



Horticulture Happenings

An Iowa State University Extension Newsletter for Mid-Iowa Gardeners

February 2005 Vol. 2 No. 2

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

Helping you become your best.

Comments and suggestions are always appreciated.

Attention Master Gardeners:

Article submission may be counted towards fulfilling Master Gardener community service volunteer hours!

Time to move south!??



During this snowy time, we gardeners are busy dreaming of spring and planning for the upcoming gardening year. I've been working on ideas for this newsletter and would like to get some feedback from you:

--What kind of information would you like to see?

--What type of gardening tips would you like?

--Any special type of recipes you'd like to see or types of foods?

---Is there a topic you wish was highlighted more - vegetable growing, conservation practices, native plantings, landscaping, low-cost gardening, organic gardening, etc.?

--Any additional resources you wish to see included?

There are two articles in this issue written by Mid-Iowa Master Gardener Interns. Why not catch their enthusiasm and try your hand at writing a horticultural article!

We are still in the process of starting up an organization of Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners in our four county area. Unfortunately our initial meeting was rescheduled due to inclement weather. (We gardeners simply do not enjoy fishtailing on icy roads, which also leads to deviant thoughts of immediately moving South where we could garden all year long.)

If you have some great ideas for Master Gardener volunteer service projects in your community, please contact your local county ISU Extension Office. Projects are needed for this enthusiastic group!

Think spring!

Yvonne Nilles
Extension Horticulturalist
Serving Hamilton, Humboldt, Webster & Wright counties

Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners to meet!!

The next meeting of the Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners will held on Tuesday, Feb. 1, at the Humboldt County Extension Office, 727 Sumner, in Humboldt at 6:30 p.m.

Juliana Bormann of Bode will present a program on "Healing Plants". Committee appointments & program planning will be held. Please plan to attend this important meeting to voice your views!



MID-IOWA AREA EVENTS CALENDAR

Feb 1....Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners Meeting--6:30 pm at Humboldt County Extension Office, 727 Sumner, Humboldt. "Healing Plants" by Juliana Bormann. Anyone who has completed Master Gardener training is invited to attend.

Feb 3....Fort Dodge Area Gardeners Webster Co. Ext. Off. – 7 pm Program: "New Cultivars for 2005", by Yvonne Nilles.

Feb 7...Hamilton Co. 4-H Horticulture 7 pm - WC Fire Station.

Feb 9...Town & Country Garden Club Design Workshop, WC Depot.

Feb 15...Fort Dodge Fed Garden Club Izaak Walton, 1:00 pm.

Feb 18-20...Home & Garden Show Des Moines, Vets Auditorium (At 4:00 pm on 2/19 is the program "Antique & Shrub Roses", by Yvonne Nilles:)

Feb 23...Town & Country Garden Club "Hamilton Co. Conservation Areas & Invasive Plants" by Brian Fankhauser. 1:00 pm at the Depot in Webster City.

Mar 12...Fort Dodge Garden Seminar ICCO, 9 am – Noon.

Mar 15-16..Shade Tree Shortcourse ISU Campus-Scheman Bldg \$110 – if registered by 2/20.

For further details on these events, call 515-832-9597

Submit your articles & events to:

Horticulture Happenings
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Webster City, IA 50595-1436

Phone: 515-832-9597

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Stalk, scape or stem ...



What's the difference?

Have you ever pondered over plant terminology? Ever been confused or misunderstood when talking with someone about plants? Such confrontations can be confusing for even horticultural experts. That is why it is so important to use the correct terms when conversing about plants.

Gardeners should be encouraged to familiarize themselves with and also use proper horticultural terminology. In order to be correctly understood, and to better educate the public the use of correct terminology is imperative when "talkin' gard-nin".

For all you "inquiring minds" out there, here are the definitions:

Stem: The main, upward-growing supporting axis of a plant; leaf-bearing and flower-bearing.

Scape: A bare, leafless flowering stem arising from ground level (e.g. daylily, daffodil, dandelion)

Stalk: Generally, a stiff, non-woody stem. May be branched or not, with one or more flowers. (e.g. tall bearded iris, asparagus, and rhubarb.)

To add to the confusion, sometimes terms are used interchangeably—such as can a scape be a stem, or is a stem always a stalk? (No – a tree trunk is a stem, but is not a stalk.)

Now, do we have you thoroughly confused?.....If so, contact your local ISU Extension Office for further information on this subject.



RECIPE CORNER



This Valentine's Day, try some of these brownies for your honey...

Honey Brownies

1 c. butter	½ c. flour
½ c. sugar	½ c. unsweetened
1/3 c. honey	cocoa powder
2 tsp. vanilla	½ tsp. salt
2 eggs	

Cream together butter & sugar. Blend in honey & vanilla. Add eggs, one at a time, beat well. Combine flour, cocoa & salt. Gradually add to creamed mixture. Pour into greased 8"x 8" pan. Bake 350° 25-30 min. Frost when cool.

Honey Frosting

3 Tbsp. butter	1 c. powdered sugar
3 Tbsp. cocoa	1 tsp. milk
¾ tsp. vanilla	2 Tbsp. honey
	½ c. chopped walnuts

Cream together butter & cocoa; add vanilla & sugar. Blend in milk & honey. Beat until spreading consistency. Frost brownies & sprinkle with nuts.

This recipe won 1st place in Honey Creations, Desserts, at the 2003 Iowa State Fair. – from *Recipes from the Iowa State Fair Cookbook*, 12th ed.

Flower of the Month –

Violet



February's flower is the violet. *Viola* is the botanical name for this plant.

According to legend, the violet is linked with love. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the fairy spirit Puck used violet juice to make "man or woman madly dote / Upon the next creature that it sees."

Of course, this practice is not ISU recommended, but why not try enticing your sweetheart with a gift from your local florist or garden center, along with a plate of honey brownies from the recipe above?

– from *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names*, by Dianna Wells.

Meet a Master Gardener...



Carol Main of Webster City in her greenhouse.

Carol Main

The featured Mid-Iowa Master Gardener for the month of February is Carol Main of Webster City. Carol completed her ISU Master Gardener training with the fall 1997 class, and finished her 40 hours of volunteer service in 1998.

Carol has been very active in volunteer work, and has given many horticultural programs for various service groups in the area. She also has assisted with the local Hamilton County 4-H Horticulture project group, helping with their community service activities and has given presentations for the project members.

Carol is also an active member of the Town & Country Garden Club of Webster City and the Iowa Lily Society. She has won many awards with her lilies at flower shows on both the local and state levels. Carol starts many of her plants and flowers from seed in her greenhouse, which is attached to her home.

Her husband Roger, who is very handy, and has even built a working watermill for their large pond and is an avid photographer of Carol's beautiful gardens, which have been featured many times in the local garden club's garden tour.

Thank you Carol, for all of your many hours of volunteer service over the years to the Master Gardener program!



Smeltzer House Toured by MG Interns

By Melissa Peterson,
Wright County MG Intern



On December 16th the Mid-Iowa Master Gardener Interns were treated to a special tour of the Smeltzer House located in Fort Dodge.

The house, built around the turn of the century by Ann Smeltzer's grandfather, was recently willed to the city of Fort Dodge, along with its contents, another house, three lots and approximately 2524 acres of farm land. It is in a state of transition and renovation which will take several years, many hundreds of thousands of dollars as well as many volunteers to complete.

It is a condition of the will that Trustees from: Blanden Art Museum; ICCG; Webster County Conservation; Fort Dodge Community Schools; Webster County Extension; Fort Museum; Fort Dodge Symphony; Fort Dodge Library; and a representative from Oak Hill Neighborhood be represented. Because of our

connection with Webster County Extension through CEED Jim Patten we were allowed to have this wonderful tour!

Our tour guide, Bill Griffel, gave us an in-depth look at this grand old house located in the Oak Hill Neighborhood. The house sits on a very large lot with many trees, and over grown bushes. One side of the lot has a rather large ravine running through it. At one time there were peony bushes that lined the long curving drive to the house as well as iris in the large yard. Ann's mother had designed a rose garden that was never brought to fruition but the plans are still in existence. What a challenge for Master Gardener Interns and Master Gardeners alike!



...**Smeltzer House**, from p. 3

There are many items of interest within the house that make it a very special place to visit. The open staircase, several pocket doors, the very large amount of personal memorabilia, as well as the architecture of the home itself make this a diamond in the rough! We even were privy to seeing the swords from both the Revolutionary and Civil War that belonged to Ann's grandfather and great, great, great grandfather.

While Ann was a life long member of the Fort Dodge community she was a widely traveled person whose interests were evident in her support of the arts,

conservation, music and other organizations and causes. She was a unique individual brought alive to us through the eyes of our tour guide and her long time friend Bill Griffel.

Her interest in the artist Matisse is evident in her attempts to reconstruct some of his famous works on the walls of the home's library! These personal touches are a part of the attraction of the home and the family that lived there.

The purpose of this trust is to restore and maintain the property, utilize the farmland and other property to produce income, emphasize conservation and to provide benefits and resources to the community.

To this goal several projects are being developed. In the Brushy Creek Watershed, three farms are being used as demonstration plots. There is a prairie being developed as well as an outdoor classroom. Music education and study circles are in the planning stages. Many

more projects are being investigated but the one most interesting to our group was the landscaping of the property that this grand house sits on.

Students from Iowa State University are determining the types of landscaping would have been most prevalent during the period in which the home was built. Then with volunteer assistance the property will be landscaped to that period.

The time that we walked past this home during our first class I thought it was a great house and it would be nice to have it landscaped but I had plenty that I could do in my local community. Now after this tour and getting to know more about what this Trust has to offer North Central Iowa, I want to be a part of the history that will make this a truly grand reproduction of life around the turn of the century. So I am hoping to don my garden glove, push up my sleeves and dig in the dirt at the Smeltzer House. I think Ann would approve!

Winter Care of Houseplants

By Dawn Durivage, Hamilton County Master Gardener Intern

Old man Winter is here to stay!! So what's a poor gardener suppose to do? Well for starters there are lots and lots of catalogs to go through. Then there's the planning and dreaming about what to do in their yards this upcoming season.



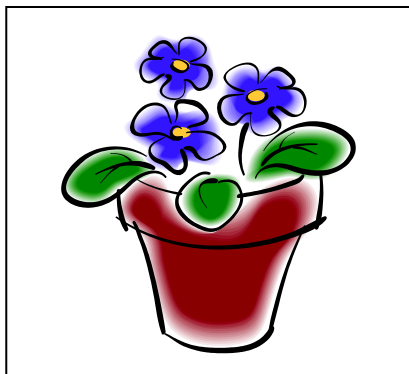
While these outside pursuits may be worthwhile, what about our inside "babies"? Winter can be damaging to houseplants if they are not properly cared for. Plants are a lot like us in that they don't like the dry air, lack of light and big temperature changes.

So what should you first know about the winter care of houseplants? You should find out what your plants specific needs are. The light and water requirements vary from plant to plant. By knowing more about your plants you can fine tune the care you give them. This can help you care for your plants year round.

Let's first talk about temperature. The majority of houseplants enjoy daytime temps around 65*-75* F and night time temps of 60*-65* F. You should try to maintain a constant average temperature of 65* F. You can do this by setting your thermostat for that temperature. Another way to stay consistent is by keeping your plants away from windows, doors, radiators, and air vents. There are some plants that can be damaged by sudden or extreme temperature changes.

We all know that light plays an essential role in the life of a plant. Winter brings us shorter days thus less sunlight. There are a couple of ways to remedy the poor lighting. First try moving your plants closer to the windows but make sure they don't touch the glass. Light coming from a window on the south side would be the best. If that lighting still isn't enough you could try fluorescent lights. Use one 40 watt warm bulb and one 40 watt cold bulb in your fixture. Place it at least six inches from your plants. This should be enough for most houseplants.

Having the right amount of humidity is also very important. The ideal humidity range is between 40% - 50% for most houseplants. If your home is too dry you can bring the humidity up by using a humidifier. Another way to boost the humidity around your plants is to group them all together. You could also place your plants on pebble-lined trays filled with water. There are some plants that really like more humidity than the average houseplant. For example the African violet is one of those picky types. You should make sure that they are not located next to radiators or hot air vents. This will draw away any moisture available to this plant. Also take care that there is not too much humidity, as there are some plants that prefer it dry, like cacti.



Humidity will influence the frequency in which you will have to water your plants. The two can go hand in hand with each other. If you have sufficient humidity in your home then you will water less frequently. During the winter your plants require less water anyway. On the other hand if there isn't enough humidity your plants soil will dry out faster. You should check the watering requirements of all your plants so you don't over or under water them. Water them thoroughly but don't let them set in water. This can cause root rot which can be deadly. Watch your plants for signs of too much or too little water. Dry, brown spotted leaves may indicate they need water. Yellow, droopy leaves can be a sign of over-watering.

The last two things to consider are fertilization and cleaning of your houseplants. Houseplants don't need to be fertilized during the winter months as they are in a resting state. You should only feed them during the spring and summer months. Start fertilizing them in March or April. Always carefully read the instructions on whatever product you may use.

Dusty plants have a slower growth rate not to mention they are not very eye-pleasing. Cleaning them can be done one of two ways. Houseplants with big leaves can be wiped down with a mild solution of dish soap and warm water. More delicate plants can be cleaned by rinsing them off in the shower using tepid water. Then just let them air dry.

Winter care of houseplants can be easy if you know what to watch for and regulate. Houseplants can become your inside garden to nurture and love during the cold months. If you would like to know more about taking care of your houseplants, listed below are just a few of the many publications, websites and extension pamphlets available. If you prefer, call the Hamilton Co. Extension office and talk with the trained staff available there.



Books:

The Complete Guide to Indoor Gardening
Jenny Raworth, Val Bradley
Hardcover 1998 \$20.97

Garden House: Bringing the Outdoors In
Victoria Wise, et al
Hardcover 1999 \$ 17.47

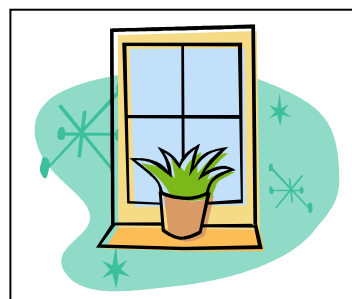
Websites:

Care of Plants in the Home
Robert J. Black and Richard
W. Henley, University of
Florida, Cooperative Extension
Service: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG031>

House Plants Forum:
<http://www.gardenweb.com/forums/houseplt/>

Iowa State University Publications

*Flowering Houseplants** PM 713b
*Foliage Houseplants** PM 713a
*Lighting and Houseplants** RG 402



Winter Activities for Gardeners

by Richard Jauron, Department of Horticulture
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

For many gardeners, winter seems to drag on, and on, and on. Fortunately, there are a number of enjoyable activities to help pass the time.

Visit a Conservatory. A vacation in Florida, Arizona or other warm weather location is a great way to beat the winter blues. If a vacation isn't possible, don't despair. It's still possible to enjoy a tropical reprieve by visiting a local conservatory or greenhouse.

Two green oases in central Iowa are Reiman Gardens and the Des Moines Botanical Center. Reiman Gardens is located on the Iowa State University campus in Ames and features a conservatory and butterfly house. The 5,000 square foot conservatory is filled with tropical plants, a waterfall, and seasonal plant displays that change several times a year. The featured attraction from January 4 to March 5, 2005 is over 500 orchids. The 2,500 square foot Christina Reiman Butterfly Wing contains a lush, indoor garden and hundreds of native and exotic butterflies. Visit www.reimangardens.iastate.edu for additional information.

Another great central Iowa attraction is the Des Moines Botanical Center. (www.desmoinesbotanicalcenter.com). Located on the east bank of the Des Moines River near downtown Des Moines, the Plexiglas dome of the botanical center is 80 feet tall and 150 feet wide. The dome is home to hundreds of exotic plants from around the world. The plants share their indoor home with fish, turtles, and frogs.

In eastern Iowa, gardeners can enjoy a stroll in the conservatory at Vander Veer Botanical Park in Davenport. The conservatory contains tropical plants and several seasonal plant displays. Another attraction in the Quad City area is the Quad City Botanical Center in Rock Island, Illinois. The 6,400 square foot conservatory contains hundreds of tropical plants, a 14-foot waterfall, and reflecting pools.

Leaf Through Garden Catalogs and Books. Another enjoyable winter activity is to leaf through garden catalogs. Many contain colorful plant photographs. Some carry specific merchandise, such as seeds, perennials, roses, or fruits. Others carry a wide variety of products.

Also, visit a bookstore or public library and browse through some of their gardening books. Excellent reference books for home gardeners include "Growing Perennials in Cold Climates" by Mike Heger and John Whitman; "Growing Shrubs and Small Trees in Cold Climates" by Nancy Rose, Don Selinger, and John Whitman; "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants" by Michael Dirr; "Herbaceous Perennial Plants" by Allan Armitage, and many others.

With catalogs and books in hand, winter is the perfect time to design that new perennial bed, vegetable garden, or select new trees and shrubs for the home landscape.

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