

## What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila  
answer your growing concerns  
Issue #157, September 28, 2011

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Right: Dependably mounded, clean-leafed, re-blooming big betony (*Stachys micrantha*) kept a front edge looking good for six months. Yet on page 14 we cut it out of the picture!



## Good crop, bad crop -- in a nutshell

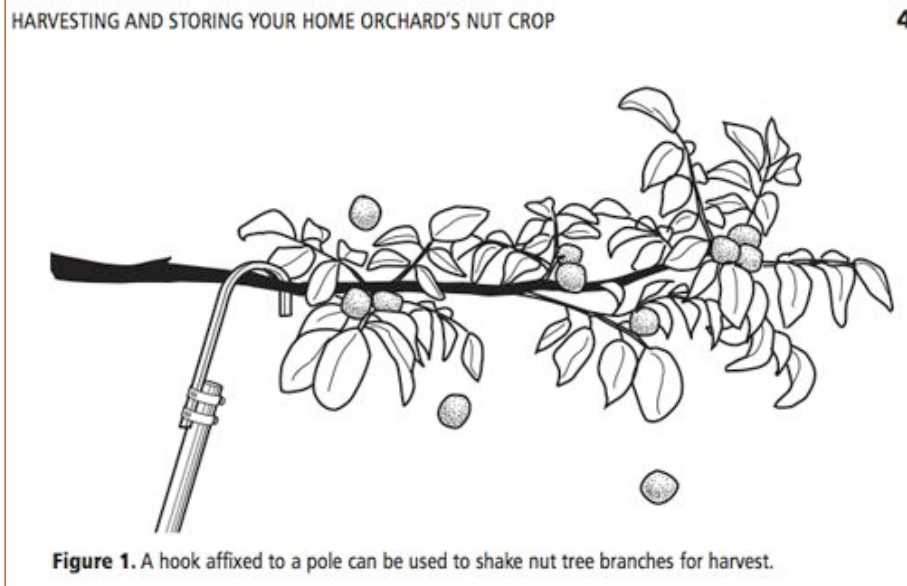
We have an **American chestnut tree** that we planted as a twig. It's about 22 or 23 years old and several years ago **produced nuts** for the first time, just a few. This year there are nuts again, less than 20. What causes it to bear well? Why **nuts one year and not others**?

We collected the nuts and are drying them. One has split open and you can see that under the **thick husk** the nut itself is relatively small. The husks are really deadly, by the way, **very spiny** things. I had to go change to heavy ski mitts to pick them up, they pierced right through my garden gloves. - J. C. -

Ken Asmus of Oikos Tree Crops in Kalamazoo has grown a lot of chestnut trees, and sold a great many of them since 1985 when he founded Oikos Tree Crops in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Here's what he had to say about your chestnut tree.

First, **chestnuts are self-infertile**. **You need two** genetically different individuals for cross pollination -- two seedling trees, one cultivar and one seedling, two different cultivars, etc.

Second, what you've so painfully collected may be disappointing. When you have **a lone tree**, says Asmus, "the burrs would likely form and appear to you to have a nut inside, but when you open it you'll find **the nuts are just shriveled things**. It's pretty much 100% blanks when you have a lone tree."



Left: This is from University of California Davis' excellent bulletin on home nut growing. (We are certain the writer assumed the person holding this stick is wearing a hard hat!) To read the entire bulletin copy the URL below this image and paste it into your browser:

#### Harvest this!

In a good year in a commercial orchard, one tree may produce 30 to 80 pounds of chestnuts.

<http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/8005.pdf>

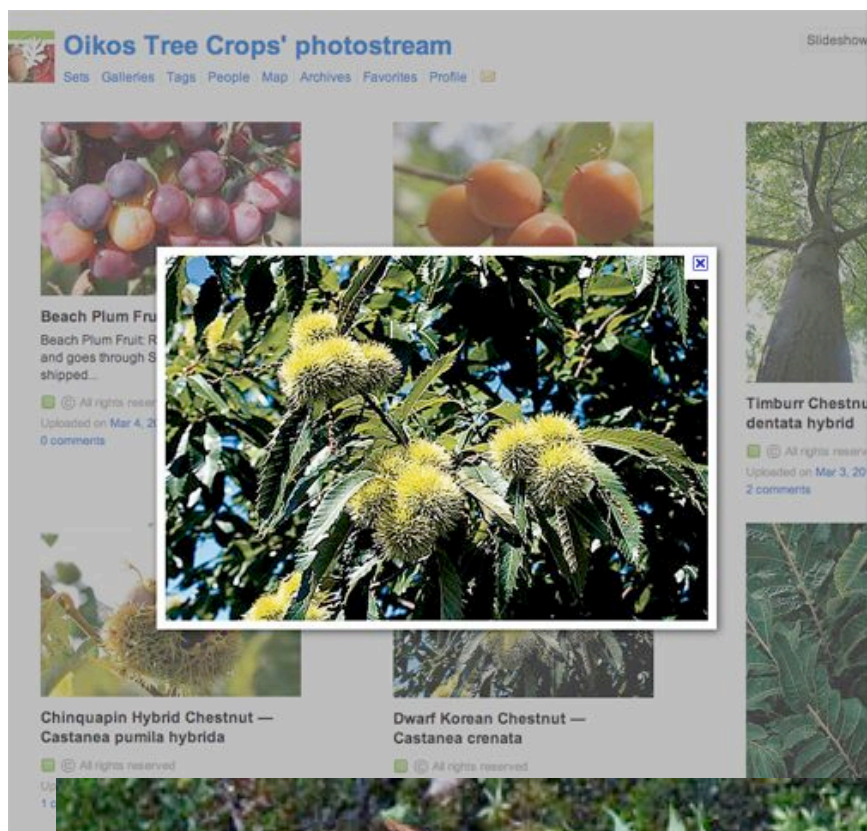
Third, the crop is not simply a matter of age. Even if you have more than one chestnut tree, the **trees have to be good sized** to bear a good crop. "We see the most production from a tree after 15 years," says Asmus, "when you start getting some significant trunk size. Caliper of the trunk is really critical." So, you might have nuts in 10 years but you can't expect much even after 25 years if the tree's not big, such as when it's been growing in the shade so its trunk is only a couple inches in diameter.

Fourth, **individual trees do vary in how many nuts they produce** in any given year. It's a genetic thing -- some tree have higher and lower production years, some are more steady. "It's not such a drastic difference as with oaks, but they are kind of alternate-year bearers."

Fifth, some years the **weather can affect nut production**. Asmus has heard and thinks he's seen some evidence himself, that a rainy period during pollination time can reduce the crop. Most chestnut cross-pollination happens when wind blows pollen from one tree to another, and that action's negligible if rain is carrying all the pollen to the ground. That probably wasn't the case this year, at least at Asmus' orchard, where, "some trees are just loaded, and based on that I'd say it's a good year this year."

As for handling those **very sharp-spined burrs**, Asmus says that a chestnut orchard in fall, "can be hard hat area, with those burrs coming down. I used to wear tennis shoes during fall but now I don't, they go right through. Also, I play guitar and if I get one of those spines in my finger I can't play -- they're hard to get out. I have **leather gloves** and still it's a problem. I can't think of anything that works 100%. Ski mitts, yeah, I'll have to try that!"





Left: Chestnuts come in spine-covered husks. If you plan to harvest them, be prepared to protect your hands. One tree in a good year may produce 30 to 80 pounds of nuts.

### Permaculture:

The development of food-producing ecosystems intended to be sustainable and self-sufficient.

Below: Nut trees do flower, although we don't always recognize the bloom. Here's an oak twig with spent blooms and foliage just emerging. If a storm is what brought the twig to ground and it was rainy all through the week while the flowers were open, much of the pollen probably went to ground, too. It didn't reach other oak flowers and so there won't be many acorns that year.





## Growing to change the world: Ken Asmus of Oikos Tree Crops

Ken Asmus is the founder and owner of Oikos Tree Crops, a nursery that aims to produce seed strains with genetic diversity. In addition it aims to educate people about the benefits of growing such seeds, with an end result of plantings that can be useful for wildlife as well as agriculture, be resilient to environmental change, and allow people to ecologically integrate with the environment.

Oikos offers **trees and shrubs that bear fruit or nuts**. Currently highlighted in Oikos' catalog, **Timburr hybrid chestnut\***:

Oikos' most American-like hybrid, from Douglass American hybrids and other hybrid Chinese- and European trees that show good form with little or not blight. Seeds are from the best seven trees that were selected 20 years ago.

\*For more about these trees:

[http://oikostreecrops.com/store/product.asp?P\\_ID=468&PT\\_ID=73&strPageHistory=cat](http://oikostreecrops.com/store/product.asp?P_ID=468&PT_ID=73&strPageHistory=cat)

### Contacting Oikos Tree Crops

<http://oikostreecrops.com>  
PO Box 19425 (2004 South 4th Street)  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
40019-0425  
(269) 624-6233

## Bumper crops and slump years: Common traits of fruit and nuts

We hear that pumpkins will be in short supply this year because hurricane-driven storms flooded many fields. In other years, the apple- or cherry crop from a given region may be cut in half when unusually late spring frost slices through the flowering season. These are examples of how weather can cause crop fluctuations.

Crops may be **genetically influenced**, too. Every grower of fruit- or nut trees or shrubs should be aware of this impact on some plants' fruit-bearing regularity or crop size.

Recognize these terms and situations when you choose **berry bushes, fruit trees, nut trees**, etc.:

**Dioecious**, or **male/female**: A plant of one of those few species wherein individual plants have only female or only male flowers. Only the females can produce fruit/seed. Suppliers label such plants with gender-appropriate names: 'Blue Princess' requires 'Blue Prince' holly, bittersweet 'Indian Brave' is a pollinator for 'Indian Maid,' Ginkgo 'Fallgold' is a seedless male, etc. **For fruit to develop, male and female plant must be grown** within bee-flying range of each other, in similar conditions so their bloom times coincide.

Right: All types of holly (this is the deciduous Michigan holly, *Ilex verticillata*) and grapeholly (*Mahonia*) are dioecious. That means this female -- we know she is a girl because she has fruit! -- must be growing near a pollen-providing male.

**Self-sterile**: For any of several reasons having to do with genetics or timing, the plant's pollen **cannot fertilize its own flowers**. Fruitset **requires two different individuals**



from the same species -- a 'Jonagold' apple tree can't be fertilized by another 'Jonagold' but will set fruit in the presence of any non-'Jonagold' apple- or crabapple tree. Responsible growers advise buyers of this situation with notes such as: You need two plants to set fruit.

**Pollinator required:** A shrub, vine or tree grown for fruit that is either **self-sterile** or **dioecious**. It must have a compatible pollen-producer nearby.

**Pollenizer:** A plant suggested to **cross-pollinate other** individuals. Usually listed as "pollenizer for (variety name)".



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*Characteristics*

Left: Good nurseries will alert buyers to self-sterile varieties and species. This catalog entry lets you know this pear requires a pollinator.

**Annual bearer:** A perennial plant that tends to **bear a good crop every year**.

**Alternate year bearer:** A perennial shrub, vine or tree that tends to **bear a heavy crop every other year**, with a light crop or no crop in between. In some species, such as the common lilac, most individuals tend to be alternate year bearers. In other species, such as apple/crabapple, some individuals are reliable "annual bearers" while others tend to have ups and downs.



Above: Many types of apple and crabapple are alternate-year bearers. The Sargent crabapple, for instance, will probably flower only lightly the year after it puts on this great floral show and bears lots of fruit. Little we can do will affect that pattern.

## Hard hat year under the oaks: Can we predict it? Can we stop it?

Anyone who lives with nut or fruit trees knows that some years there are nuts -- lots of them.

Many people ask: Why does it happen, and can we make it stop?



The answers are "Various uncontrollable reasons" and "not hardly."

These facts from the USDA *Crop Tree Field Guide* (Forest Service publication NA-TP-10-01\*) may make the hard-hat years more bearable:

### Black walnut:

...Good seed crops are produced about twice every 5 years. Large seed crops do not usually occur until trees are about 30 years old, with production declining after 130 years of age.



Left: A black walnut tree produces hard, round, 3-inch diameter fruits. They can pack a wallop, falling as they do from 70 or 80 feet up. Years ago, Steven suffered a direct hit and swears the dent in his skull is still there.

### Shagbark hickory:

... reaches productive seed-bearing age at 40 years, with maximum production from 60 to 200 years. Good seed crops occur at intervals of 1 to 3 years with light crops or no seed during the intervening years.

### White oak:

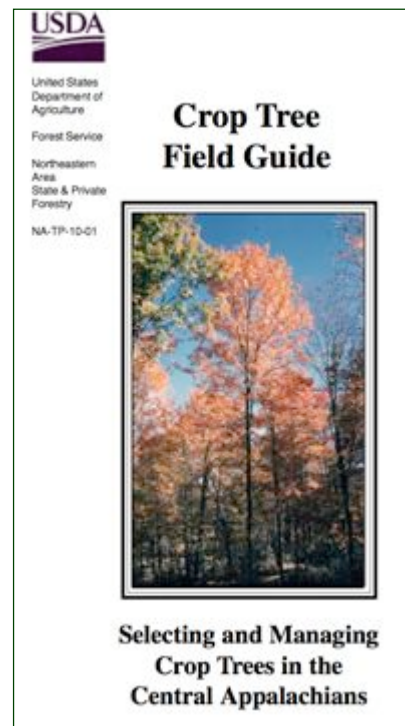
White oak acorns are a highly preferred though inconsistent source of food for songbirds, squirrel, raccoon, and deer. Acorn crops are good in years when weather is warm for 10 days during flowering and then cool for 13 to 20 days afterward. The acorn crop has been poor in years when cool periods preceded warm periods at the time of flowering....

...good acorn crops are irregular and occur only every 4 to 10 years...

In the open, white oak may begin to bear fruit at age 20, but trees normally bear seed between the ages of 50 and 200.



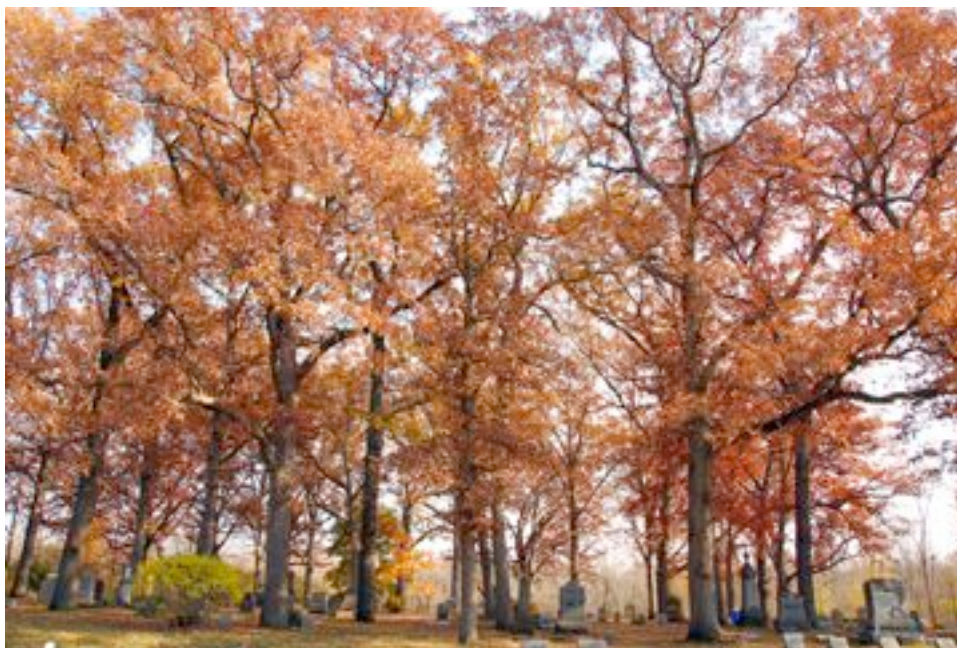
*Swamp white oak: Acorns have a rather sweet flavor.*



\*Above: Man, oh man, we love the Internet! We had to *buy* our copy of this excellent resource, back when. Now, you can just go to the USDA site and download the pdf: <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/ctfg/index.pdf>

Left: We probably all recognize an acorn as from an oak, but these nuts are also distinct between oak species, in looks and in taste. This elongated acorn is from a swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) and, as acorns go, probably has a rather sweet flavor. Nuts from burr oaks English oaks may be "nourishing but indigestible" while burr oak acorns are "one of the most palatable of all the oaks\*\*."

\*\* For more about alternative food crops from Plants For a Future, copy this URL to your browser and type a plant name into the search field: <http://www.pfaf.org>



Any given tree in this oak grove may go years without producing acorns, but sometimes the trees' cycles coincide and most bear heavily at the same time. Then, those who walk there are smart to wear a hard hat.

*One fall, working under hickories that had borne a heavy crop, we realized we were hoarse at day's end, from shouting to be heard over the constant tattoo of nuts striking walks, cars, roof... - Janet -*

## Frightfully fruitful year: Grin and bear it

Anyone who lives with nut or fruit trees knows that **some years there are nuts -- lots of them**. Many people ask: Why does it happen, and **can we make it stop?**

Weather and genetics both play a part. **We can't do much** to change either one.

You may hear that, "something can be sprayed on a tree to stop it fruiting." True, but hardly practical for a home gardener.

**Growth regulators** -- synthetic copies of plants' own "hormones" -- can reduce or eliminate a fruit or nut crop **if the right product is applied at just the right time**. That time isn't a calendar date but a point in the plant's annual growth, so only a person who is on-site every day and knows when to say "when" can make an accurate call for application of something like Fruit-Stop. Hired help is generally required, since it takes professional, high-pressure equipment to cover an entire tree. That's asking a lot: For the gardener on site to make the call on-time and for a tree care firm to respond same-day.

**Risk and expense come into play** two other ways. One, the same growth regulator can have different effect when applied at different stages of growth. Fruit-Stop applied at the wrong time can cause fruit-hold -- an even heavier than normal crop! Two, since we cannot tell in advance whether the year is going to be a heavy fruiting year for a given plant we must pay for annual application even for a plant that is only sporadically "messy."

See **What's Coming Up #91** for more! (See page 11 about obtaining back issues.)

*The next time you think about falling fruits or nuts as messy, consider this exchange between Janet's father, John and cousin Sergei visiting from a very poor town near Minsk. (Dad's translation from the Russian was unnecessary, as body language conveyed the gist.)*

*S: What happens to these apples?*

*J: They rake them up and compost them.*

*S: What?!*



## A rose is a rose is a tough thing to picture for pruning

I've **seen your photos** of pruning shrub roses and climbers and **I still don't get it!** - D.R. -

**We share your frustration.** We've been cutting and shooting for over 20 years to capture the why and how of rose pruning. Yet we're still saying, "Well, this will have to do" and/or resorting to diagrams rather than real stems.

Pruning: It's **tough to capture a three dimensional process in a two dimensional medium.** Especially challenging when the species involved has a rose's tangle-y, criss-crossing tendencies. Worse, if the pruning itself has precedence over its recording, as it must for we who garden for a living, write and teach as a sideline. If the setting, lighting or the particular plant complicate photographic matters, it's too bad. We can't delay the work for better conditions, can't forsake our true charges for more photogenic plants or better lighting.

That's why we invite you to join us, 3-D, in Garden By Janet & Steven sessions (see pages 18 and 19). It's also the reason we're working on interactive sessions through our upcoming website (see page 20). We'd like to stream sight & sound live from a garden for you, and archive them, downloadable for later reference. Stay tuned!

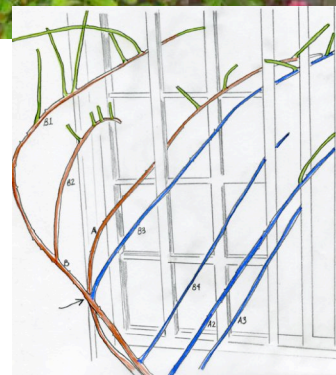
Meanwhile, here's our advice for pruning shrub- and climber roses in fall:

**Delay pruning those shrub- and climber roses until early spring** if you can. Go ahead and shorten the very long new canes that might break if whipped around by winter winds. Take off old, damaged or diseased wood -- that's fair game any time of year. That said, if you want to cut something, go ahead and cut it. Then pay attention to "what next" so you can decide if a satisfied tidiness urge now is worth the difference in growth the next year (probably more straight, unbranched, non-flowering wood next year). There's no better way to learn how to prune than to see for yourself how a plant responds to cuts made at various times.



Right, below and on page 9: Janet's been pruning this climbing rose to contain it on its trellis. Even when it's photographed in fall when growth has slowed considerably, it seems to do all it can to obscure its bones with wild, new, every-which-way growth. A number of "wild hair" shoots formed even at the tail end of summer, since the last pruning.

We sketched that rose to remove the foliage and assign colors and numbers to the branches to make explanations more clear. Do you recognize it as the rose in the photo? If so, page 9 directions may speak to you!





In this diagram of an actual climbing rose:

**Brown:** Established main cane which has already borne flowers for several years.

**Blue:** Cane that just this year has been allowed to grow and been trained at an angle across and through the trellis.

**Green:** Flowering spur.

### Every year we prune

a climbing rose or shrub rose at these times, in these ways:

**Early spring**, just before budbreak, we **cut all flowering spurs** to leave just stubs with one or two leaf buds. At the same time, we **shorten the tips of main canes** and remove any dead or decrepit wood.

**Shortly after bloom**, we **cut the spurs** short again. If there are -- usually there are -- new canes that have sprouted from low on the vine, we decide if we want to keep them as eventual replacements. If we keep them, we train them into the pattern. Otherwise, we cut them off at their point of origin. In its first year, a new cane remains unbranched, or produces perhaps one or two late-emerging spurs. In its second and subsequent years, it will produce spurs which will then bloom.

**Throughout the growing season**, we **remove weak or dead** wood and unwanted branches. This is a repeat-blooming climber, so in addition we continue to deadhead spurs. The spurs will produce more flowering trusses if the light is good and the plant has plenty of water and fertilizer.

**At the end of the year**, we cut off or cut short any **unwanted or over-long** new shoots.

### For this particular rose, lately:

We decided that main cane B extended farther beyond the trellis than was good. In anticipation of cutting it back, we allowed and trained some new shoots this year.

We angled those new canes away from the vertical because more flowering spurs develop on a "leaning" branch.

One of the new canes, A3, grew poorly -- perhaps because there is too much foliage from other canes between it and the sun that shines from the left. We'll remove A3. We'll cut it out, and keep A2, B3 and B4.

Next year in early spring we'll remove B1 and B2 by cutting B just beyond the base of B3. Then we'll shorten A, A2, B3 and B4, cutting each one back to just above a strong spur. We'll cut each spur back to leave just one or two leaf buds.





Below, left: Long new shoots such as those on this climber (arrows) haven't developed bark yet and are particularly susceptible to breaking. You can clip to shorten them, but perhaps you'll decide "That's a good new piece to train in next year!" Then you simply tie it in for now to keep it out of harm's way.



Below: Most roses have some wood that "times out" each year -- dies or becomes unproductive. Two such canes are here (arrows).



All that new growth developed since we pruned this climber about 8 weeks ago, plus two new canes emerged from the base. (They're a bit tough to discern among all the canes in these photos but if you look low and close to the pole in either photo above, or follow the orange arrow below, left, you can pick them out.) We welcome these wholly new canes, as we can tie them in to replace wood that's flowering less as it ages.

Lower left and lower right: Here's the vine after we shortened some new shoots, removed others, and tied-in the rest (two of them tied at blue arrows, left) to reduce the chance that they'll break in the wind, or under the weight of snow and ice. We removed dead or very weak wood. Because one can never know what might happen over winter, we left all the rest, even those canes we think will probably go next year right after bloom to make way for the newly-sprouted successors.





Right: Check back issues (clockwise from top right: 88, 100, 139 and 145) for past rose-pruning pictures. Let us know if this newest installment is any more helpful.

**Obtaining back issues.** There are several ways:

Any issue: **Email and ask** us to send a particular issue. We can't promise speed, but we do get to *all* email eventually.

Issues #1 to #122, **buy a collected works CD** (see pages 21 & 22):

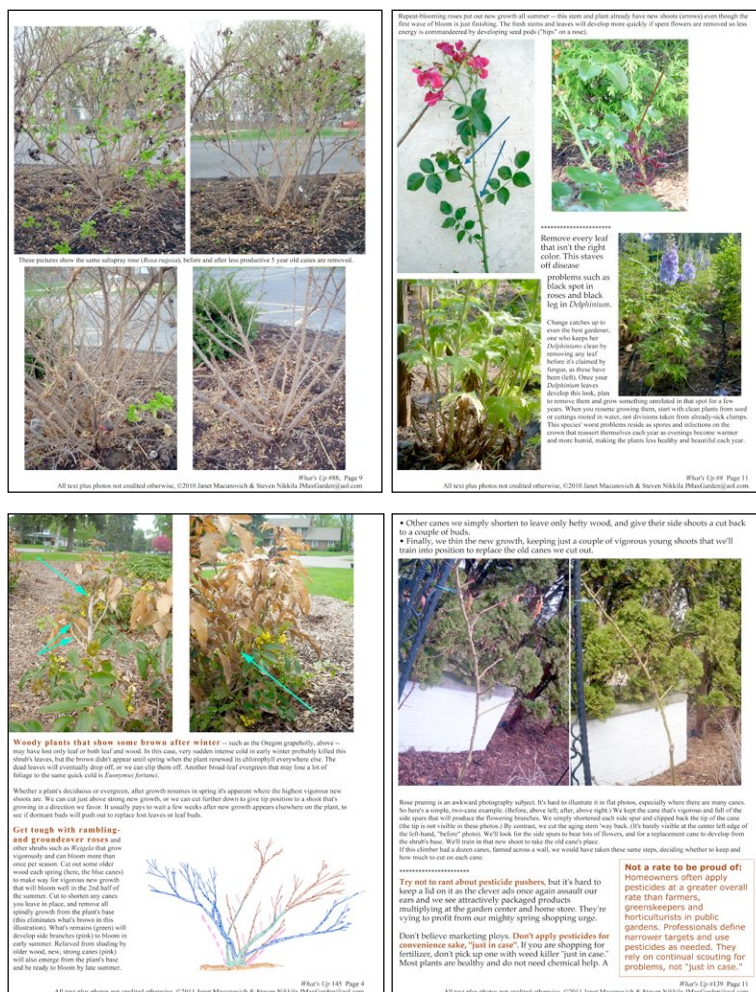
- *Asking About Asters* has five years of Q&A mail from before we were on the Internet and one year of these newsletters, including issues 1 - 21, all fully indexed.
- *Potting Up Perennials* is an indexed collection of issues #22 - #122.

**Ask a friend to copy you.** Many readers, perhaps the person who told you about us, have been reading and saving our newsletters for many years, some since we started this weekly in 1993.

**Wait a bit for our website archives.**

We are loading our library onto our upcoming website (see page 20). Work's been on hold during fall when we're so busy in our clients' gardens (we write for love, we garden to pay the bills!) but we'll be back to it shortly. The site's almost ready to use!

instance, reader Judy Root says of her dad, uncle and their friend Fred Russ:



**Alone in the Garden? Never! Our mentors will always be with us:**

Most of us had a **parent, neighbor or other veteran gardener** to guide us through our first attempts to grow. The **gardening advice they gave us** may include facts about long-ago uses of a plant. For

**They called the tulip tree "whitewood."**  
- Judy Root -

Research note: Many trees that produce light colored wood, and that lumber, are called "whitewood." In this category, basswood, cottonwood, spruce and various pines join tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). Although both of us had carpenter grandfathers, we hadn't ever heard this term before. Anyone want to fill us in on what distinction whitewood has for a carpenter?

Is there **pass-along gardening wisdom** in your hands now? Want to pay homage to all those generations of effort? Tell others about it, and **send it to us**. We'll also pass along all we can.

## Aiming for Answers: Hits on scabby potatoes, blackhearted celery

There are no sure bets in dealing with living things, but every situation we face helps us learn more possibilities -- especially when we share with each other what we've observed. So we're always glad to hear whether you used our suggestions, and what happened next.

Two thank you's to you two! You answered my email question about a potato problem last year. You said you thought it was **potato scab** and sent me to Cornell University's on-line information. You were right. I'll be doing without potatoes for a few years because what Cornell said about the scab getting worse if you don't rotate, was right on. And we'll use soil sulfur and acidifying fertilizer.



The second thanks is for the **celery blackheart** thing. I thought you had just made up that name but now that I know what name to look for I've found a lot of information. Sounds like celery's tough to grow but I'll keep trying, and keep it more evenly watered. - L.T. -

Left: Scab\* is a fungal disease that doesn't completely ruin a crop -- peel and eat it, it's A-OK --

but people don't like the look. It's costly, too, since peeling off the scabby layer can whittle a potato down to something pretty small. Scab's best controlled by choosing scab-resistant varieties, rotating so potatoes and their relatives aren't grown in the same bed year after year, lowering the pH of alkaline soils, and keeping the water steady.

\*For more, copy this URL to your browser:

[http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Potato\\_Scab.htm](http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/factsheets/Potato_Scab.htm)

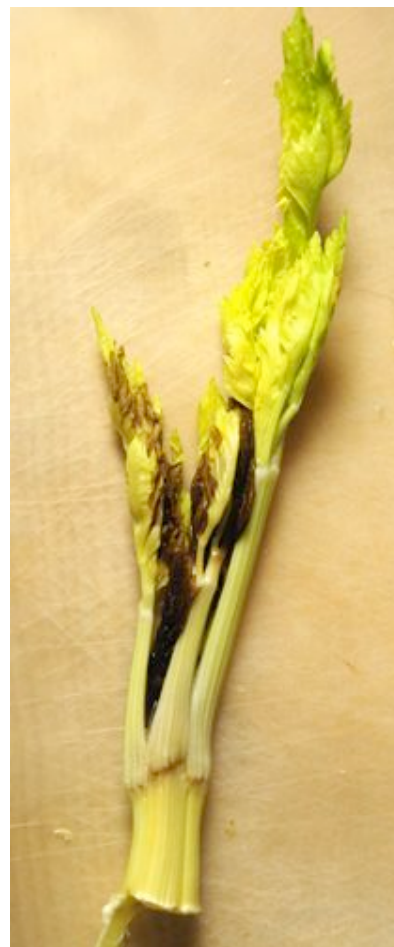
### Simpler than celery:

We're glad to help! One more idea: It can be easier to grow **perennial lovage** (*Levisticum officinale*) and use it as a celery substitute. It's not so good for snacking as annual celery but great for cooking!

Right: Celery blackheart\* is often traceable to irregular watering. Like blossom-end rot of tomato, it occurs when moisture fluctuations keep the developing plant from taking up sufficient calcium. Celery's a crop with a long growing season so you have to be on your toes, water-wise, the whole time. What a chore to keep the soil evenly moist in a year when weeks of early, heavy rain are followed by high heat and drought, then more rain!

\*For more, copy these URLs to your browser:

<http://www.ct.gov/caes/cwp/view.asp?a=2823&q=377614>

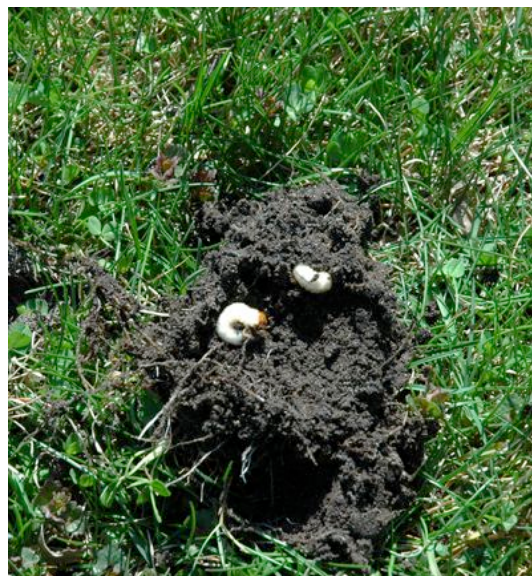


[http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/PhotoPages/Impt\\_Diseases/Celery/Celery\\_Black.htm](http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/PhotoPages/Impt_Diseases/Celery/Celery_Black.htm)



### Green thumbs up to **counting grubs as you lift sod.**

Soil's easy to work in fall, so it's a great time to prepare a new vegetable growing area for next spring, or make an existing bed bigger. Cut the sod into squares, lift each one, knock the soil off it and take it away to the compost. Watch for grubs that fall as you shake the soil loose. More than six grubs per square foot, on average, can mean that your lawn will need help in the form of grub-hunting beneficial nematodes, insecticide, or extra water and fertilizer to out-grow these root-grazing pests. Grub control is better done now than in spring. The grubs are young -- more easily killed -- and they haven't done so much damage to the lawn.



**Green thumbs down to **tree paint**,** another old-time remedy disproved long ago but persisting because it seems like a good idea. Painting over a tree's wound does no good -- the tree's own resin, filling the opening from within, cell by cell, is better. Paint may even do harm. Tar-type paints can kill the wood cells they touch, preventing them from filling with naturally fungicidal, insecticidal resin. Some paints can keep the wood moist, making it *more* attractive to insects, which can bore into it more easily.

### Not all grubs are bad

Grubs are the larval form of beetles, and there will always be some in the soil. Sure, some will become chafers and Japanese beetles, but others\* will become beneficial rove beetles and ground beetles. These prey on many insects that would otherwise proliferate.

\*For more, copy this URL to your browser:

<http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/beneficial-insects-beetles07.pdf>



Big betony gets the ax... See next page.



Fig. 2. Rove beetles can be beneficial insects.<sup>2</sup>

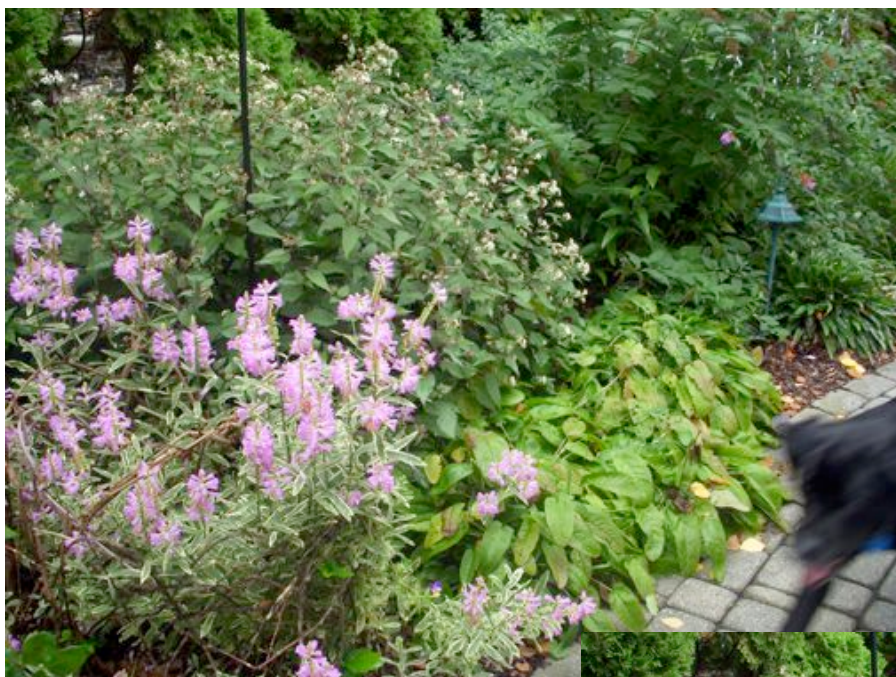
### This week in our garden

#### Grow with us! This week:

(Actually, "this month", since we missed a couple deadlines during this busy season!)

**Cut for a better show.** We're removing whatever doesn't look good. No, we don't worry the least bit that we're hurting anything by cutting it off before Ma Nature can cut it down with cold.



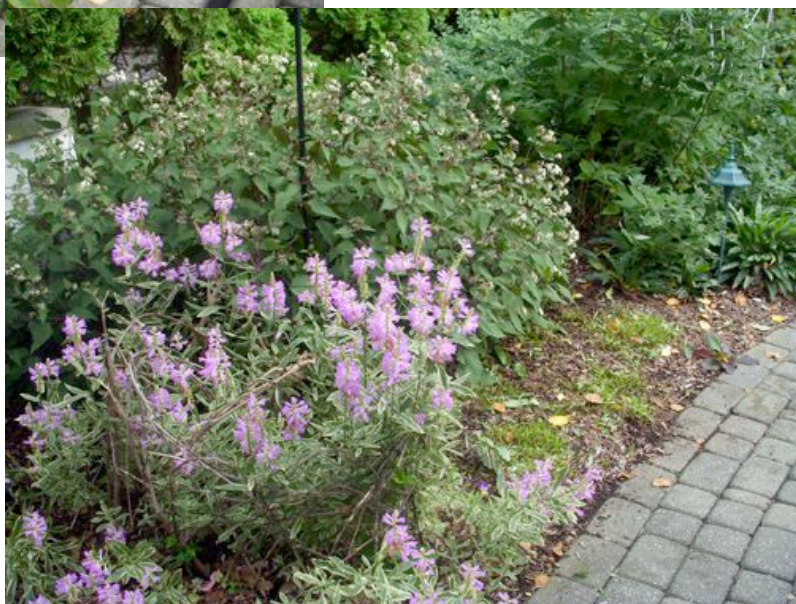


Big betony (*Stachys micrantha*) is a great plant for the front edge of a sunny garden. It blooms, we deadhead it and it blooms again, all the while keeping pretty clean foliage and maintaining its neat form.

On the previous page: Big betony 6 weeks ago after its 2nd deadheading.

Left: Now, at season end its foliage is tired looking, no longer a great contribution to the show.

Below: So we cut it off at ground level, leaving the 'Chocolate' Joe Pye (*Eupatorium maculatum*, beginning to bloom white) and variegated obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana* 'Variegata', with pink flowers) to strut their stuff without distraction.



Tough cutting in fall means we **keep deadheading what is willing to keep looking good.**

Toadlily (*Tricyrtis*), turtlehead (*Chelone*), late gentians (*Gentiana*), fall monkshood ((*Tricyrtis*) and butterfly bush (*Aconitum carmichaelii*) are all candidates. That is, if the plant's in a place where it will be seen this late in the season. Admit it, we spend more time in fall looking out through the window, than in summer when we visited every corner of the yard!



Left, top: This turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*) has weeks of bloom left, if we cut off all the seed pods that are forming. Cut with authority -- too much cutting is usually better than too little.

Left, bottom: Deadheading cut the plant's height in half yet it maintains its looks.



We're also **very glad now for pinches we made a month ago.** What we cut back to delay in bloom, is sure looking fine now.

Below: We cut this blue mist flower or perennial ageratum (*Conoclinium coelestinum*) 7 weeks ago -- took it down to about 3 inches tall. (We also



deadheaded the yellow-orange *Lantana* behind it). Now it's fresh and blooming, later and less tall than it would have been but every bit as blue and welcome.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Get the jump on pests like iris borer.** They're caterpillars that spoil our iris foliage in summer and bring soft rot into the thick, root-like rhizomes.

They pupate and reappear as moths (next page) to lay eggs on iris foliage.



That reappearance happened a couple of weeks ago.

Left: Remember this icky, iris-tuber-chomping caterpillar from issue #151? It's moved on to new mischief as a moth now -- turn the page!



Below: Iris borers are unremarkable moths that fly under our radar each fall. A key to controlling their damage is that they fly just once a year, during this past few weeks. Once it has done its egg-laying on our irises' leaves, fall cold ends its run. If we then clip off and destroy the iris leaves, it makes a huge dent in next year's iris borer population. (Okay, you can wait and cut the leaves off very early next spring, before the eggs hatch. But, yuk! Winter-mushed iris leaves are far less simple to cut and handle than crisp fall foliage.)



If we do nothing, iris borer eggs will hatch in early spring and a new generation of tiny borers will begin to crawl toward the emerging iris foliage.. If we anticipate them, cut off the iris foliage once cold weather has ended the moths' egg-laying, and throw that infested stuff into a hot compost or a fire. Hah! Take that, you creepy crawlers!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Beating out tent caterpillars** that also try to give us the slip. Their egg masses are easily scraped off now, if you know to look for them on crotches of apple trees, crabapples, and cherries.

Left: A tent caterpillar egg mass. This one is empty, the chambers all open, the caterpillars out. Now that you've seen it, you will know one on your crabapple, apple or cherry when you see it. Imagine it dark, each little opening full. If you're pruning a cherry in fall to remove overlong branches, keep an eye out for them.

\*\*\*\*\*

We're **still staking**. Not that we want to be. We thought (as always!) that this time we would full anticipate the plant's finished height and bulk, and provide adequate support. Sigh.



Who can begrudge a plant as pretty as Japanese anemone (this one is *Anemone x hybrida* 'Pamina') some extra staking time? Not us, not in September when it's a major player in the continuing color show. Between the lefthand and righthand photos below, we spent about 15 minutes cutting out 20 flowering stalks and placing taller, stouter canes to stake 20 others.



\*\*\*\*\*

It's high time to do so much more! It's the season for **almost every kind of garden work**. Beds that are too wet in spring are workable now. Areas kept too dry in spring because trees are leafing out, are better now for giving new plants a good start. Cooler air makes it more comfortable for working. We've been planting trees, shrubs and bulbs, dividing almost everything -- small plants tend to grow more vigorously and bloom more fully than older clumps -- edging beds, renovating lawn and spreading slow release fertilizer...

### Who's Janet? Who's Steven?

**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've learned a lot during 25 years of gardening, writing and teaching. The flexibility of the process and its never-ending newness is the best thing. I was hooked from the first time I worked in someone else's yard. That's when I saw that what we do to make a garden has to be modified for *every place*. Now 'my' gardens grow in several States but each one is unique, even those that are full of the same plants. So it's a privilege to work for others and help readers. I learn with them."

**The voice behind the captions** of many gardening books and articles. When publishers who ask him to supply photos for their publications also began asking him to suggest captions, Steven Nikkila's voice developed to match his talented and experienced eye. His visual perspectives have delighted readers and students of gardening for a quarter century. His captioned advice and observations go back a dozen years. Both aspects are fresh and enduring.

Email questions to Janet or Steven at JMaxGarden@aol.com or call 248-681-7850.

## Where to catch Janet and Steven in-person:

**Chances to *Garden by Janet and Steven*** -- observe or try your hand to learn about fall garden clean up at any of the places below. These sessions are free but require registration. See page 19 for more about the why and how of such sessions.

**Saturday, October 15, 9 a.m. - noon, *Garden by Janet & Steven*** at the **Detroit Zoo**, Huntington Woods, MI, Woodward Avenue at I-696. Your chance to volunteer at the zoo in exchange for Janet's & Steven's hands-on instruction in *fall bed preparation, weeding, mulching and protecting tender plants*. For instructions how to join us, call or email Janet & Steven. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

**Wednesday, October 19, 10:30 a.m. - noon, *Garden by Janet & Steven*** in **Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan**, to learn about *gradual fall garden clean up*, from cutting back and weeding to edging and mulching. Come to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register, and to learn the address. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

**Monday, October 24, 10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., *Garden by Janet & Steven*** in **West Bloomfield, Michigan**, to learn about *pruning and fall garden clean up*. Come to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register, and to learn the address. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

**Saturday, November 5, 9 a.m. - noon, *Garden by Janet & Steven*** at the **Detroit Zoo**, Huntington Woods, MI, Woodward Avenue at I-696. Your chance to volunteer at the zoo in exchange for Janet's & Steven's hands-on instruction in *bulb planting and fall garden clean up*. For instructions how to join us, call or email Janet & Steven. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

**Wednesday, October 12 and Thursday, October 13**, Janet and Steven present *Kaleidoscope: Gardens through rose-colored glasses* and *Gardeners: 21st Century Shamans* in Charleston, West Virginia. These presentations about getting and giving more from your gardening are part of the four-day International Master Gardener Conference. For more information or to register for the conference, <http://imgc.ext.wvu.edu/>



Oh yes, once in a while we do dress up and go out on the town! Although we won't go so formal as this for our presentations at the International Master Gardener Conference, the gathered energy of hundreds of gardeners will make it feel this special.

**Tuesday, October 18, 7 p.m., *Four Season Landscape Begin in Fall!***, a how-to design presentation by Janet at the Washtenaw County Michigan State University Extension Master Gardeners' meeting in **Ann Arbor, Michigan**. In the MSU Extension classroom in the basement



of the Washtenaw County Water Resource Commission building at 705 N. Zeeb Road -- just northwest of the I-94 Zeeb Road exit #169. Guests are welcome; a \$5 fee is payable at the door.



### **The Garden by Janet & Steven series:**

You and we are let-me-see, hands-on people. That's how we learn best. So from time to time we schedule *Garden by Janet & Steven* sessions and list them in this newsletter to afford you that kind of chance to grow. You visit us in a garden to either watch or work with us. Generally, there is no charge and we're in one of two kinds of locations:

1) At the **gardens we tend through our business, Perennial Favorites:** Our clients understand our enthusiasm for teaching. Some open their gardens to small groups who want to see and practice "how to." When work we're scheduled to do may be of interest to you, we invite you in.

2) In the **Detroit Zoo, Adopt-A-Garden** program where we're 22-year veterans. Many people have worked with us there, some for a day and others for years. We have fun, we learn, we accomplish much. You can come help us for a day, and stay on if you like, too.

Above: Finished the day's to-do list at a *Garden by Janet & Steven* at the Detroit Zoo (counterclockwise from Janet): Sandy Niks, Mary Birnbryer, Shirley Ewing, Debi Slentz with granddaughter Lily Koen, Deanna Koen, Dawn Miller, Phil Gigliotti, Maddie Laule and Karen Bilicki.

### **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 with new material and "hybrids" from our basic 100.

So, we're game for...

- 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 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 times.



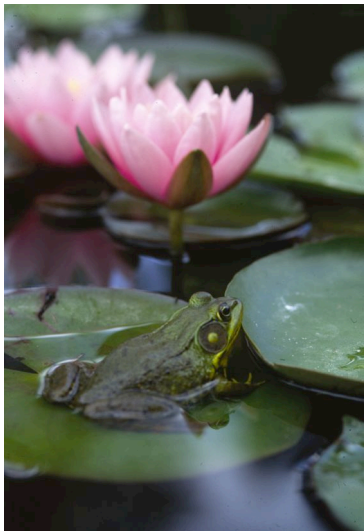
\*Steven Nikkila and Janet Macunovich have been digging, shooting and teaching how-to for 22 years. They began producing conferences in the '90s and ran a gardening school for 12 years, featuring expert instructors who knew their stuff in a garden as well as knowing how to get their messages across in front of a group.

The yellow coneflower we used as a donation telltale is all-blue. Thank you! We've paid the design and programming bills and are now learning to operate all the component parts of the site. We're itching to launch but determined to have everything usable *and* useful first. We'll keep you advised of progress right here.



You helped us pay for the expert help we needed to insure that our website will be clean, easy to use and secure. Now the project's back to us, and we do a bit more as we can -- a process that's slowed a bit for the past few weeks, and a few weeks still to come as we close client's gardens. We hope to meet you there in November.

## Time to garden your walls...



You can purchase hard copies or high-resolution versions of any of Steven's images you see in *What's Coming Up*.<sup>\*</sup> Or name a flower, type of scene or hue in mind you can request that dream. His library includes tens of thousands of plants and natural images.

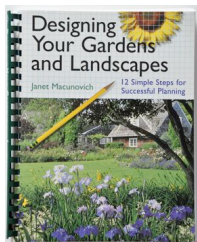
- **Matted, framed,**  
overall 11 x 15", \$48
- **No-fade cloth tapestry,**  
36 x 48', \$215

A photograph of several fishing boats docked in a harbor. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the boats. The boats are primarily red and blue, with white superstructures. In the background, there are green hills and some buildings. The water is calm, reflecting the boats and the sky.

What's Up 157 Page 20



## You asked for our advice "on paper". We wrote and sell these books plus CDs:



### **Designing Your Gardens and Landscape**

First published in 1990 as *Easy Garden Design*, a 150-page step-by-step recipe that's become a design classic. Janet developed, uses and has trained thousands of others to use this process. People say: "This is exactly the simple, clear approach I need!" This design process is applicable world-wide.

Soft cover, spiral bound. B&W illustrations by Janet. \$19.00

### **Caring for Perennials**

Janet's unique approach to perennial care how-to, the real-time story of one bed from early spring to season's end. The 180 engaging and fact-filled pages make you part of all Janet does and you might ever need to do in each task's appropriate season and sequence. Includes a chart of what to do, when for 70 top perennials. Advice in this book is applicable in all of temperate U.S. and Canada. The perennial chart includes a key to adapt its timing for far southern or northern edges of that range.

Soft cover book. Text by Janet Macunovich. Color illustrations by Steven Nikkila. \$20.00



### **Asking About Asters CD.**

A digital library of six years of Janet's work: weekly columns, newsletters and over 200 extra Q&A letters to individual gardeners. 1,681 questions answered about soil preparation, fertilizing, pruning, design, choosing plants, foiling bugs and much more. No repeated topics. Fully indexed; the entire collection can be searched from one index.

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### **Potting Up Perennials CD. New for 2011**

Practical, beautiful answers about perennials and all kinds of flowers, trees, shrubs, design, pruning and much more is in this collection of 2009 & 2011's *What's Coming Up*. Includes 101 issues with over 1,700 pages, 1,600 articles and 2,400 images. Has a comprehensive index with how-to guide so you can search for any topic or detail in any of the 101 issues. Bonus on this CD: Steven Nikkila's Daydream Screen Saver, 74 of his most vivid works from gardens and nature.

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### **Janet & Steven's complete digital library New for 2011**

Set of two CDs: *Asking About Asters* and *Potting Up Perennials*. \$30.00



### **Janet and Steven give you: Trees\***

A choice collection of Janet and Steven's advice for tree selection, planting and care. Each article made its debut in *Michigan Gardener* magazine and has been on hold since, awaiting completion of its fellows until this comprehensive compilation became possible. Topics include: Selecting trees; fall color; what's happening to ash trees; replacing a big tree; descriptions, lists and photos of great trees; why starting small is a good idea when planting; planting how-to, why's and why not's; staking, watering and fertilizing; mulching; rescuing a tree from the lawn; preventing construction damage; pruning to keep trees and shrubs small; removing suckers; detecting girdling roots; and dealing with maple tar spot and lecanium scale.

10" x 13" magazine, 48 pages. Color illustrations. \$12.00

### **Janet and Steven give you: Landscape Ideas\***

Janet and Steven's favorite articles on landscape design and renovation: Designing with foliage color; covering up after the bulb season; doubling up perennials for 3-season color; shady solutions; using usual plants in unusual ways; designing hypo-allergenic gardens; Murphy's Laws applied to gardens; renovation how-to; fragrant plants and designs; attracting wildlife; rockwork; invasive plants; discovering a site's hidden assets; using herbs in a landscape; and how to cheat to improve a garden quickly. These articles appeared first in *Michigan Gardener* magazine individually between 1999 and 2011. Now they're collected in this set for your design library.

10" x 13" magazine, 48 pp. Color Ill.'s. \$12.00



### **Janet and Steven give you: Garden Care\***

Vital how-to for tending a garden, from Janet and Steven's favorite articles on: bed preparation; soil testing; making a weed-free bed; spring start-up; improving hard-packed soil; fertilizing; watering; cutting back and deadheading; repairing irrigation; drought-tolerant plants; sharpening tools; tweaking in summer; staking; and the art of fall garden clean up. Items in this collection were selected from among Janet and Steven's ten years of *Michigan Gardener* articles. Each made its debut in that magazine, waited for its companion pieces and now they all join your library in this more durable and comprehensive form.

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### **Janet and Steven give you: Trees, Landscape Ideas and Garden Care \***

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**\*For a look inside, email [JMaxGarden@aol.com](mailto:JMaxGarden@aol.com) with the subject line "Magazine peek."**

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