

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila answer your growing concerns
Issue 129, January 26, 2011

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That about-to-fall magnolia petal can play a part in protecting pine from its pests. See page 5.



Pesty pine: Change may be the cure

We have five **mugo pine** bushes in front of our house (north exposure). Three are against the foundation (very shady) and two are farther in front (semi-sunny). Not all of them are thriving.

Last year early in the growing season I noticed white **worm-like creatures** on three of the bushes -- two near the foundation and one in the sun. Also, I saw some **white things that looked like eggs** (could it be "scale?"). I sprayed with something containing "botanical pyrethrins." That seemed to kill the worms.

Later in the season there appeared a **black sticky substance** on the two shaded bushes, which my lawncare service diagnosed as some kind of fungus. The bees gather to eat the stuff and it appears to be killing the needles on the interior of the bushes. The lawncare guy sprayed twice, but that didn't help.

Is there something I can use myself to combat the fungus, if that's what it is? Also, are shaded bushes at risk because they are growing in less favorable light conditions? - J.G. -

You give a good description of **pine sawfly** (the "worms") and of **pine scale** (the white dots and the black sooty mold that can grow on scale excrement). You're correct in thinking mugos in shade or half shade are at risk. They are weaker, more prone to heavy infestation and more likely to suffer lasting damage from their pests, compared to mugos in full sun.



Left: Pine scales are sucking insect pests of pine that can make the needles look like they have dandruff, or as if the plant is a holiday decoration that's been flocked to appear snow-covered. Each year, new scales emerge in spring from eggs left under the protective, hard shells of their dead mothers. We've used the straight pin in this photo to pop off some of last season's white scale covers. The flecks all around the pin are the tiny scale eggs that fell out from under those covers.

When they're newly emerged in spring, scales are called crawlers and are easily killed with an oil or insecticide, or knocked off the plant with a forceful spray of water. They become immobile and fixed as they age, and harder to kill as they develop protective hard covers of their own.

What this reader saw as worms were probably the pale green larvae of European pine sawfly (below, *Neodiprion sertifer*). These insects are not native in North America but naturalized wherever European pines such as *Pinus mugo* grow. Members of this species rear up in a synchronized, distinctive way when they sense motion nearby. Gardeners often describe this reaction in more detail than the pest itself.



Snowy winter, a plentiful harvest.
Benjamin Franklin, in *Poor Richard's Almanack*, 1733

European pine sawfly eats a pine's mature needles. These are feeding below the new "candle."



Below: They often finish feeding for the year before the newest needles are developed to their liking, and so the plant's branches look like this.



Below: Despite the name, sawflies aren't flies but the larvae of tiny non-stinging wasps. Take a look after spring weather has held sway for about a month in your area -- early May for us in zone 5 Michigan. You may get a heads up that your pines are in for a sawfly year. These sawfly eggs were laid on the needles by adults that emerged on the first spring day, having spent the winter cocooned on the ground under the pine. These eggs have enlarged and are almost ready to hatch -- eclose.



On every stem, on every leaf,... and at the root of everything that grew, was a professional specialist in the shape of grub, caterpillar, aphid, or other expert, whose business it was to devour that particular part.
Oliver Wendell Holmes

Below: Over the last few years we've been seeing eastern white pines in Michigan infested with needle-eating larvae. These are



not pine sawflies but a type of pine webworm, possibly the non-native pine false webworm that's been spreading west for the last 5 or 6 decades.

Left: One way pine webworm damage can be distinguished from sawfly damage is by light webbing the insects produce, which fills with needle debris and insect excrement called frass. This mess remains behind on the branches they've defoliated. (Below, on a dwarf white pine). The webworm prefers to eat old needles but will eat the new foliage as well, if it runs out of old needles before growing large enough to drop off and pupate below the plant. Control tactics for webworm are the same as for the pine sawfly, although timing differs.

Pinus mugo is a **mountain species** from the Alps. It's evolved for life on exposed slopes where shade occurs only around really big boulders. That's how much sun energy and air movement a mugo pine should have to be healthy. Those very near a building may be **handicapped by shade, rain-blocking walls and lack of air movement**. Brisk breezes can help keep needles clean of scale and sawfly. Rain rinses away insect excrement.



There are always choices in gardening, and in this case your choices include **removing the pines**. All other options involve **pine pest control as a regular, permanent part of your schedule**. That's never our first choice when it comes to deciding how to spend our outdoor time. If these pines were exposed to more sun and wind, their pests might get ahead of them once in a while but in most years sawfly and scale populations would be so low and the plant's growth so vigorous that neither you or the pine would notice.

If you can't part with the pines, you can **put a damper on their pest population** by spraying with a horticultural oil such as Sunspray or Volck in late April** as the sawfly and scale eggs discharge the new generation of suckers. Time it right and the crawlers and tiny larvae will emerge through a film of oil and be smothered. If it looks like that first salvo didn't do its job well, you might follow up with a spray of pyrethrin (or pyrethrum, which is the natural, plant-

derived form of this insect killer) in mid-May and mid-August to stun or kill the late-emergers and survivors.

Sooty mold doesn't destroy a leaf surface. It grows over the foliage on the insect excrement. Then that dark filter can screen out sunlight, weakening that greenery so the plant eventually discards it. This effect speeds up where light is already on the low side. **Wash away sooty mold** with a weekly shower of plain, forceful water.

As you saw, **almost any insecticide will kill pine sawflies** and most kill scale crawlers, too -- those that are young, not yet white. Water can kill both, too, if sprayed hard when they're tiny. Most people overlook sawflies until they're large, when many needles have already been eaten. If you watch closely for them in the last half of May, you can knock them off before they've had time to thin the foliage. The same action will help suppress the scale numbers, and your struggling pines will have that much more energy to deal with other problems.

****Pine scale and sawfly hatch usually happens in late April in our neck of the woods, just as pine buds pop their covers and start to grow. However, this development comes earlier in warm springs and more southerly locations. It happens later when the season's been cooler than usual or the garden's further north. So don't time your spray by the calendar, or pay a pest management company that operates that way. Use the calendar only as a guide. Begin checking the plant a week or two ahead of the average time, ready to begin your pest control measures whenever the plant's growth begins.**

Alternatively, watch the saucer magnolia trees in your area as a pine sawfly alarm clock. When you see the sight below -- the petals of saucer magnolia have begun to drop -- pine sawfly larvae are emerging from their eggs. Donald Orton's book *Coincide* (Plantsmen's Publications) explains this and many other pest-plant development pairs.



If you spray to kill, pray have a care for your fellow killers!

Be aware that tactics involving chemical sprays -- even natural chemicals such as pyrethrum and neem oil -- will also kill natural predators such as ladybug larvae, parasitic wasps, rove beetles and lacewing larvae that are timed to hatch along with their prey. Like lions and other animals high in a food chain, predacious insects are slower to recoup than plant-eaters.

While their natural controllers are away, pests will play -- scale, mouse and antelope numbers boom until ladybug, fox and lion multiply and move back in. So any strategy you employ that kills predator along with prey will lock you into the pest control loop.

Our own preference in pest management is to allow some pest damage while promoting appropriate predators any way we can, insuring the presence of a natural, 24-7 defensive force.

Unlikely hero: Mouse as sawfly predator

Both pine sawfly and pine webworm larvae drop to the ground after finishing their needle-y feasts. They overwinter there just beneath the soil surface under their host plant. A hungry mouse can make a big dent in their population during winter.

Bees blamed but innocent

Where sucking insects are, there will be honeydew -- excrement from the aphid or scale that's hooked into the plant's sap flow. Where there's honeydew, yellow jackets and ants gather that cannot themselves tap sap yet crave its sweetness. See a yellow jacket, look for scale or aphids!

Bees aren't part of this scene, since they're happy sipping nectar and occupied in collecting pollen. So don't blame bees for the mess made by and foliage lost to sucking insects.

Filling a gap in the landscape

Removing pest-prone plants might create gaps in a garden. Don't rush to fill that space. Spend time with good books such as *The National Arboretum Book of Outstanding Landscape Plants* (Jacqueline Heriteau, Simon and Schuster, 1990) and check with knowledgeable friends or a landscape designer at a garden center. Consider your options. For example, where conditions are not right for sun-loving mugo pine, you might consider a shade tolerant birdsnest spruce (right, *Picea abies* 'Nidiformis'), dwarf yew (*Taxus x media* varieties such as 'Everlow') or dwarf grapeholly (*Mahonia aquifolium* 'Compactum').



Don't limit yourself to shrub-for-shrub replacement, either. Perennials and non-plant features can stand in for small shrubs to carry a landscape elegantly through all four seasons. A north-facing foundation could be planted with evergreen groundcover ajuga (*Ajuga reptans* 'Bronze Beauty' is one choice), evergreen lenten rose (*Helleborus x orientalis*), evergreen Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), and dwarf astilbe (*Astilbe chinensis*). Add a well-placed bit of statuary, and this combo yields winter interest plus April, May, and August bloom.



Very few needled evergreens thrive in full shade, but a few handle part shade better than mugo pine can. One is birdsnest spruce (left). Another is dwarf white pine (*Pinus strobus nana*, shown on page 4 troubled by pine webworm).

Below: Perennials such as this evergreen Lenten rose (*Helleborus x orientalis*) have enough size and presence to fit the bill in many cases when someone says "I need a small shrub."

Below: Our vote for evergreen in shade often goes to dwarf grapeholly (*Mahonia aquifolium* 'Compactum'). It has bright yellow flowers. There are blue berries on female shrubs (quickly consumed by birds, so of fleeting ornamental value). What we like most, however, is its coarse evergreen leaf, that's green in summer, maroon in winter.



In search of magnifier merchants

As usual I am enjoying your newsletter, and I have a question. You mentioned (issue #128) that a **magnifier** belongs in my garden tool bin. Could you tell me **which of these is best** and where to buy it? - W.W. -

We have **numerous magnifiers**, W.W. We keep collecting because we keep seeing different models **useful in different situations**. We like our loupe that hangs on a lanyard around the neck when we're out in the field. We like a cupped loupe at our desk, for being able to confine a live insect as we view it. We find glass loupes easier to clean, but plastic lighter in the pocket and less expensive to replace when we lose it, as we are wont to do with small tools. And so on.

Just looking into magnifier suppliers recently, we added to **our wish list** the tiny, flat-screen digital microscope we mentioned in issue #128 (for when we happen to have \$329 laying around). It's on our list just below the computer accessory with a magnifier eye, that will display on our computer screen a great big image of what it "sees."

If we had **to choose just one**, it'd be a loupe that's 10x - 20x in strength, in a case or mount that keeps it from getting dirty and scratched. Donna Danielson, a Plant Clinic Assistant at the Morton Arboretum, uses a **Super Loupe** that fits the bill. She has been pleased with a supplier (www.sciplus.com) that sells them very inexpensively. (Below.) That supplier also sells a 30x pocket microscope which costs less even with shipping than we've paid for the same thing at local Radio Shack stores and teacher supply stores. Thanks, Donna!

Search Results for "super loupe"



SUPER LOUPE

This extremely good quality fold 5/8" x 13/16" and is teardrop-shaped by (3) button-cell batteries that accessing the batteries.

93400P1 LIGHTED LOUPE
93400P3 LIGHTED LOUPE 3
[See More Magnifiers](#)

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Popular Tag

Left: At www.sciplus.com, search for Super Loupe to find the magnifier recommended by Donna Danielson, who examines a lot of insects and leaves as a plant clinic assistant at the Morton Arboretum. She says, "Thanks so much for emailing your newsletter to us. I thought I'd tell you about a hand lens that I like a lot -- it's 20x and has two LED lights on it so you can see really well. It's only \$4.95 and available at this scientific surplus store in Illinois. But they sell them on-line, too (at): www.sciplus.com"

Below: www.sciplus.com also has a 30x pocket microscope for a price that, even with shipping added, beats what we have paid for the same tool at Radio Shack and teacher supply stores.

Please note that this 30x pocket microscope is the TOP photo in this catalog entry from www.sciplus.com yet it's the BOTTOM product number, 34407. We never turn down a good tool and own a 60-100x magnifier, but find 30x to be enough magnification for most garden uses,

Search Results for "30x pocket microscope"



POCKET MICROSCOPY

Good things come in (2) different small packages. It stamps, coins, flora, insects or assorted minute focus knob, on/off switch, small LED for illumination microscopic 3-1/4" x 1-3/16" x 3/4" and has a battery included. Magnifies from 60-100X, with coarse-

~~93252 60X MICROSCOPE~~
34407 POCKET MICROSCOPE

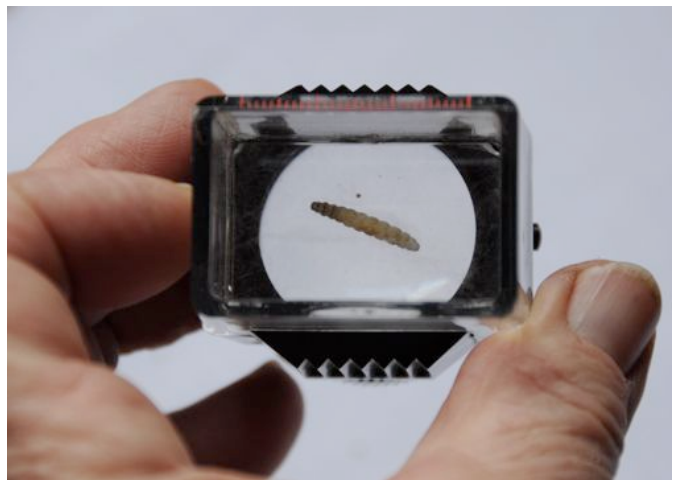
We do hate to be close to some pests, but without magnification we'd be a lot further from pinning down the identity -- and thus the life cycle and vulnerable times -- of this pine webworm (below, left). Looking close, we see its brown head and markings are quite different than the European pine sawfly's black noggin and stripes (below, right).



Below, left: We suspected this to be a *Euonymus* caterpillar (*Yponomeuta cagnagella*) infestation. Insects had webbed over and were devouring the foliage of a burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*). One caterpillar is centered among the frass and bits of plant debris caught in the tent.



Below: A close look at one of the caterpillars helped us confirm its identity, and that was the key to figuring how and when to control it. (With a forceful, web-penetrating spray of the biological control Bt in earl spring.) Read more at <http://hyg.ipm.illinois.edu/pastpest/200806g.html>



Tip cuttings: What people are saying this week

So much goes on in email exchanges between newsletters! Some current excerpts:

Worm bins work, but aren't for everyone

Re winter composting: I am going wild here, having to put all the kitchen waste in the garbage. I never throw the vegetable trimmings away without a pang of remorse! I had a

Worm Woman bin* for years, until my husband got REALLY testy about it. I finally gave it to young gardening friends who pay me back with a bucket of vermipost each year. - C -

My friend had a worm bin* that worked like a charm. Even banana peels were being turned into finished compost in about three weeks. The end came when her dog started gnawing at the cupboard door that kept the bin out of sight. (She had no basement, so kept the bin under the sink.) The dog could hear the quiet rustling of the worms and was going nuts trying to get in there and investigate it. So now I have the bin! - J -

*More in the book *Worms Eat My Garbage* by Mary Appelhof and at www.wormwoman.com

Dressing indoor plants for frigid winter trips

I (had Christmas cacti to transport on a bitter cold day and) knew I had one or two places to stop along the way.... though I didn't want these plants anymore I still had a hard time killing plants. I set the two little plants in their pots in a big zipper baggie, then took two disposable hand warmers, shook them up and set them in the bottom of the bag. I left air in the bag and it soon steamed up. It was freezing out but the plants made the trip with flying colors. Oh ya! - D -

Houseplant gave thumbs down to plastic

When we moved to our new house we set each houseplant in a paper bag or cardboard box and closed it up so the warm air would stay around it. It was a two hour trip in 19°F in the unheated back of the moving truck, but they all made it. Except one that was too big for a paper bag and we were out of really big boxes so we put it in a plastic bag. When we took it out we found that wherever the plastic rested on the leaves they'd turned black. I had to cut off those parts. While I was clipping, G. was saying, "It's like in *What's Up*, they said don't use plastic to cover plants in a frost because the plastic isn't an insulator..." Of course, he didn't remember to tell me that *beforehand*! - L -

Houseplant problem caught early, washed away

Your newsletter is RIGHT on time! I was reading it (about mites and indoor plants developing trouble that builds up to a plague by February) when my partner came out of the bathroom -- where the zebra plant lives - and said, "There's something on the top of that plant in the bathroom." I went to look and eeew, there are translucent flat things congregated on the new growth. Mealybug crawlers, maybe. I'm soap sudsing 'em to death, right now! - S -

Put distance between woodies and pond edge

Hello Janet & Steven. I'm sure you will receive a wealth of expert advice regarding what a first time pond owner should know, so I'll try to keep my answer short. This is what I wish someone had told me when I first started planting around ponds.

Don't plant small trees and shrubs too close to the edge. Over time rock pond edges are sometimes (depending on the size of the rocks) prone to settling and shifting with water movement and winter snow and ice. This can create low spots along the edge of the pond. So you may need to occasionally find and lift the edge of the liner, use a few handfuls of sand to build up the edge, then reposition rock. If you plant an expensive Japanese maple too close to the edge, this task could become much more complicated. Perennials and ground covers can be tucked in right up to the edges because you can easily relocate them if needed. – Karen Skandalaris –

Karen Skandalaris is a landscape designer who's designed and installed many water gardens for clients, and built an extensive pond and stream system for her own landscape. She's also an engaging speaker who taught with us at our gardening school for many years and speaks about design topics. Bring her to your club by asking for our speaker list! See page 20.

Plant answers to harvest ideas

...thank you both so much for sharing all of your hard-won knowledge... – C –

Thank *you*, C. It's a two-way street. We learn a great deal by hearing from you-all about how your gardens grow.

Neglected bed needs tough love early in spring

18 months ago, I had a bone marrow transplant and, as a result, I have been unable to do *any* work in my garden. My immune system is fragile and there is too much bacteria, mold, fungus, etc. My family has helped although their favorite reply to my requests (demands?) is "Why do we have to do that? It looks fine the way it is."

So I am now faced with the coming spring (I plan to be out there even if I have to wear a biohazard suit) following over **a year of benign neglect**. For example: There's an unknown flowering vine among the daises, the sedum has plans to overtake the entire side bed, my yellow lab discovered the burning bushes make great scratching posts -- never mind that the Lamium couldn't stand up to her paws... I think you get the general idea. So, what can I expect next spring? **What should I plan to do** first? Second? Any advice is greatly appreciated. – B.P. –

Good for you, B.P. **Gardening is a great healer**. Maybe others who have been in your shoes can suggest ways to avoid harmful or compromising contacts.

Your family may be more right than you think. A garden can *look* terrible by virtue of things grown tall and floppy -- annual weeds mixed with perennials not cut back, for instance. Yet that bed **may not really be so far gone**.

Plucking ideas from the grapevine:

Have you gardened yourself back into shape after an illness or surgery? Tell us how, so we can share it along.

Do you have advice for others coming back to a garden that ran wild for a time? Tell us and we'll tell all!

A previously well tended garden can hold its own for a year. A **thorough weeding** and edging can to bring it back into shape, with some special attention to hot spots. Those include places where your own desirable plants have gotten out of hand as well as where a perennial weed formerly held at bay by regular plucking has had time to get its legs under it. (We shudder to think that the flowering vine you see may be bindweed... Yet it may be only annual buckwheat. We'll be here for you if you want to send us a photo to identify.)



The catmint snuggled into the rocks (lower arrow here, and the background arrow in the next photo) was not invited but self-sown from plants higher on the hill (upper arrow). The extra catmint may please our cat Fraxy, who escapes from the house and dashes out to rub and chew such foliage. However, we're not keen on it...

... since during our neglect it seeded itself even further out, all along this path edge. Half the stone surface is now lost under catmint -- the edge of the path is actually at the dashed red line. Cutting the plants to the ground and then covering them for the growing season with newspaper and mulch (or black cloth on the rock face) can kill them.



A quicker way to reclaim the bed: Disassemble the rock wall, remove the entrenched weeds, then replace the rock.

To reclaim a bed after 1 year

We get to the bed early in the spring and **start by cutting down** all the herbaceous perennials' previous years' stems and clipping woody perennials short. We leave any weed tops un-cut so we don't miss them later.

As we clip we give plants the once-over to **determine if each clump's healthy**, needs division or other attention. We don't do that work right then but we do make a note of what's needed.



Around and between plants, we **spread slow-release fertilizer**. It will be mixed in as we continue our work.

Then we **edge the bed**, chasing all uninvited running roots from the edge into the bed. This can mean lifting perennials to remove weed roots, then replacing the perennials.

Next we **weed the center of the bed**. If we come to a perennial weed hot spot, we deal with it by slicing through its center, tracing any running roots outward and removing them. We also mark such places mentally or physically and come back to them weekly during the season to pull any survivor weeds before they have a chance to regain momentum.

Then, if there's time, we **divide perennials to rejuvenate crowded clumps** or relocate any plant that's doing less well than expected. As we do this, we lift everything out that must be lifted in an entire area, and set the clumps outside the bed. Then we spread as much compost as we have wheelbarrows of lifted clumps. As we dig to replant perennials we'll also be mixing the compost



in, renewing the soil's fertility and bulk. If this step is skipped, re-made sections of a bed settle. This creates low craters, that look uneven and trap some plants in stuffy lower spots where air doesn't move well.

Finally, we cover all exposed soil -- **spread 2- to 3 inches of mulch**.

Left: Hot spots in a neglected garden are places colonized by an aggressively spreading perennial -- it may have been originally invited or a true "weed."

When a garden has been on its own for a long time, it may be best to smother, dig or kill everything since only the most aggressive plants and weeds may remain. If you choose to dig in such an area, it pays to identify what's there. I've wrapped a bit of plastic around the stem of some poison ivy (a) so I can hold it up for you to see, in this bed. Arrow "b" points to Virginia creeper vine, "c" a wild geranium, and "d" a young *Sassafras*.



Right: Clumps of perennials and woody plants lifted from a bed being renovated can be put on hold in the shade nearby. These clumps add up to 8 wheelbarrow loads, and so that same amount of compost must be added to the bed to replace what's been removed and avoid the crater effect.



Left: Most of these perennials will go to the compost. Only a small portion of each will go back into the clean bed, after that division has been thoroughly examined and declared free of weed root bits.

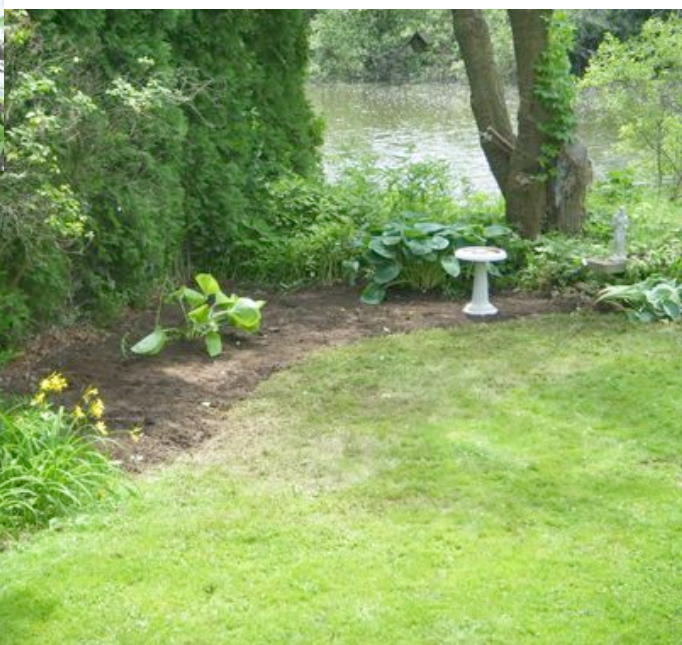


The edge of our working area, a space we renovated in our friend Lea's garden last year. Lea, like this issue's B.P., had been laid low for a couple of seasons, during which time the garden had done its own thing. We've lifted all the plants from this bed and carefully followed all running roots to extricate those, too.

Below, left: What Janet removed, Lea and Dominic sorted and cleaned, or composted. They identified the "keeper" plants and removed all weed roots from those root balls. The keepers went on hold in the shade in bunches, in buckets, their bare roots moistened.



Below: When it was time to replant Lea's bed, we started by placing a focal point plant -- a distinctive plant placed where we wanted to draw the eye. Smaller, blue-r and green-er plants will frame it to help it remain distinctive.



More steps after more years or more trouble

Also, where the gardener's situation has changed, we figure ways to **redesign to reduce maintenance**.

When a gardener can't keep up the former pace, **ruthless changes are often necessary**. We ask each plant, "Can you perform here even if you're given minimal care?"

Those that can't answer "Yes" immediately and with conviction, earn a fast trip to the compost. Then we go on the hunt for species that can fit the new, more restrictive selection criteria. We can usually make those alterations a bit at a time.

When the garden is very large or there are many beds to reclaim, we start with the bed or part of a bed that is seen most often by those who come into the yard or seen front-and-center from sitting areas in and around the house. If we clear only a portion of a bed, we maintain a wide no-man's land between that re-made section and what's still wild.

If the bed is so far gone that it cannot be reclaimed by one thorough weeding, we treat the area like a brand new bed. Then the first task is to clear it of all perennials -- both weeds and desirable plants. That means digging it over thoroughly to remove all plant parts, or killing everything there.

Physical- or chemical kill?

We kill with a smothering paper-and-mulch layer that can starve most things if left in place for a whole growing season.

Some people use a herbicide to kill what's there. We don't recommend that, because it does not save time in the long run or work better than digging or smothering. There are also disturbing questions in our minds and research files about collateral impact of herbicide use. Ask us about those specifically if you're interested, as it's an involved issue that may slow your decisions and we'd rather see you digging in right away.

We then **loosen and renew the soil**, again with as many wheelbarrows of compost as wheelbarrows of plants removed. We spread a slow release fertilizer and rake the bed to level it. Then we split every perennial to bits small enough that we can see there are no unwanted roots hiding in that mass, and replant.

Usually, we **replant only very small divisions** of the rescued perennials, since removing weed roots often leaves us bare root pieces with only one or two "eyes." Guaranteed weed free is better than big. Small pieces grow very quickly.

If it's been **more than two years since the bed has been tended**, we often pop out only a plant or two, to save heirloom perennials or varieties no longer available on the market. Then we do a wholesale dig or smother of the entire bed.

Redesigning to correct problems.

Making a bed easier to work involves many tactics. We might lay out maintenance paths so we can easily reach everything in a deep bed. Sometimes we remove and discard all of a given perennial because it's shown itself to be weedy without supervision. We look for different, more sedate species to place there. We'll also re-group plants to improve blooming combinations and help one plant hide its neighbors as they enter shabby seasons.

*Low care is what we do while on our knees.
Smart care is what makes the growing easier.*

- Janet -



Snipping lilies and stopping diggers

Hi Janet & Steven! **About dead-heading Asiatic & Oriental lilies**, should you cut off what's left of each individual flower or should you cut the stalk just below the lowest flower? Also, one more question: What critter digs up annuals & then just leaves them laying there? - S.B. -

You can either deadhead or cut back a *Lilium*. If it's a new plant that's not yet well established or one we're hoping will bulk up, we clip only the flower. From others we might want a foot-long stem for a bouquet, and so cut a 24-inch plant to 12 inches. or to keep the garden looking neat. Sometimes we cut low so remaining stubs will blend into shorter, surrounding foliage. Sometimes we cut quite hard. One clump that increases like wildfire gets cut to the ground as soon as it has finished bloom each year.

A bulb forms each year under a true lily (*Lilium*) such as your Asiatic and oriental hybrids. If the plant's top is left alone that bulb will increase in size and eventually develop side bulbs, upping the clump's stem count. The rate of increase depends on how much leaf surface the plant has. A healthy perennial such as a *Lilium* in a good place has enough leaf to cause its bulb to double or triple in size each year. So if you only want the plant to remain the same size, you can cut it back after bloom by a third or a half.

As for **what digs up annuals:**

Raccoons and skunks will check out

loose soil in search of whatever may have burrowed in there. The plant is tossed aside as it isn't their focus. Rabbits and squirrels may dislodge plants as they nibble if they are loose plugs in a bed. We've seen geese and ducks do the same thing.

Malodorous and distasteful powders and sprays such as blood meal and hot pepper may protect a plant until it establishes roots or loose soil becomes settled around it. However, nothing's certain when living things are involved. We once watched a rabbit grazing among annuals, apparently favoring plants that had been treated with a repellent.



Green thumbs up to the **greatness of any growing year, in January**. In our midwinter imaginings, everything about our gardens is better than last year. Oh, that those dreams would all play out.

Green thumbs down to **letting your tools languish in rust**. Even if you don't come to a tool cleaning party (see page 22) to learn to clear away the rust, at least coat the metal parts -- rust and all -- with some WD-40 oil, and rub linseed oil on the wooden handles.

Who's Janet? Who's Steven?



A gardener who got carried away. Janet Macunovich has been known to two generations of neighborhood children as "the lady at the flower house, the one with no lawn." Her lifelong interest in plants grew to a passion after she spent the summer of 1973 working in England, where she had the privilege of apprenticing to tenth-generation gardeners in a 300 year old garden. By 1981 the last of the lawn disappeared from her yard just as her hobby -- helping others in their gardens -- grew beyond its bounds into a gardening business. Eventually her talent as a writer and speaker crossed with her experience in the garden to grow on as books (such as "Designing Your Gardens and Landscape" and "Caring for Perennials"), a weekly newspaper column, a radio talk show and a gardening school.

A garden- and nature photographer who likes his job so much that a

waterproof camera case hangs right alongside his fishing tackle box and waders. Of this arrangement he says, "I used to think that if I somehow knew a day was going to be my last day on Earth, I would simply take my pole and waders and go fishing, preferably up Schlotz Creek where Dad and Poppa and I fished. Now, I know I'd have to have my camera, too!" His love of the natural landscape shows in some of the plantings he and his wife do for clients of their gardening business. There, he might customize a rocky channel made to lead water away from downspouts to add "eddies" of small stone and an occasional larger rock "where a big trout could lurk." In the rain garden that receives that runoff water he favors plants he's admired along the edges of "his" fishing streams: turtlehead, cardinal flower, Joe Pye and marsh marigold.



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

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 talks or get a referral and list of speakers.

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 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 expert instructors who knew their stuff in the garden as well as knowing how to get their messages across in front of a group. Janet and Steven are glad to help you themselves or refer you to these 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.

Where to catch Janet & Steven in-person:

Saturday morning, February 5. Join Janet as the Detroit Garden Center wraps up the Center's **20th Winter Seminar series**. 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., at **Historic Trinity Church**, 1345 Gratiot in **Detroit**, around the corner from Eastern Market. \$30. Walk-ins welcome. For more information or to register, call the Detroit Garden Center at 313-259-6363 or download a registration form at www.detroitgardencenter.org.

February 5: **All the Best Sense in a Garden**. Janet gives you a fresh look at your garden as a place of wonder for ears, skin, nose and taste bud. It's how to design and tend your garden to have more dimension and fun, even with your eyes shut.

Wednesday, February 9, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Janet teaches *Flower Gardens*, a segment of the Michigan State University Master Gardener class. At the St. Clair County Extension office, 200 Grand River, **Port Huron, Michigan**. Open to the current class of St. Clair County Master Gardener candidates plus active Master Gardeners looking for a refresher on this topic. Limited seating. Contact Laurie Dennis at 800-989-6312 or ldennis@stclaircounty.org to reserve a spot.

Thursday, February 10, 10:00 a.m. - noon, *Landscape Ideas: Before-After*. Steven Nikkila shares good landscaping ideas and how-to by walking you through some of his favorite before-after examples. Geared for professional gardeners. At **Ray Wiegand's Nursery Wholesale Office, Macomb, Michigan**. Contact Wiegand's wholesale office at 586-286-3658 for more information.

Saturday, February 12, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. a seminar with Janet and Steven, hosted by the Men's Garden Club of **Youngstown, Ohio** at the Fellows Riverside Gardens of Millcreek Metro Parks. Janet will present ideas and design approaches for *Entry Gardens* and follow up with an all-star line up of *Great Plants and Combinations*, then turn things over to Steven for his recommendations of *Trees and Shrubs for Small Spaces*. For more details and registration information go to <http://mgcy.org/default.aspx> or contact John Kolar at 330-545-2266.

Tuesday evening, February 15. Janet explains and entertains with *What the Groundhog Won't Tell*. This look at gardening folklore, its basis and practical application, takes place at the Fremont Area District Library in **Fremont, Michigan**. Free. No advance registration required. Contact Jill Hansen at the library 231-928-0256 for more details.

Thursday, February 17, 10:00 a.m. - noon, *Cutting Back the Rambunctious Garden*. Janet helps sort out the problems of overgrown gardens and too-big plants with instructions for pruning, growing season cuts on herbaceous plants, dividing to keep small, and other restraints. Geared for professional gardeners. At **Ray Wiegand's Nursery Wholesale Office, Macomb, Michigan**. Contact Wiegand's wholesale office at 586-286-3658 for more information.

Saturday, February 19, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Janet teaches *Flower Gardens*, a segment of the Michigan State University Master Gardener class. At the Wayne County Extension office, 640 Temple Street, just a block west of the Masonic Temple theater in **Detroit, Michigan**. Open to the current class of Wayne County Master Gardener candidates plus active Master Gardeners looking for a refresher on this topic. Limited seating. Contact Anita Callendar at 734-727-7238 to reserve a spot.

Grow with Janet at **Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison, Wisconsin:**

Wednesday, February 23, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., *Pruning Your Trees and Shrubs*. Janet helps you learn what to prune, when and how in plenty of time to take advantage of two prime pruning periods: winter thaws and very early spring. She invites you to "bring a branch" to get specific directions and some hands-on for trimming your own plant.

Thursday, February 24, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. *Gardens for Small Spaces*. A hands-on design workshop where you can learn and try out Janet's how-to and what to grow for those small courtyards, awkward corners and tiny but important beds.

Take one or both of these classes At **Olbrich Botanical Gardens** 3330 Atwood Avenue in **Madison, Wisconsin**. For more information, contact the gardens' office at 608-246-4550 or copy this URL to your browser bar to read about classes, registration fees and to download a registration form: <http://www.olbrich.org/education/classes.cfm>

Friday, February 25, 10:00 - 11:15 a.m., Janet presents *Renovating the Older Landscape, Part 2:* the nitty gritty how-to for making your landscape dreams come true. Attend one or both sessions. Presented by the Meadow Brook Hall Garden Club in **Rochester, Michigan at Meadow Brook Hall.** (Take Meadow Brook Rd. west from Adams south of Walton rd., and follow signs). \$5 per session to non-members. No advance registration required.

Monday, February 21, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. *Garden by Janet - Bring your gloves and tools!* We'll be **pruning to shape and control** two ornamental trees to keep them healthy, attractive and in proportion to the small spaces they occupy. **Waterford and Orchard Lake, Michigan.** Email or call (JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850) to reserve a spot and learn the location. Include your phone number so we can call you as the date approaches, in case weather changes the plan. This is a limited-space workshop.

Tool Cleaning party. Bring your tools, learn how to clean and sharpen them, then set a spell among good company and put those tools in order!

We're co-hosting parties this year with friends and fellow educators Celia Ryker, Sue Shuttleworth, Deb Hall and the Detroit Garden Center. Details vary but expect to chip in about \$5 toward supplies. Email or call Janet and Steven to reserve a spot and receive location details.

Sunday, February 6, 1 - 3 p.m. in Ortonville, Michigan

Sunday, February 13, 1 - 3 p.m. in Milford, Michigan

Sunday, February 20, 1 - 3 p.m. in Troy, Michigan

Sunday, February 27, 1 - 3 p.m. in Detroit near the old Michigan Central train depot

To attend Garden by Janet sessions:

We're let-me-see, hands-on people. That's how we learn best. From time to time there are *Garden by Janet* sessions listed here to afford you that kind of chance to grow. You visit us where we're working to either watch or work with Janet. 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 the 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 check out this program by coming in as my student on a temporary pass. **To join Janet at the Zoo,** email mstgarden@gmail.com with the subject line of your email "Help at zoo."

Save the date for these events coming up in March -- details in upcoming issues:

March 1, Tuesday, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., Janet's presenting *8 Months of Color* at the Howell Carnegie District Library in **Howell, Michigan.** Free.

March 7, Monday, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., help from Janet about *Gardening in Small Spaces* at the Northville Library in **Northville, Michigan.** Free.

March 10, Thursday, 7:30 p.m., join Janet for *Canned Goods: Container Gardens* at the **Farmington, Michigan** Hill and Dale Garden club meeting in Heritage Park's Spicer House.

March 14, Monday, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., *Great Plants and Combinations* by Janet at the Lathrup Village Gardeners meeting at Lathrup Village City Hall, 27400 Southfield Road, **Lathrup Village, Michigan.** Refreshments, raffle, educational exhibits, too. Voluntary \$5 contribution asked of non-members.

March 15 & 16, Tuesday and Wednesday, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., a two-part, come to one or both presentation by Janet to help you *Get Your Garden Ready for Spring.* Open to residents of

Rochester and Rochester Hills and their guests, at the Rochester Hills Public Library in **Rochester, Michigan**.

March 17, Thursday, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., Janet's advice for a **Low Maintenance Landscape** at the Waterford Township Library in **Waterford, Michigan**. Free.

March 19, Saturday, start your day of learning at the 2011 Taylor Conservatory Growing Great Gardens symposium with Janet's take on **Edible Landscapes**. Symposium is 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in **Taylor, Michigan**.

March 19, Saturday, Janet's part of the afternoon sessions at the 12th Annual spring education seminar hosted by the Allen County Master Gardeners in **Lima, Ohio**.

March 24, Thursday, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., Janet's recipe for **More Color, More Fun** at the Waterford Township Library in **Waterford, Michigan**. Free.

March 26, Saturday, Janet's at the Huron County Master Gardeners' Spring Into Gardening Day in **Udly, Michigan**.

Garden By Janet opportunities in Michigan and Massachusetts. Watch here for details.

Time to garden your walls...

Steven's decorated many walls with great garden and Nature images. He can help you do the same with photos that capture the garden beauty you love, framed or on canvas to your specifications.

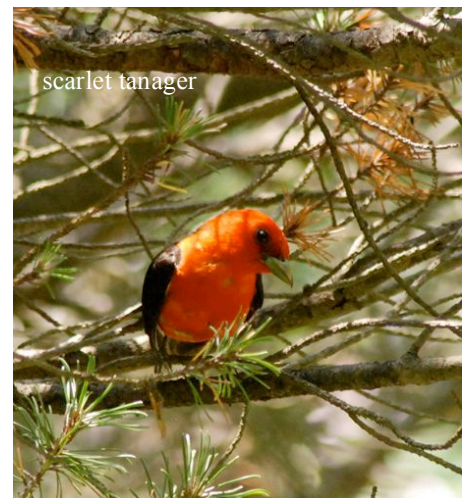
You can own any of Steven's images from *What's Coming Up*.* Or if you have a flower, type of scene or hue in mind, request your dream. His library includes tens of thousands of plants and natural images, so Steven can assemble a customized photo sampler and price list for you.

Email us at JMaxGarden@aol.com for details, to request a

sampler or to place an order.

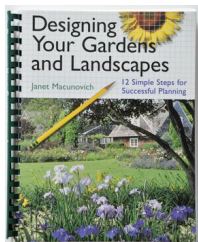
Prices for **Steven's garden art** vary with your wishes in format and size. Examples:

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



*Images in our newsletter are depicted in low- resolution to facilitate e-mail transmission. Steven's originals and art created from them are full resolution, with so much clear detail they are sharp even as wall-size cloth banners.

Support our work! Add friends to our mailing list, or buy them some of our publications:



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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Practical, beautiful answers about perennials and all kinds of flowers, trees, shrubs, design, pruning and much more is in this collection of 2009 & 2010'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.

1 CD in jewel case, Windows- and Mac compatible. \$20.00

Janet & Steven's complete digital library New for 2010

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 2010. 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.

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

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

Set of three 10" x 13" magazines, 48 pages each. \$30.00



*For a look inside, email JMaxGarden@aol.com with the subject line "Magazine peek."

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