

## What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich answers  
your growing concerns  
Issue 74, January 2, 2010

### The best of what came up this year, part two of two:

No cover like snow cover, page 2  
Best name for pretty poppy: Shh!, page 3  
Long blooming *Centranthus* & *Gaura*, page 4  
When orchids stoop to sneakiness, page 5  
Being aware of prickly pear, page 6  
As ever, blue tops list of new recruits, page 7  
Great Lady turns arms onus into bonus, pg. 8  
Tricolor beech and multi-color fall, pages 8-9  
Fabulous, no-doughboy fall, page 9  
On reflection, mirror made a garden, page 10  
Kudos to fresh, sense-able views, pages 11-12  
Rose goes on, spots and all, page 13  
Recreating an historic garden, page 14  
Prank prairie, neighborhood history, pp. 14-15  
Frog pond makes room for one more, page 16  
Grins for a single resolution, page 16  
Who's Janet? How do I contact her? Page 16  
Invite Janet & friends to your town, page 17  
Where to catch Janet in-person, pages 17-18  
*New:* Garden images for your wall, page 18  
Six years of Janet's advice on one CD, page 19

#### Dear readers,

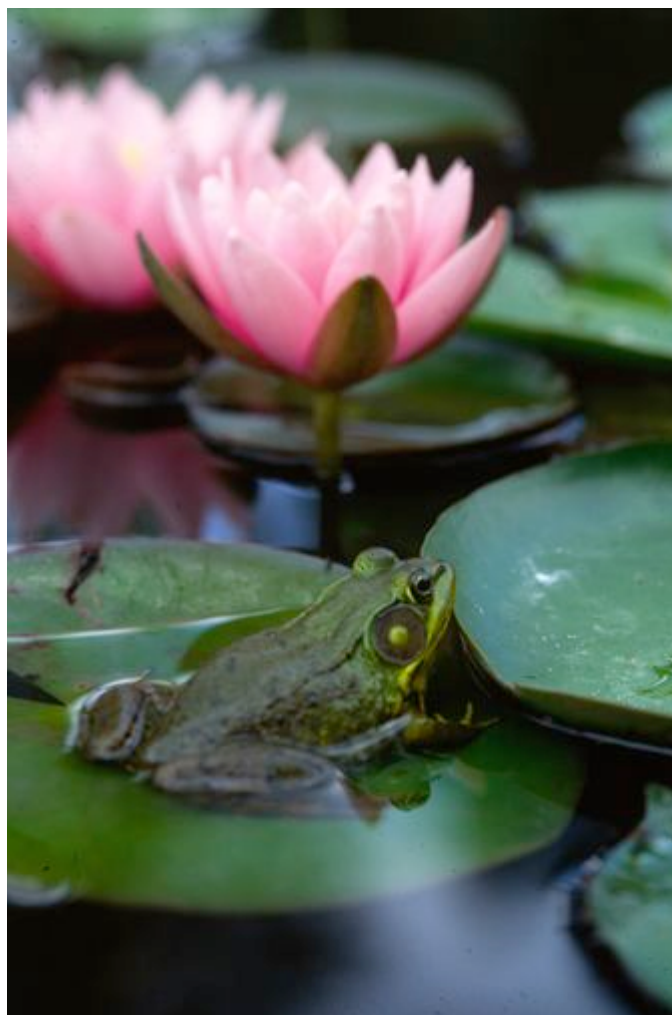
I asked you, "What was the best plant, situation or idea that came up in your garden this year?" All views count! In my last issue, you saw the first half of the answers. Here's part two. - Janet

**And the best-laid plans are often confounded  
by plants imbued with such uncontrollable  
wanderlust that they have no intention of  
staying where you put them...**

- Helen Dillon, in *Garden Artistry* -

**Another remnant of childhood  
to which I confess is a yen for plants  
that serious gardeners hold in low account,  
especially gaudy ones that  
lack a shred of pretence to modesty...**

- Allen Lacy, in *The Gardener's Eye* -



Frufru the frog illustrates Steven's "best" on page 16, and also features in his offer to decorate your walls -- page 18.

Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

#### Reminder: Your comments requested:

In this issue as in #73, I'm holding some things back so you can tell me if they're needed.

I'm suspending my practice of maneuvering key words within the text and highlighting them in a different color. I imagined this aided speed readers. It's been called to my attention that it is also a drain on ink supplies for readers who print this newsletter.

Another technique I have used is similarly implicated -- that of giving different articles within the newsletter different background colors. I thought these would stand out on PDF thumbnail pages to help you decide where to hop in to sample the next item.

I will reinstate these features in issue #75 pending your comments on comparative readability.

## Oh the weather outside is frightful -- Not!

"Let it snow!" Cold-hardy plants show the good results all through the growing season, if they were blanketed during the off-season in a deep, airy, enduring snow layer. This year, many people made the connection between free-snowing winter and great growing season, and wrote to give snow their vote.

It makes me glad to associate with you who don't rush your life away by saying, "I wish it was (some other season or day)." You're enjoying every day for all it's worth, even in winter!

**The Golden Age  
was never the present Age**

- Benjamin Franklin,  
in *Poor Richard's Almanack* for 1750 -



### Fighting ice with snow: Winter soil temperature under mulch

From a University of Vermont study:

When snow accumulated early in the winter and remained at a depth of 10 inches or more, soil temperatures remained above freezing at all depths throughout winter.

From a Michigan State University wintertime soil temperature study:

"...soils froze to depths greater than (7 inches) on cultivated sites, which were windswept and barren of snow for most of the winter... Sites insulated by forest cover and leaf litter, as well as thin but persistent snowpacks, froze to depths of only (an inch or less); temperatures at (7 inches) hovered near (34-35°F) for most of the winter."



Snow not only insulates but allows the subtle colors of branch and seed pod to shine (above). Also, it's a medium a snow-suited artist can use to spread a bit of cheer (left). (There was no foul, environmentally speaking: It's just food coloring and watered applied with a pump spray bottle.)  
Photos ©2009 Steven Nikkila



## Pretty poppy: Don't name it, just admire it!

Janet: An herb friend gave me some seeds for this mystery double pink poppy. Well, I just can't find out anything about it, even the name.

I was told to sprinkle the seeds on the ground in the fall after flowering and they'll appear next season, and they do. The underside is purple and I just love it. - Bon -

Call it bread poppy, Bon, since its seeds are used on baked goods. Or say oil poppy (the seeds are pressed for salad oil). Perhaps you'll call it peony-flowered poppy as some catalogs do. Just don't be too free in tossing around its other name -- opium poppy.

It's illegal to own anything except the seeds of this plant. However, it's been grown as an ornamental for so long in just the way you describe, that it's likely there's a law-breaking gardener in most neighborhoods in the U.S.

### Pretty potent poppy

- Opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) has been used as a sedative and pain reliever since prehistoric times.
- Corn poppy (*P. rhoeas*), the annual red flower immortalized "In Flanders Fields" has medicinal use, also. It yields a mild sedative.
- Poppy seed pods are distinctive, important characteristics in telling one species from another.
- Although other parts of the opium poppy yield narcotic substances, the seeds do not. However, those who eat poppy seeds may for several days show a false positive if tested for opiates.
- Oriental poppy seeds are edible, too, although not so tasty as bread poppy seeds.



If you're growing the poppy captured in this photo (©2009 by reader Bon), you aren't alone in breaking the law. Thomas Jefferson grew white opium poppies as ornamental plants and the practice continued at Monticello into the 1980's.

**"My land, I've never seen such a to-do over a bunch of flowers."  
- Mrs. Ouida Parsons of Tecumseh, Oklahoma, quoted in National Geographic, Feb. 1985,  
after police pulled and burned the poppies in her garden -**

## Be *Gaura*, it's Jupiter's beard, blooming still!

Two delightful plants in my garden bloomed all summer and right into November. One is a Jupiter's Beard, *Centranthus ruber*, which has deep pink blossoms; the other, and my favorite, is *Gaura Lindheimeri*. I have several plants, whose delicate white floating blossoms enhance almost any other plant growing near them. – Fran Knorr –

Both are perfect plants for the cottage garden, Fran, where there are always bits of open ground for short lived, self-sowing perennials to start over every few years. Both prefer very well drained, lean (low nitrogen) soil. In richer soil they tend to flop rather than stand and they bloom less well and less long than they could -- only the youngest plants are likely to bloom on and on.

Some people may scoff at my description of *Gaura* and *Centranthus*\* as "short lived." Where these species find perfect soil conditions, individual plants can remain healthy and free-blooming for a long time.

\*Copy this URL to your browser to see a glorious *Centranthus*: [wsu.edu/~lohr/wcl/Centranthus.jpg](http://wsu.edu/~lohr/wcl/Centranthus.jpg)

### *Centranthus* in bloom: Heavenly or heavy scent?

*Centranthus*, like its relative *Valeriana officinalis* or garden heliotrope, is very fragrant. However, that's a misleading term: fragrant. This aroma may be pleasant from a distance or when individual flowers are young, but sickly sweet or reminiscent of decomposition at close range or as flowers age. Thus Jupiter's beard is rated "honey like" by some noses. To others, it's "like perspiration."

In rich Midwestern soils, gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri*) tends to lay down (top, right), rarely tops 24" and does not bloom so freely as in its native sandy plains (Texas and Louisiana). By comparison, in the sandy, lean, soil of a high-desert garden in California, I divided a single gaura into all the pieces you see here when at four feet tall and wide it began outgrowing its welcome.

*Centranthus*, also called keys of heaven, fox's brush or red valerian, has similar preferences, thriving where it can root into the crumbling mortar of an ancient wall but disappointing in a fertile garden soil. Photos ©2009 Steven Nikkila



**"...alas the crumbling walls, the happy home (of *Centranthus ruber*)  
...are not the heritage of our young country. – Louise Beebe Wilder –**



## Beautiful orchid to one gardener, pesky weed to another

For me this year, best was an exciting plant that popped up in my garden. Last year a few tried to come up, but alas they died. This year I had about 20 scattered about. I had no idea what they were but the seedling was thick stemmed and it looked really interesting. Before they faded away, I got out the books and lo and behold I had *Epipactis helleborine orbicularis* coming up in my garden! How fun. They look like tiny orchids...gasp, I almost pulled them out! Now the question is, will I have zero next year or hundreds? - Sandie Parrott -

The look's the truth, Sandie: they're of the orchid family. Helleborine's a moist woods wildflower that's not native but very willing (even invasive\*). In southern Michigan we're at the leading edge of this Eurasian species' hundred-year advance into the continent\*\* from entry points in northern New England and the Maritime provinces.

I've seen them pop up just as you describe, suddenly there in quantity. The seed is like dust; perhaps it came into your garden after you walked in a damp woods where it is already established. It may have happened years ago, and lay waiting for a moist year.

You may also like its relative from the Southwest states and Mexico, giant helleborine (*E. gigantea*). It's equally tall (about 36") and suited to the same sites and zones (6; marginal in 5). Yet with leaves almost twice as big it makes a more dramatic statement.

\*Read more and see more photos for identification by copying these URLs to your browser: [ontariowildflowers.com/main/species.php?id=93](http://ontariowildflowers.com/main/species.php?id=93)  
[botany.wisc.edu/orchids/Epipactis.html](http://botany.wisc.edu/orchids/Epipactis.html)

\*\*To look into the distribution of this and plant species, native or otherwise, copy [plants.usda.gov](http://plants.usda.gov) to your browser. For helleborine, copy this URL to your browser [plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=EPHE](http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=EPHE)

Notice when you view the whole-country map that its spread appears to be well beyond Michigan. Click on individual State abbreviations below the map to see that it has been reported so far in only one or a few counties in each State west of Michigan:

Fun, to find an exotic volunteer in your woods, helleborine orchid (*Epipactis helleborine*, top). Photo ©2009 Sandie Parrott

Yet even "ordinary" plants can thrill us with surprise appearances. That's why plume poppy (*Macleaya cordata*) and pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) made Sheryl Kammer's "best" list (page 7).



**When we first pick up  
our trowels... we plant  
with the hope that what  
we plant will do well...  
We need also hope that  
no plant will do so well  
that it romps  
everywhere... We soon  
learn that "invasive  
plants" are dirty words.  
- Allen Lacy -  
in *The Gardener's Eye***

## Prickly but beautiful earns a "best" in Konchel garden

Who knew you could grow Prickly Pear Cactus in Michigan? Gorgeous flowers after heavy spring rains are evident in this photo taken at the height of their glorious show in June. I planted the cutting in a sunny and very dry spot near my garage. -Denise Konchel -



Photos ©2009 Denise Konchel

Many people are surprised by Michigan's native cacti. In sandy fields and plains, and in oak woods of the western Lower Peninsula you can find *Opuntia humifusa* (also dubbed *O. compressa* for its flattened segments, a name refuted by Dr. Edward G. Voss,

author of *Michigan Flora*). A rarer cousin, *O. fragilis* is reported in one area of each peninsula, in Ogemaw and Marquette counties.

### Prickly pear: American pay-back for "Canada" thistle?

Many Eurasian plants that migrated to the Americas became superweeds. Adapted to many sites through many moves, when given a foothold in disturbed ground around settlements they were sure bets to succeed. One, prickly *Cirsium arvense* moved so far from its landing spots on the East coast so quickly that later explorers to Ontario took it for a native and dubbed "Canada" thistle!

Fewer American plants had that kind of success going eastward. Prickly pear's an exception. Spaniards took various *Opuntias* home from Mexico and the West which are now naturalized there, in Switzerland and other regions. *Opuntia humifusa*, introduced to Australia in the 1800's took just 75 years to become a noxious weed across 60 million acres. It took introduction of an *Opuntia* eating caterpillar from Argentina to bring it under control.

### For the adventurous chef: Prickly pears

*Opuntia humifusa* fruits are roughly pear shaped and may be a bit purplish when ripe. Peel and eat the flesh raw or cooked -- it's said to taste a bit like pear. Make syrup by boiling the fruit and straining the juice. In the desert Southwest, people learned to heat and mash the seeds to thicken soup.

If you cook more than you care to eat, consider using the sticky juice as an additive to adobe -- another innovation by Southwestern people.

### On cactus spines, from Janet's *Manual of First-hand Lessons*:

Mistook yourself and grabbed a prickly pear cactus? Remove tiny, irritating prickles by spreading white glue on your hand, letting it dry and peeling it off, or applying then removing duct tape.

However, don't then put your de-bristled hand right back into that glove you were wearing! Wait until you've cleaned the cloth of all the remaining prickles.

(Prickly pear is) ...almost indestructible... if uprooted will survive many days of desiccation in hot sun before transplantation and recovery. -



## Blue beauties and lovely leftover leaves

In November Sheryl Kammer reported, "My new favorite is (great blue lobelia) *L. siphilitica*... they have been blooming since mid September. (Meanwhile) the 'Easter' lilies are trying hard to bloom with several buds on each stem and the lamium ('Silver Beacon' and 'Orchid Frost') are still sending up flowers."

Of blue cardinal flower (*L. siphilitica*, left) Kammer writes: As you can see, I have oaks and this year I'm leaving the leaves to cover the beds for the winter. The lawn is another matter. Photo ©2009 Sheryl Kammer



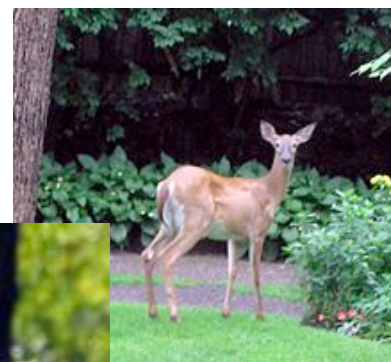
**Blue cardinal flower. Diuretic, cathartic. It generally disagrees with the stomach and possesses no power of curing syphilis, from which supposed virtue it took its name.**

- Dr. E.G. Clarke, 1814  
Conspectus of the London,  
Edinburgh and Dublin  
Pharmacopoeias -

**...whole leaves, marsh hay, straw and pine needles all provide adequate winter protection... 6 inches thick... Oak leaves are your first choice... since they rarely mat down.**

- Mike Heger, in *Growing Perennials in Cold Climates* -

Kammer sent along runners-up for best: A doe snacking on evening primrose, a butterfly enjoying lantana, volunteer plume poppy (*Macleaya cordata*, left, below) and pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*). Photos ©2009 Sheryl Kammer



*What's Up* #74, Page 7

All text plus otherwise uncredited photos ©2009 Janet Macunovich JMaxGarden@aol.com



## First Lady empowers fashion breakthrough

Janet here, with one of my own "best" occurrences: That a woman with trim-fit arms stepped into the White House and gave me courage to bare my shoulders.

No kidding. It's been almost 20 years since I went sleeveless. This year the reports of "Michelle Obama's sleeveless style" and advisories on "How to get Michelle's toned arms" pierced even my armor. Here are my three cheers for Michelle the Muscular!

**Janet's arms workout: Grasp spade, press down, lift up. Grasp plant, lower into hole. Repeat.**



Tricolor beech (*Fagus sylvatica roseo-marginata*) has plum colored leaves with pink and white margins. Photo ©2009 Mary Anne Lisac

**On beech: There is no finer specimen tree; so beautiful that it overwhelms one at first glance. (Tricolor)...best provided some shade for the creamy pink areas often become scorched in hot, dry weather.**

Michael Dirr, in  
*Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*

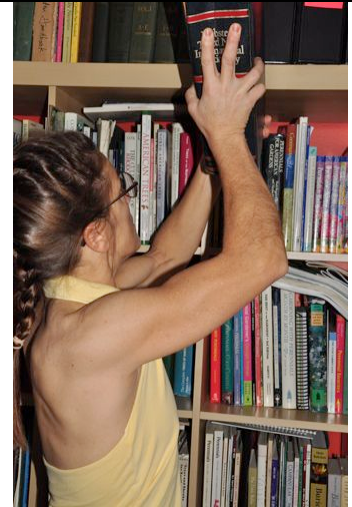


Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

## Tricolor beech plus multi-color fall: Non-stop color

Hi Janet, I have appreciated all of your insight and plant wisdom throughout the years. I took a landscaping class under your tutelage several years ago. I kept telling my husband, Janet recommends this, this and this.

Well, come spring we purchased some of your recommendations: *Cornus kousa*, Arnold's Promise witchhazel, several Serviceberries, and the pride of my yard, my Tri-color Beech. Love it !

Thanks again for your talent, time and passion for growing. So many have benefited.

- Mary Anne Lisac -

You're welcome, Mary Anne. However, as a designer who also plants and maintains, I know that design ideas are the minority part of the equation. Plant selection and care are what make or break the vision. Congratulations to you.



I took this picture at the height of fall color and I vainly named the pic 'Tapestry of Color.' Mary Anne Lisac, Photo ©2009



### Long underwear gets short shrift in warm fall

The best thing about this season was being out there so late, not having to wear 18 layers and looking like the Pillsbury Dough Boy. - Susan McLarty -

'Nuf said, Susan. This fall was heavenly!

This year I didn't need full winter gear to do the fall cut back of my own garden. How nice! Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila



**Early spring or late fall: My arms and legs are stiff under so many layers, my glasses fog up because bending forces warm air up out of my shirt, and my nose drips freely because there's no reaching into pockets for a tissue while wearing such thick gloves. Yet the leaves crackle, the air is clean as crystal, and I think, "This is glorious. I love my job!" - Janet -**



## Reflections on the best design

Hi Janet,

Here's an entry for "Summing Up the Season" in my garden this year.

I was looking for an appropriate spot for a mirror I purchased on sale (impulse buy)... last February. In October we replaced a deteriorating privacy screen and mounted the mirror next to a swing. Wallah!!

We now have a mystery door that appears to lead into a "hidden" garden. My grandkids love it! .... and so do the grown ups.... Now we'll see if the deer see anybody they know in the doorway. – Margy Truza –



Photo ©2009 Margy Truza

What fun, Margy! I love playing with mirrors in garden design, too. One thing I learned the hard way: Unless it's plastic, protect it from the weather and falling- or wind-blown objects.

### **Trompe l'oeil**

Trompe l'oeil -- to trick the eye -- is a tactic to convince the viewer that something false is real, or that an object is larger, more spacious or at a greater distance than is actually the case. Trompe l'oeil devices, including paths tapered to seem longer, false-perspective trellises and mirror gateways are particularly successful and appropriate in small to medium-size gardens.



## The best full-sense gardener

Professional gardener Gail Morrell proposed a fox she spied (photo, next page) in one of her gardens as a 'best.' Says Morrell, "I just love the little face."

I'm adding this summary of two other incidents and suggesting *you're* a "best" Gail -- best investigator. In sharing your experiences these last couple of decades you have gifted me with insights that come only to one who probes deeply with open mind and senses. Thanks!

### **Incident #1, Ear to the ground:**

Morrell and I, both professional gardeners, have faced four-lined plant bug problems some years, agree that the damage they do isn't deadly but is ugly, and hand-picking the insects when they are still young red-bodied (wingless) nymphs is a good control tactic. But only Morrell would think to *listen* to the insects, and report to me that, "If you hold one near your ear you can hear it squeaking."



### **Incident #2, in four rounds, A nose for gardening:**

Morrell asked me about and then kept me apprised of a lawn problem she had. In the end, she took me right off the beaten track by following her nose. Here's the gist:

Opening round:

Morrell: I've got a problem spot in the lawn. It's done fine for 21 years, now is a problem. It thins, browns and dies, and it looks like moss is growing in the middle of the area; it's not a shady spot. Makes me think something happened to the soil.

Janet: What's underneath? Could be compacted layer below, or debris.

Round 2:

Morrell: I don't find any debris in the area, not in the top few inches anyway. How deep should I look?

Janet: Sometimes something 12, 18 inches below can make that happen, although if it never happened before it's more likely in the top few inches where the compaction from repeated foot traffic would develop.

Round 3:

Morrell: ... dug down about a foot to 16 inches in the center of the area and didn't find anything. Then ...began removing the thin grass... found tons of red ants, larvae and all. I looked it up in my Ortho book and it said they don't eat the grass roots but can certainly cause the grass to die because of their tunneling. The only thing I find strange is there is no mounding like ants usually make. But I'm not sure if red ants make the same kind of mounds that I am used to with the ants I see at work. We put Diazinon down before laying the new sod. Hopefully it works.

Janet: I've seen that happen. Ants waterproof some of their chambers, the ones where larvae develop. Stops water getting to the roots from above or below.

Round 4:

Morrell: It seems strange to me. Red ants don't seem to make much of a mess as they do their thing but maybe that's what it is. I am going to go out (when I'm home in the day light) and lift the sod to see if they are still active or if they are dying, now. Have you ever noticed the smell that reds ants have when you disturb their colony? Kind of a citrus smell. I know now as soon as I smell that that I am into a colony.

Janet: Gail, you are a wonder. Nope, I have never smelled an ant colony.



#### **When an ant can't see, it smells**

In general, ants do not see well but rely on odors.

- Lester A. Swan, in *Beneficial Insects* -

"When disturbed, ants commonly release a defensive compound that is irritating to predators and warns other members of the colony... In the case of larger yellow ants this compound smells to humans very much like citronella or lemon."

For more, copy this URL to your browser:  
[extension.org/pages/Lemon-Scented\\_Ants\\_May\\_Lurk\\_in\\_Your\\_Garden](http://extension.org/pages/Lemon-Scented_Ants_May_Lurk_in_Your_Garden)

"...citronella ants get their name from the lemon verbena or citronella odor they emit when threatened. It is most noticeable when the ants are crushed. They... feed on the honeydew (excretions) of aphids and mealybugs feeding on the roots of shrubs."

For more, copy this URL to your browser:  
[ento.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/citronella-ants](http://ento.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/citronella-ants)

Photo ©2009 Gail Morrell

"Janet, is this crazy?! I swear I saw a fox in a tree eating serviceberries." - M.S. -

Not crazy at all, M.S. The gray fox, almost as common all over Michigan as the red fox, is a good tree climber. And both foxes eat not only any mammal they can find and overcome, from mouse to woodchuck, but also carrion, seeds, fruits (including apples, raspberries, strawberries and serviceberries), corn, and insects such as grasshoppers.



## A rose, however lame, appreciated for being game

Dear Janet, I didn't think I had anything to contribute, but as I was sitting catching up on your past newsletters I happened to glance out the window. There is snow on the ground this December 4 and there is my David Austin rose 'Winchester Cathedral' hanging on to a last flower. This rose has suffered abominably this year, first with rose midge ( at least I



Photo ©2009 Cindy Robinson

THINK that's the culprit!) and then black spot ( as you can still see). Frankly, it looked horrible most of the season. I was just thinking maybe I shouldn't be growing it at all, but I guess the season isn't quite over. I admire that it has hung in there...to bloom late AND for the first time bless me with a couple of HIPS!! Which I love and for which it is not known and I wasn't expecting. I'll be keeping it another season and reviewing what different steps to take this spring to help it do better next year.

- Cindy Robinson -

Sounds like a good plan, Cindy. People often say to me, "Janet, I know you don't like roses..." Yet, I do! Especially very fragrant varieties like 'Winchester Cathedral.' What I don't like is to be the one who has to tend them!

A tough rose won't be killed by black spot disease, just slowed and somewhat disfigured. Since the fungus starts up from spores on previously infected material, keep a clean a rose bed and you'll have healthier roses. The biggest mistake some gardeners make is to give up the fight in mid-season and let spotted leaves remain where they fall.

From *Ecology & Field Biology*, (The) Presence of thorns, spines or prickles reduced herbivore feeding.

From Janet's observation one summer afternoon in a Birmingham, Michigan garden:

Janet: "I thought thorns would at least slow it down, Steven but you should have seen it. I just watched a groundhog eat that entire new shrub rose, the one with the two-kinds-of-thorns covering every millimeter of stem. When it was done I went to see if it spit out the thorns or something but there was nothing!"

Steven: "You sat here and watched a groundhog eat a \$20 rose bush?!"

## Resurrecting a rose garden

Hi Janet,  
At the Detroit Zoo 25-30 years ago existed the most beautiful rose garden. It was an unexpected surprise seen from the barn exit. I dreamt that one day I would have a garden like that.

This year I officially adopted that garden. Though its grandeur is mostly gone. My goal is restoring the EXACT garden I saw so many years ago and to recreate it even better. - Nancy Ranieri -

That's an admirable best, Nancy. And one you can share with tens of thousands of visitors to the zoo! Brava!



A big rose garden produces a lot of flowers, which means a lot of deadheading. Always curious about such practicalities, I asked about maintenance at one such acres-big rose garden and was told, "We have eight volunteers who spend about 5 hours each week doing the deadheading. The rest, the staff does." I enjoyed that garden even more, to think that someone was keeping it deadheaded just for my viewing pleasure, 40 hours a week!" Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila

## Bluebells and funny business fuel this gardener's best of the year



Janet, During our lawn renovation project in the spring, my husband decided to have a little fun. The piles of compost in our (herbicide-induced) brown lawn reminded him of the prairie dog towns we've seen out West. Our lawn looks great now, but the neighbors miss the prairie dogs. - Ginny Stobby -

A sign not visible in these photo reads "Ann Arbor's Prairie Dog Preserve." Photos ©2009 Ginny Stobby



I bet that'll live long in neighborhood history, Ginny. A great legacy for one year's best.

### Nature's own soil conditioners

Creatures which tunnel mix the soil and bring to the surface earth which contains nutrients flushed from above and no longer available to plants' roots. Moles, woodchucks, chipmunks and -- on a smaller yet more massive scale -- worms are working for us all the time. Try to view the aggravation they cause as worth the digging they spare us and the expense of fertilizers.

**Burrows of prairie dogs can be as deep as 15 feet, and can extend laterally as much as 100 feet. These burrows therefore significantly affect the recycling of water and nutrients.**

- [www.prairiedog101.org](http://www.prairiedog101.org) -

Stobby adds, "a couple extras I have to comment on:



Brunnera 'Jack Frost' (left) is a truly great plant. Unlike the species, its variegated leaves look good all season long! A great companion for white bleeding heart (below).



And my low-branching magnolia (left) is underplanted with Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*). The bluebells are one of the first plants to perk up in my spring garden and are in full bloom right along with the pink magnolia blossoms. When the bluebells fade, their unattractive mass of withering foliage is covered up by the expanding magnolia leaves. Photos ©2009 Ginny Stobby

## Another frog jumps into the pond

This year a leopard frog joined our pond community. American toads and green frogs (one who became quite the pet to our kids headlines this issue) moved into our pond almost as soon as we built it 20 years ago. But only this year have I seen a leopard frog there. Who knows where he came from or what we did to attract or allow him, but I'm sure glad to see him. It means the pond community's still evolving.



Haven't caught the new frog in a good picture yet, but I'm working on it. – Steven Nikkila –

## Wrap-up with Grins and Grow-ans that turn our green thumbs up or down

**Grins:** To living and growing in the minute. As rough as this year has been economically and as slow as recovery may be in the coming years, still these days are the only ones we'll be given. Let's resolve to look each day for beauty to enjoy, puzzles we can solve and something to smile about. Thank goodness for a garden where we can find all of those.

**Grow-ans:** To happening upon "opuntoid" -- now *there's* a great word -- and not being able to find a legitimate use for it in what may be my only coverage of *Opuntia*, the prickly pear!

## Who's Janet?



**Someone fascinated by the *process* of gardening.** Janet Macunovich began gardening for others when she ran out of places to make new gardens at her own home. "I was hooked from the first time I worked in someone else's yard. It hit me right away, that what we do to make a garden has to be modified for *every place*. Now 'my' gardens stretch across several States but each one is still unique, even those that are full of the same plants because those plants behave differently in each place. I've learned a lot of wonderful things over 25 years of gardening, writing and teaching but the flexibility of the process and its never-ending newness is the best fact of all. It makes it a delight and a privilege to work for others and to help students and readers who ask for advice." Email questions to her at [JMaxGarden@aol.com](mailto:JMaxGarden@aol.com).



## Invite Janet or Steven or their expert friends to your club or community.

We go where we're invited! That's taken us all over the country and then some over the past 20 years. We address many topics, drawing from our list of **100+ talks**. We also continue **to meet groups' needs** and expand our horizons by developing new material or "hybridizing" from what we already have.

So, whether it's...

- a **how-to lesson for a garden club** meeting,
- a **hands-on workshop** at a site of your choosing or
- a **multi-part class** for a small group, ...we're game!

We can also connect you to one or a whole line-up of other experts who know how to explain how-to. So give us a **call or send an email** to make a date, request our list of classes and talks or get a referral. **JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850**. Our calendars fill about a year in advance for spring weekends, and six months ahead for most other weekends and evenings. So give us some lead time. Then we can meet you in *your* garden.

Steven Nikkila and Janet Macunovich (top) have been digging, shooting and teaching how-to for 22 years. They began producing conferences in the early '90s and then ran a gardening school for 12 years, featuring instructors who knew their stuff in the garden as well as knowing how to get their messages across in front of a group. That line-up includes people like Cheryl Bennerup (right). Cheryl and Janet began their relationship 20 years ago when Cheryl grew perennials for Janet at her Milford, Michigan greenhouse and continues today as Janet taps into Cheryl's know-how as chief of propagation and troubleshooting at one of the country's largest perennial growers, Sunny Border Nursery in Connecticut. Janet and Steve are glad to help you themselves or refer you to others to meet your group's need. Contact them at JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850 when you want to set up a talk, workshop or class.

Photos ©2009 Sonja Nikkila and ©2009 Steven Nikkila



## Where to catch Janet and friends\* in-person:

\*See January 30 and "Invite Janet or Steven" on page 17.

**Tuesday, January 12, 2010, 7:00 p.m..** *Choosing the Best of New Plants.* Join Janet at the **Association of Professional Gardeners meeting**. At Warren Mott High School in Warren, Michigan. The meeting is open to members and other gardeners, professional or otherwise, are welcome for this meeting. More details at [www.associationofprofessionalgardeners.org](http://www.associationofprofessionalgardeners.org)

**Thursday, January 14, 7:00 p.m.** *"Saving Time and Money in the Garden."* Economize with Janet at **Cromaine District Library, Hartland, Michigan.**

Wednesdays, January 20, January 27 and February 3, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. **Do it! Easy, beautiful landscape design**, a three-part series at the Chesterfield township library. Janet provides directions for creating the landscape of your dreams, one with four seasons of interest, that increases your home's value and decreases your yardwork. Free. You must register in advance by calling the library at 586-598-4900 or registering from the calendar page of [chelibrary.org](http://chelibrary.org). More detailed class description at [chelibrary.org](http://chelibrary.org)

Saturdays, January 23, January 30 and February 6, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. **"Garden Design, New Plants, and Janet & Steve's 50 Favorite Before-Afters."** These sessions featuring Janet Macunovich, Steven Nikkila (above) and Cheryl Bennerup (more about Cheryl on page 17) are sponsored by The Detroit Garden Center as part of its 19th annual winter seminar series. They'll be held at Historic Trinity Church auditorium, 1345 Gratiot near Easter Market in Detroit. Registration information will be available here and through The Detroit Garden Center at 313-259-6363, [detroitgardenctr@yahoo.com](mailto:detroitgardenctr@yahoo.com) or [www.detroitgardencenter.org](http://www.detroitgardencenter.org).

## Time to garden your walls!

Steven's decorated our walls with beautiful images from gardens and Nature. He can help you do the same.

Any of Steven's images here in *What's Coming Up* can be made to hang on your wall. Email us at [JMaxGarden@aol.com](mailto:JMaxGarden@aol.com) for details and to place an order.

Prices depend on your choices in format and size.

For example:

Framed, matted, image 8" x 10", frame 11" x 14-1/2", \$48

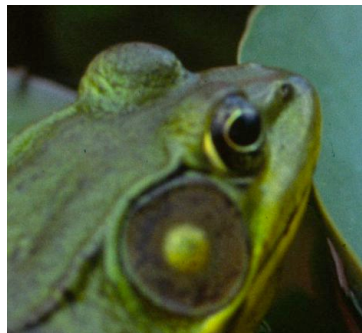
Cloth tapestry\*, 3' x 4' (photo-quality print, museum-grade cloth) \$215

\*My favorite; I can change our display by simply rolling up one and unrolling another.

It's been asked: "Can he also make *my* garden photo into a big cloth wall-hanging?"

Yes, he can, but let him look at the photo and tell you if it will enlarge well. A good quality enlargement requires photos taken at a high resolution -- lots of dots per inch. Steven's originals, are hi-res, as opposed to the lower-res images some cameras take and the reduced versions I use here to keep the newsletter file size small. His original of Frufru the frog, here, looks sharp even when it's 48" square but this detail and enlargement from the lower-res version I use for the newsletter fuzz out at just 3" x 3". If you have particulars, email to [JMaxGarden@aol.com](mailto:JMaxGarden@aol.com) and Steven can tell you more.

Photo ©2009 Steven Nikkila





## A complete library of Janet's gardening how-to on one CD... just \$24.

Is this *What's Coming Up* newsletter useful to you? Imagine how a whole year of these weekly newsletters could help your garden grow.

Now imagine *SIX YEARS* of the same: 1,681 gardeners' questions answered, with no repeated topics! And picture that collection fully indexed and searchable by any key word you can type.

That's what you can have on my CD, *Asking About Asters!* It's six books plus one comprehensive index. Each book contains a full year of weekly Q&A.

Mac- and Windows compatible.

The price including shipping, is **just \$24** (Michigan residents include tax, total \$25.44. In Canada, \$30).

To get a copy of my CD, send a check payable to Janet Macunovich, to 120 Lorberta, Waterford, MI 48328-3041. Include your name and full mailing address.

My CD has everything from six of my books: How to prep soil, design, choose and de-bug plants, plus one A-Z index!

Jam packed with information that's easy to access. Type any key word into the index's "Search" field to receive a click-thru list of every place those "hydrangea" facts, winter interest tips, acidity explanations, etc. appear in this CD's 6 books.

