GardenAtoZ.com presents:

What's Coming Up: This week's garden news

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila help you grow Issue #203, September 25, 2013

In this Ensemble What's Coming Up pdf*

Green thumb answer to violets in lawn Early cuts are ruthless, harmless, pretty Banking on caterpillars for next year Brake lights shine on white blooming tree Roses need daily care, no misses allowed Summer of flood and fortune Pages 1, 14-15

Pages 2-4 Pages 5-6 Pages 7-10 Pages 10-11 Pages 12-13

Below, left: What fun to watch a tiger swallowtail nectar on a flower!

Yet once we look, it's a slippery slope to becoming very involved with these winged works of art. It's hard to imagine anything else that can draw a person so deeply into the garden than delving into the life cycle of a butterfly: Where is it before we see it on our butterfly bush? What happens to it at the end of a year? How can we attract more to our garden?

This week, we enjoy and learn from a reader's attachment to black swallowtail caterpillars. Page

I'm sorry... I was delayed.

- The wizard Gandalf, from the movie Fellowship of the Ring -

Gandalf said it so well, to such good purpose, we must re-use the line.

The tale's too long** for this day. Since issue #202 months ago, we've come through ice, flood, injury, and high tech hurdles to regain this page. We're very sorry to have been out of touch and determined to get back in step.

For more detail or to help us in our recovery, read About Us: Summer of flood and fortune.

Now, onward! In this issue, stay on top of the garden in its second most vigorous growth spurt. (In fall, yes. You saw the top growth in spring. Now the garden's nether regions are growing like sixty.) Read on to more effectively oust weeds, clean up perennials, foster caterpillars, invigorate roses and add late color to your landscape.

To read this issue with live links and additional photos

Each of this issue's articles is on our site, with current links, often with additional or larger photos.

To read these articles on line, select What's Coming Up #203 at http://www.gardenatoz.com/what%27s-up!/ensemble-weekly-editions/

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**Oh, argh! We compose these articles at our dsks, then post them at GardenAtoZ where you-all can read them. This time when we tried to post, the website snapped shut. We could not add these articles and now the site's not even accessible! We're working on that now and will post these articles there soon. Until then, thank heavens for this pdf option.

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9/28/13 in Lexington, MI, *The Art of Fall Garden Clean-up* 10/5/13 in Independence, Ohio, *Simplify Your Garden* 10/5/13 in Flint, Michigan, *Trees and Shrubs for Small Spaces* 10/8/13 in Pontiac, Michigan, *Shade Gardens* SOLD OUT 10/15/13 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, *Fall Color* 10/16/13 Fenton, Michigan, *Color Even in Small Spaces* 10/19 & 10/20/13 Garden By Janet & Steven, Berkley, MI, *Design, plant: Rain gardens and pet friendly landscapes* 10/22/13 Trenton, Michigan, Topic to be announced

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Main features

Green thumb answer to violets in lawn



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We keep an eye on these flowers so we can focus on your hot topics as we write.

As we worked in a client's garden this week, a neighbor popped over to ask:

These violets in the lawn. Is there some kind of medicine we can use to get rid of them? No matter what we do they keep coming back!

You can dig them out or kill violets with a weed killer. If you choose to use herbicide, do it early in the growing season. Use a broad leaf weed killer that lists violets on its label (at this writing, that's products containing trichlopyr, or the combination of herbicides called Trimec) or a non-selective herbicide that does not preclude follow-up planting or seeding (active ingredient glyphosate as in Roundup products). Understand that the broad leaf

weed killer will probably be only partially successful and glyphosate will kill both weeds and grass.

Pesticides as medicine?

It's an apt metaphor.

- Antibiotics kill microbes, herbicides and insecticides kill plants and six-legged pests.
- We know there are always side effects from medication, inform ourselves and try to choose a chemical that will not also injure the patient.
- We decide that the assistance a medicine can give us is worth the cost of any collateral damage we've learned there may be.
- We resort to medicine only after doing what we can to strengthen the patient's or the plant's own immune system through environmental improvement, diet change, etc.

half the battle. Those violets got in because the lawn was weak so there were open spaces where seeds could sprout, yet you've done nothing to improve the lawn's density and thereby break the weed cycle.

Where turf is thick and tall, most weeds have a tough time getting started or spreading. So whenever you address a

However, killing the plants currently bugging you is not even

Where turf is thick and tall, most weeds have a tough time getting started or spreading. So whenever you address a weedy lawn, determine the environmental condition that's limiting the turf's growth and correct it. Aerate to loosen compaction, prune overhanging limbs to increase sunlight or switch to more shade tolerant grass seed, mow higher so grass blades can cast the shade that inhibits weed seed germination, then water and fertilize more regularly.

Timing is key to oust pesty violets

In *fall*, violets may be most susceptible to broad leaf weed killer (chemicals that don't kill lawn), although you probably won't see the results until spring. In spring, you may have more success with a non-selective herbicide (glyphosate).

Left: Common blue violet (Viola sororia, a.k.a. V. papilionacea) is native all over eastern North America, adapting well to most open areas in sun or shade. Lookalike marsh blue violet (Viola cucullata) is a lover of damp places that's also native to eastern North America. These aren't the only two violet species but these two alone are

capable and ready to occupy any mowed place where lawn grass has open spaces because of shade, compaction or dampness.



Left: Most violets form a starch-rich crown, like a mini-iris. Pull off only the top or leave even a piece of the crown, and the plant's only diminished, not gone. Better to insert a fork, loosen the area and then pull. Then the soil has been aerated as well as weeded.



I hate it when they kill the violets.- Virginia Smith -



Left: Weeds had no trouble sprouting in the small gaps between grass plants in this weak lawn. Now there is a big bare spot created by killing or digging a violet, and the soil there is loaded with violet seeds. Unless you make this whole area more agreeable to bluegrass or fescue, and then cover it with grass seed, your weed killing will only net you a new crop of violets.

Below: Violets are particularly sneaky weeds. In spring you probably recognize that they have just bloomed, have seed pods, and know not to leave the plants lying around to drop those seeds. In fall, these cunning plants develop "closed flowers" -- blooms that never open but do produce seeds. See the pods at ground level, and the developing seed within? Don't leave those laying about, either!



Weed: What's in a name?

Gardening Law #10: A weed is simply a plant growing where you don't want it.

Corollary 10A: Even the finest garden plant is a weed if it puts itself where it's not wanted!

Corollary 10B: If you want it, it's not a weed!

Left: Well into her 8th decade of gardening, our mentor Virginia Smith endorsed this, saying:

"Lower your standards. Don't be such a perfectionist. There are places where what we cultivate are weeds, and vice versa. Dandelions are very pretty. I'm not going to worry about that creeping buttercup. I realized I've been fighting that weed for something like 50 years and recently I realized it's very pretty.

I hate it when they kill the violets in my lawn with the stuff they put on. I love them... the flower, the leaf. "They're very pretty."

This week in our gardens

What we ourselves have been up to in our own and others' gardens.

Early cuts are ruthless, harmless, pretty

I notice you cut down the irises already. Is that okay? - S.J. -

Perfectly okay. Irises, peonies, coneflowers, daylilies, we're cutting at will, now. Some for their health, most for our visual pleasure.

Right: Do you miss the whole peony (A) and faded bear's breeches stalks and leaves (B) that we cut from this scene? We don't, and we do like to be able to see the final bonus bloom from the bear's breeches.

Some perennials, including peonies and iris, are better cut early than late. When we remove iris foliage from the bed after early September, we're also fending off next year's pests by removing iris borer eggs laid on those leaves. We cut peonies early to stay ahead of botrytis, a leaf disfiguring, flower bud killing disease. By October what were just purple-brown blotches on the leaves and stalks at Labor Day may have traveled down the stem and infected the crown, ready to start trouble in the new year.

Pest trouble aside, we don't cut gardens down all at once in late fall. It's too depressing to go from merry fullness to moonscape in one day. Instead, we cut a bit at a time throughout fall. We're not out to scalp anything, just take away all the tall stems and debris. Perennials that develop a basal rosette for winter keep that nice looking new foliage. Others produce





some new growth after the cut, which is not a loss to the plant and can even refresh a late fall scene.

We've been doing this ruthless cutting for 30 years without ill effect, since it occurred to us that Ma Nature could start cutting things down any time in our region -- killing frost can come in September. That means hardy plants must be capable of early check out. And why not? They've had a 5 month growing season, and that's plenty.

Ma Nature can start cutting things down now in our region -- killing frost can come in September. So we have no qualms about cutting now. - Janet -

Below: If a perennial's no longer attractive in fall -- brown or just blah -- we take it out of the picture. Since we no longer admired this Russian sage (A, Perovskia atriplicifolia), we don't miss it after the cut. (About "B" - we cut down those daylilies six weeks ago when they were tatty and brown. We like them better with new foliage.)





Below: Places like this bearded iris patch in the last half of September are where Steven's photographer's motto applies perfectly. "If it's not contributing to the scene, it must be detracting."





Exceptions to the early cut

We do make exceptions. We ask ourselves before we cut:

- Did we pick this plant and place it so its seedpods and stems would make a nice winter scene?
- If we take this out will any still-blooming neighbor fall down or look lonely? (There's no sense leaving fall stars prone or forlorn. In the photo above we considered cutting out the hosta, too, but the Nerine at far left has yet to bloom and can stand the company.)
- Did we grow this for seeds for the birds? (If appearances require we cut them, then we bunch the stems and hang them where the birds can still get them.)
- Is this part of a butterfly sanctuary? The stalks all around butterfly host plants may have overwintering caterpillars and chrysalises. (If we must cut these, we bundle them loosely, prop the sheaves out of sight, then clear them away *late* the next spring.)
- Is this a marginally hardy plant, one to be babied? If so, it may derive a bit of extra protection from its old stems. (However, we've mostly given up that goofy game. Now, if it's not reliable over winter we say, "to heck with you.")

Tip cuttings department

Expanding on what's growing on in the Forum

Banking on caterpillars for next year



If they do hatch, should I plant the fennel in a container and bring it in and out of my garage when the nights are cold, or should I just plant the fennel in the ground and let nature take its course?

hatch, or is it too late in the year?

I also have a couple of small black swallowtail caterpillars on my original fennel plant (they are about 10 days old). I haven't been able to find out if small caterpillars can survive really cold nights. Once again I'm not sure whether I should bring the little guys in at night or just leave them out on the fennel plants and let nature take its course.

Any help would be greatly appreciated. There could be quite a few caterpillar lives depending on me, and I'm not quite sure I'm ready for all this responsibility. - G. -

The end of the growing season is not The End for insects, although for many it requires a change in state. Some butterfly species hunker down in plant debris to weather winter as a caterpillar (you've probably seen wooly bear moth caterpillars do this), some ride it out as eggs (you can reduce a gypsy moth or tent caterpillar problem by destroying the egg masses in fall). A few butterflies and moths winter as adults (big, dark blue and brown mourning cloaks hole up in loose tree bark to fly the next spring as the north's earliest big, bold butterfly). Some such as the monarch migrate south. Eastern black swallowtails use still another strategy, waiting out the frozen months as pupae in their chrysalises.

It's possible for late season black swallowtail eggs to progress through caterpillar-ness to their overwintering state, provided they have enough warm days. As caterpillars they can survive cool nights -- but not freezing. By day they



Above: It's remarkably easy to have the thrill of fostering a caterpillar and seeing it emerge as a butterfly or moth. The black swallowtail on page 7 made its debut as a butterfly in our house.

Most important is knowing what the caterpillar can eat. Dill (above) is a host plant for eastern black swallowtail.

This species can also eat dill relatives including fennel (previous page), parsley, carrot, rue and queen Anne's lace. We've raised many, keeping a caterpillar on host plant stems in a vase in our kitchen. When one of our pet caterpillars finished growing, it would migrate to the twigs we offered, pupate within its chrysalis, and rejoin us after about 12 days.

need to eat and metabolize what they ingest to develop from egg to a size large enough to pupate. That requires temperatures above about 55 degrees F for a couple hundred hours -- about 18 daytimes in summer when it's warm, or perhaps four weeks in fall. Your caterpillars might beat the 18-day minimum if you raise them in a warm house with grow lights on 24-7.

Always some eggs lost...

Adult butterflies don't know how many warm days are left. They just keep laying until the frost kills them. So there are always some eggs and caterpillars that don't make it.

...but cold hardy chrysalises endure
In the chrysalis these insects are quite cold
hardy. However, the chrysalis is subject to
physical damage such as crushing and also
predation (birds, mice). Thus to support
this species through winter, be less hasty
about cutting everything down in fall and
tolerate some winter mess. On those
"messy" plant stems are next year's first
butterflies.

May be kept at the back of the 'fridge

You've already given your neighborhood black swallowtails a boost. Your guardianship of the first ten gave helped them beat the odds -- infant mortality's pretty high for insects! That boosted the local population going into winter. However, if you're keen to go above and beyond you can bring the host plants indoors to let this last brood keep eating, ride herd on them as they progress to pupae (they're wanderers), and finally cool those

chrysalises down to 40F. Store them in the refrigerator and set them into the garden in April, or put them outdoors in a place mice or birds may not find them.



generation of eastern black

swallowtail caterpillars overwinters in chrysalises. Here's one we spotted in a shrub near some of their larval food plants (in our case, mostly annual dill and perennial rue and fennel -- Anethum graveolens, Ruta graveolens and Foeniculum vulgare). We also find chrysalises on ornamental grasses and sturdy perennial stalks.

Right: Every year we learn new caterpillars. This year, it's this neighbor moth caterpillar.

Resources to learn by

We use a number of books to find information like this. Gaps are common --for instance, certain some species' listings may lack larval food plants or overwintering strategies. We often check several to piece together the whole story. The Audubon Society Guide to Eastern North American Butterflies has good life cycle info, usually including overwintering stage.

Another great resource is Brenda Dziedzic of Garden City, founder of the Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association. brendad1@ameritech.net www.sembabutterfly.com. Her book, Learn About Butterflies in the Garden, is a marvelously illustrated one-stop resource. You can buy a copy online* or from Brenda herself. She's acquired a mind-blowing amount of experience about butterflies including raising them, keeping the chrysalises and overwintering caterpillars overwinter, and she loves to share.

*http://butterfliesinthegarden.com/PurchaseBook.aspx





The **45 mph garden** What's catching drivers' eyes this week

Brake lights shine on white-blooming tree

Trees loaded with big white blooms are not common in late summer and early fall, so it's no surprise to see brake lights flash as cars pass these Japanese angelica trees (*Aralia elata*).

Right and below: Japanese angelica trees in bloom in September.



We had never seen a neighbor moth caterpillar until this year. Like many people, we want to have more butterflies. So we welcome them one species at a time, as we are doing with this new find, "the neighbor:"

- First we identify the species. In this case, *Peterson's Guide to Eastern North American Caterpillars* helped us identify it as neighbor moth, *Haploa contigua*. Its adult form is small, boldly patterned, white and black.
- Second, we learn its larval food (host plants; what its caterpillars eat). Neighbor eats many different plants, but probably prefers aster family.
- Third, we protect its habitat, including banning all pesticide use in the area and preserving the winter habitat.

So far we have done this for more than a dozen butterfly and moth species in our own yard. We hope to keep adding more all our lives.

Left: Hard to imagine it of this soft, 2-inch critter, the neighbor moth caterpillar, yet it will overwinter in this form, then pupate in spring.



GardenAtoZ.com presents What's Up 201 page 10



There are several beautiful but hard to find variegated forms of angelica tree. 'Variegata' and 'Silver Umbrella' have white edges on each leaf. (The tree pictured above is *Aralia elata* 'Variegata'.) 'Aureovariegata' leaves have a creamy yellow margin. All are a bit smaller than the species, 15' rather than 20'+. These varieties are usually grafted, in which case the rootstock may be the less hardy (zone 5), thorny relative known as devil's walking stick (A. spinosa). So don't allow suckers to persist and do watch out for thorns as you grasp them to pull them out.

The angelica tree's leaf is a big, compound affair so the structure is quite open after the tree drops all the leaflets and the rachis that run between leaflets. We like it as a coarse sculpture in winter.

Stumper

Where we laugh together to salve problems that have no solution

Roses need daily care, no misses allowed Whyizzit that roses are so vicious, even to we who wait on them hand and foot?

So many insects and fungi aim to make a meal of roses that the best way to grow this queen of flowers is to visit the shrub daily, look it over, squish the 6 legged rose eaters and pluck any infected leaves.



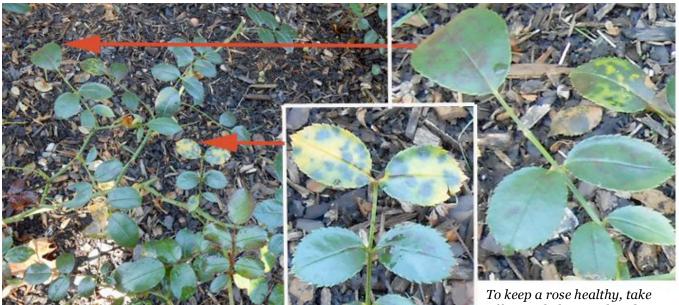
Left: Do stay the course, however, right to the last day of the year. Don't let any of these black-spot-infected leaves remain in the garden.

That way the total spore count in the area will be less. Flowers are weak creatures. They are naive. They reassure

themselves as best they can. They believe that their thorns are terrible weapons.

- The Little Prince, Antoine de Saint Exupery -

The rose lives up to its beliefs. -Janet -



In the year after you plucked faithfully, daily, the rose will thank you with more foliage and flowers. Both this 'Red Cascade' mini-rose (left) and the Carefree shrubs roses (right) are resistant to black spot, but that doesn't mean they are immune. Even they are prettier and more floriferous after infected leaves have been taken away.

To keep a rose healthy, take off not only leaves already fading to yellow but any that show signs of infection, even mild symptoms. Sometimes in fall when dewy mornings give fungus a boost, this can mean the shrub should be plucked leafless. Never fear, even its stems are photosynthesizing.



GardenAtoZ.com presents What's Up 201 page 13

About Us

Things about Janet & Steven to help you understand our garden advice and AtoZ's mission

Growing through floods, knee injuries, technical tangles

Summer of silence

We missed a whole season between issue #202 and #203. It's the first time in almost 30 years we've even missed a weekly deadline, let alone the whole summer's worth. We are very sorry! Here's what happened.

Floods

Enough water, enough time, and even rock disintegrates. We managed to cope, move on, and even reach out to organize the neighborhood recovery after three previous floods. This time... Maybe it's being older, maybe it's because a 9 year reprieve lulled us into thinking that our hard work with the township and county drain commission had been successful. Whatever the reason, when a 2-foot deep river raced into our yard, peeling asphalt slabs from the driveway, carrying iron garden tools 1,000 yards downstream over 4-foot fences, and pushing once more into our home to soak and muddy everything, we thought we could handle it but we're still shoring ourselves up 3 months later.

We did not choose to live in a flood zone. The floods came to us after 45 years dry, when previously absorbent wet meadows above us were transformed into 100 acres of paved, roofed or hard packed construction. In the 2001 flood we didn't know what the heck was going on. In 2002's soaking we patched the big picture together and aimed for longer range fixes. After the 2004 flood when FEMA declared us eligible for flood insurance we decided that paying annually "in case" was not the way to go. Even if that insurance replaced belongings (it doesn't), even if it could clone us to do the clean up while also keeping our business afloat (dream on!), it was not an answer for us. We chose instead to aim our resources at correcting the basic problem -- to work to *end* our neighborhood's flooding.

Oh, argh, continued from page 1:

As we began to post the pieces of this issue at GardenAtoZ, the website developed a mysterious snafu. We can't post. You can't access the site.

We did not wish to feature this lament as general reading in the pdf. Yet people have been asking, 'Where have you been?" So here it is, but without its photos and spin-offs such as the list of out of print flood-ruined reference books we hope you may be able to help replace. Photos et al would overload this pdf to the point that it would be an undeliverablly large file.

For more than this, check GardenAtoZ.com next week for the full article.

Despite this fourth, harder hit, we remain committed to that decision. As soon as we can muster the energy we'll be back at the township and county, and maybe beyond, to stop this and to develop more rational land use policies.

Friends

Some of you who heard about this or recognized our neighborhood on news reports have asked, "Why didn't you call?! We'd have helped!" We realize that, appreciate you and we're so sorry to upset you by not asking. In a small house that's also an office, when Ma Nature follows flood with 9 days of rain and high humidity so outdoors is not available as drying space, there is no extra room for crew. Also, every bit of muddy material must be assessed by one of us to determine if it can be pitched or should go to the precious little bit of space available to spread things to dry. In addition, one of us admits to some obsession about cleaning and sterilizing in this awful circumstance, so that she finds it impossible to trust even the dearest friend or hardest working sibling to do what we did.

Knees

Yet we can't explain why we who crawl at work every day and wear knee pads religiously, did not do so while scrubbing on tile for nine days. The injury Steven sustained while originally installing all that tile in place of carpet, recurred. Janet came up with a new twist. We'll heal, but being hobbled in this interim has slowed us in doing our jobs -- that work that must be done to pay for this labor of love, GardenAtoZ.com

Hackers, or "It's not personal, just business."

We are told that Internet hackers have this perspective, as in *The Godfather*. That is, they do not target us, per se. They have simply programmed their computers to break into and get what's available from any site they can. We fended off an April attack and had just restored order when another hit came in July. It's expensive and time consuming. More important, it's depressing work we didn't need *this* summer. Wish we could've dodged that bullet.

Heads spinning yet still on straight

We whine, yet we are well aware and so grateful -- yes really -- that our lot was not so bad. We did not sit on our roof and wait for a helicopter. We did not lose a limb. We do work for ourselves so couldn't be fired for missing all those clean-up days. Our family, our friends, our work in a field we love, are all so wonderful that we've laughed as much as we've cried this summer.

Thus we feel like wimps to have missed so many deadlines to you. On the heels of the flood we gave a week to a family member laid low by a skull fracture. We used 3 hours that might have been just enough to compose and send some sort of explanation to you-all, to go take emergency possession of a mysteriously ailing friend's pet. And when the kids who've been inhabiting our garden and expanding our website's coverage needed help coping with their own flood experiences, we did lead them in distractions such as hunting tadpoles to restock the floodtide losses and reassure them of normality via a trip to the county fair.

Creativity temporarily sidelined

While we worked in gardens this summer we did think of you. For you, for us all, we investigated and recorded. We just could not muster the creativity or patch together enough hours to compose it and send it out. So often in our 200-issue run we gave up a night's sleep to write, find photos or to manage the mailing. This summer, when we tried we fell asleep on the keyboard.

So we'll save all that we captured this summer until next year. Because there's a whole caboodle of autumn topics to send out to you. Starting now.

Calls and emails

As for email and calls, we're slowly catching up. Messages from most of summer met the same fate as papers in our to-be-filed stack -- always at its deepest in June, having accumulated all during spring's crazy time. They were buried under all the stuff we had to stack in haste to empty cabinets and shelves. We had no choice but to do that because we had to flip all the furniture to clean and dry it. Some of our layered heaps are still waiting to be interpreted and the contents put back into place.

Your thoughts and questions are vital to our educational goals. They teach us as they point us to relevant issues. Often, you also connect the dots between issues we wouldn't otherwise recognize. So if you emailed, mailed or called us this summer please pardon our delay. If your topic's still urgent, please re-send it/call again now, because we're catching up starting from the current messages and going backward.

Please help if you can

We need Sponsorships more than ever. The hosting bill's coming due, our pocket's way more than empty, and we're going to have to hire some help to keep up while catching up. As an example, the mail list we worked so hard and you helped to streamline needs updates even when used weekly; at 90 days stale it's going to generate a lot of returned mail and restoration work.

This issue's article on rose care was Sponsored by

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