%
 - April 16-May 15 = 42/44 = 95.5%
 - May 16- June 15 = 27/40 = 67.5%
 - June 16-July 15 = 38/42 = 90 %
 - July 16-August 15 = 32/44 = 73%
 - August 16-September 15 = 25/42 = 60%
 - Overall = 185/234 = 79%
- **FIRST-YEAR MGs:** Between August 16th and September 15th, first-year MG Tracy Tuftee completed her required hort clinic service hours. Congrats!! Fifteen of the 17 first-year MGs have now completed their hort clinic requirement. Special thanks to Michele Dane, Cheri Slavens, Brian Thomas, and Bill Wyatt for volunteering extra sessions in the hort clinic.
- **VETERAN MGs:** Many thanks to the following “veteran” active MGs who volunteered in the hort clinic between August 16th and September 15th:

Bob Cohee	Bob Krush	Wendi Laake	Vicki Liebbe	Arnold Olson
Ron Phillips	Jeff Sebille	Cindy Stolley	David Sunleaf	Jill Vogt

So far this year, the veteran MG participation rate in the hort clinic is approximately 19%, i.e. 26 out of 135 veteran MGs have volunteered.

- **LAWNS:** Those poor lawns – soaking rains through August and a September that has yet to yield a drop a rain. If I were a blade of grass never mind. We have received several calls in the hort clinic about rust on turfgrass. I have also noticed rust on several lawns in my neighborhood during my walks, including my own. Following is some information on lawn rust extracted from the ISU Extension Horticulture and Home Pest News.

Orange Lawns

By Paula Flynn, Extension Plant Pathologist, Iowa State University Extension

Have you noticed that your shoes have an orange tint after mowing? Weather conditions have been favorable for rust, a fungal disease that causes lawns to appear yellow or orange when viewed from a distance. The rust fungus produces powdery orange spores that are easily transferred from leaf blades to shoes, pant legs or mowers.

Rust tends to show up midsummer, especially when grass growth has been slowed by stresses such as drought, low fertility, close mowing or compaction. The rust fungus thrives when temperatures are moderate (68 to 85 degrees F) and leaves stay wet for extended periods. Long dew periods or night watering can create moisture conditions ideal for infection.

Initially, diseased plants show yellow spots on the leaves. With time, these spots enlarge and the fungus breaks through the outer leaf surface. By the time the powdery orange spores of the fungus are exposed, it's obvious how "rust" got its name.

Continued on page 6,

When rust is severe, lawns may be weak and thin, causing them to be more susceptible to environmental stresses such as winter injury. The rust fungi that affect turf usually don't survive the winter in Iowa. Most of the rust spores are carried north by winds during the growing season.

We can't change the weather to defeat rust. However, it is easy to change cultural practices that may predispose turf to rust. Keeping plants in good health also will help discourage visitation by numerous other unfriendly fungi that cause problems on turf.

- **Mowing** Avoid close mowing. Mowing below recommended heights depletes the grass of energy reserves, thins the lawn's canopy and encourages weeds. The best strategy is to mow frequently, but never remove more than one-third of the plant height. For example, during summer, bluegrass typically should be mowed at 3 to 3 1/2 inches. This means mowing when the grass reaches 4 1/2 inches in height. The rust fungus needs a living plant to survive. Regular mowing severs infected leaf tips from the plant, helping to reduce the amount of fungus present.
- **Watering** Avoid night watering. This increases the length of time grass blades remain wet. Many fungi, including the rust fungi, need to be wet for a certain period of time to infect grass blades. Early morning or afternoon irrigation ensures that plants dry by evening. Also, avoid frequent light watering. Light watering discourages downward root growth, predisposing turf to injury during dry periods. Poor root health also allows root nibblers, such as the summer patch fungus, to gain entry into the grass plants.
- **Soil fertility** Apply fertilizer according to soil test recommendations. When too much or too little fertilizer is applied, diseases can gain a foothold. Diseases such as rust and dollar spot tend to occur more on nutrient-deficient lawns than properly fertilized lawns. Excessive fertilization favors leaf growth at the expense of root growth, making the lawn susceptible to diseases such as summer patch, brown patch or Pythium blight. In general, spring and fall applications of a slow-release form of nitrogen are recommended.
- **Thatch** Thatch is the layer of dead grass material on the soil surface of a lawn. A moderate thatch layer is beneficial, acting as a protective mulch layer. Ideally, this layer should be no more than 1/2 inch in thickness. The thatch depth can be checked by cutting several small sections out of the lawn and measuring the layer's thickness. When thatch becomes excessive, the roots of grass plants tend to grow in the thatch layer rather than in the soil. When the thatch layer dries out during a drought, the root system becomes stressed. Excessive thatch can be removed mechanically. Using a core aeration machine to remove soil cores also provides better movement of water, air and nutrients into the soil.
- **Grass cultivars** Many grass cultivars possess resistance to certain diseases. It's a good idea to include one or more disease-resistant cultivars in a blend when seeding.
- **Fungicides** Fungicides can control many of the common diseases such as rust. These products, however, cannot replace good cultural practices that reduce stress to lawns. Effectiveness depends on the correct diagnosis of the problem and proper timing of applications. Most products need to be applied before the disease shows up or at the very first signs of disease. It's sometimes difficult to determine whether fungicide sprays are warranted. Rust, for example, usually doesn't reach damaging levels before the grass begins winter dormancy. Fungicides are not routinely used.

Adhering to good cultural practices is basic to reducing turf disease problems. Encouraging vigorous growing conditions helps plants to fend off problematic pathogens. Routine monitoring and scouting allow for early detection of any disease problems.

Meet Your Advisory Board Member: Marilyn McAllister

For those of you who do not know me.....



I am Marilyn McAllister, I am one-half of the Volunteer Coordinators team. The other half of the team is Peggy Dykes. We took over for Marilyn Buel this year when she decided to become "Just a Master Gardener" and enjoy helping on several new committees. Thank you Marilyn for everything.

I am also the Committee Chair for the Class Facilitators.

I am a single mother of three boys, Joey age 16, David age 14 and Sean age 11. I home school all three of them. I have also started working full time at Hy-Vee as a Pharmacy Tech. I am currently studying to get my Certification as a Pharmacy Tech. Somehow I seem to keep running out of hours in the day to do my yard work and the yard work for three other older woman that I help out.

I also enjoy taking my Golden Retriever "Rockie" on dog visits to retirement homes. Rockie is a certified Therapy dog and totally believes his only reason for existence is to be loved by anyone who meets him.

I would like to welcome all the new Master Garden interns and wish them a wonderful year. I would like to thank all the current Master Gardeners for all they do. Master Gardeners is a great group of people that I am glad to be a part of.

Did You Know????

Submitted by Ann DeSalvo

- The All-American Selections have been announced for 2010
 - Zinnia**—“Zahara Starlight Rose”, a bi-color rose and white flower
 - Snapdragon**—F1 “Twinnny Peach”, a double or butterfly flower form that does not have the jaws or joints to snap. Flower is soft shade of peach, yellow and light orange
 - Viola**—F1 “Endurio Sky Blue Martien”, clear blue flowers, a spreading/mounding plant
 - Gaillardia**—F1 “Mesa Yellow”, the first hybrid blanket flower, a neat mounded plant, good for containers.
- There were no vegetable winners for 2010.
- There were two vegetables at the Alaska State Fair that captured the Guinness World Record this year---a 127 pound cabbage and a 82.9 pound rutabaga. The growers said that both of these would be in the compost pile to help grow bigger ones next year. The previous cabbage record holder was 124 pounds grown in Wales, United Kingdom in 1989.



The Gardener's Dirt

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www.extension.iastate.edu/scott



Yard Clippings

Submitted by Christine Rice



*What is a garden? Goodness knows!
You've got a garden, I suppose:*

To one it is a piece of ground
For which some gravel must be found.
To some, those seeds that must be sown,
To some a lawn that must be mown.
To some a ton of cheddar rocks;
To some it means a window box;
To some, who dare not pick a flower—
A man, at eighteen pence an hour.
To some, it is a silly jest
About the latest garden pest;
To some, a haven where they find
Forgetfulness and peace of mind...

*What is a garden
Large or small
'Tis just a garden,
After all.*

—Reginald Arkell, "What Is A Garden," Green Fingers
(1935), page 90.

The Quotable Gardener, Editor Charles Elliot. New York:
The Lyons Press. 1999. Page 90.

Yes! In the poor man's garden grow,
Far more than herbs and flowers,
Kind thoughts, contentment, peace of mind,
And joy for weary hours.
—Mary Howitt, page 81

A Gardener's Bouquet of Quotations, Editor Maria
Polushkin Robbins. New Jersey: The Ecco Press. 1993.
Page 81.

The compost heap was behind the potting shed next to the
garden and the well. My father tended it lovingly, soaked
it with a hose and, when it was done to a turn, crumbly
and black, tossed it through a frame of hardware cloth to
sieve from it any stem or root that had escaped decay.
Then he fed it to his vegetables, grunting and cussing
behind a loud, cantankerous machine, the first Rototiller.
There was a gardener! —Sara Stein, *My Weeds*, 1988,
page 40.

A Gardener's Nosegay. Editor Jude Patterson. New
York: Barnes and Noble. 2003. Page 40.

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