

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila answer your growing concerns
Issue 140, April 13, 2011

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With spring comes *Magnolia* envy

What a great magnolia in the last issue! Where did you see that?! Every year I hope for a great show from **my magnolia** but more often than not it's **ruined by frost, or heat** makes the flowers open and fall in a single day. Should I just give up, or move to Georgia so I can grow it where springs are better suited? - S.R. -



Seeing a great saucer magnolia show doesn't depend so much on where as when. Some years **when the spring is mild** -- no really hard frosts once the warm up begins, and no blast furnace days -- a saucer magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangiana*) **can be showy for almost two weeks**. It had been that kind of spring when Steven took the spectacular photo in issue #139.

As for moving to Georgia in pursuit of magnolia blossom: Saucer magnolia is a tease even in the South. The act comes earlier but is just as fickle.

What the heck -- the rarity of a truly fine magnolia show is part of the allure.

If frost threatens...

...after your magnolia's buds show color, you can always cut some branches and bring them inside. The blooms will last a week if you peel some bark from the base of the cut branch so it will absorb water more readily. It's also fun to float the flowers like water lilies.

Preparing to buy a magnolia?

Choose a star if you're looking for a more reliable spring show. Flowers of the star magnolia tree (*Magnolia stellata*) are somewhat less likely to be blighted by frost than the saucer magnolia (*M. x soulangeana*). Some hybrid star magnolias (*M. x loebneri*) have more frost resistance and bloom a bit later than their starry parent, so they are even more dependable. 'Merrill' is one such hybrid star variety that's available at many garden centers.



Another magnolia that's more dependable by virtue of later bloom is the cucumber magnolia (*M. acuminata*), which is very popular in its yellow-flowered hybrids. (When we were at Ray Wiegand's Nursery in Macomb, Michigan last week we noted they carry *three* yellows: 'Butterflies', 'Elizabeth' and 'Yellow Bird'; we were especially glad to see 'Butterflies', which was bred in our own neck of the woods by the late, great Phil Savage.)

Placing a new magnolia?

The Royal Horticultural Society *Dictionary of Gardening* has advice:

...best sited with the maximum wind shelter possible since the branches tend to be brittle; this is especially important for the large leaved evergreens and for the spring flowering species... with their precocious flowers, so that the blooms are protected from bruising spring winds. A protective screen of... evergreens (which incidentally provide a dark background to enhance the display) is beneficial in this regard as well as helping to protect the flowers from damaging spring radiation frost. In general, it is essential to ...avoid likely frost pockets... before planting any of the spring flowering species.

Radiation frost: Cold that develops under clear skies when the air is calm.

Advection frost: Occurs when a cold front sweeps into an area on gusty winds.

Plants may be protected from radiation frost by a network of overhanging branches, or temporary covers that act as a "roof." Like cloud cover, they can hold ground warmth in place.

Time to look, foresee and forestall problems

About sudden death of burning bushes, in your last issue: I'm **worried about my new hedge**. A couple of the bushes in it didn't seem to be doing as well as the others last summer. Can I **tell now if they're all okay?** – D.N. –

You can tell. No matter what the type of shrub or tree, you can **assess it by comparing** its growth to that of known healthy plants. Even before budbreak in spring, the growth rate and signs of vigor or stress are there. (Photo, next page.)

Compare the four twigs on page 3, all from compact burning bushes.

- 1) This shrub didn't drop its leaves last fall. (It's the plant addressed in issue #139),
- 2) Grew unchecked last year -- this twig shows the plant's full potential.
- 3) From a shrub that was cut once or twice during the growing season.
- 4) Sucking insects lived on this shrub in early spring, so the twig became deformed before hardening. (For why, see page 4.)

#1 is dead, but it was in trouble before its last gasp. We know it's dead by its color, peeling bark, lack of tip buds, and brittleness. We can tell it was stressed for some time because it's not as thick as it could be, not even as thick as the twig that had less than a season to grow after being clipped.



You can **find comparison plants at botanical gardens** and garden centers. Explain your objective to the staff -- call ahead if it's a busy season! Many will be tickled to help you find a particular plant for this purpose.

We prefer to compare our plants to those in-ground at botanical gardens, rather than to pot-grown garden center specimens. In a botanical garden, plants are generally set out into appropriate sites, then given basic care but no special pampering. We figure it's realistic to expect similar growth from plants in our gardens. It's less likely we'll

match what a grower has done in a concerted effort toward a primo crop.



Right, top: At Sarah Duke Gardens in Durham, NC, we are reassured about bark peeling away from *Clematis armandii* stems - it happens!

Right: At the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, plants have metal tags with technical data as well as labels for the general public. (To J.B.: The metal tag marking the katsura-- *Cercidiphyllum* -- is about 3 inches across. Using it for scale, can you see how big your katsura tree's leaves should be? You may like the look of tiny foliage but the tree's telling you that it's in trouble. It's living on the edge, where any other problem may be the last straw. So do what you can to improve that limited root space and water shortage.)



Right: The Chicago Botanic Gardens' goal to educate the public is in action here via interpretive signs as well as plant labels.

Deformed twig: What caused it? How can we stop it?

Sucking insects are usually to blame. In this case, the suckers were aphids. Two- and three years ago the aphids occurred on this shrub in numbers high enough that 25 - 30% of the twigs had some deformity. We waited and watched, not terribly concerned since the shrub had vigor to spare.

Natural controls seem to have overtaken the pest last year, as there was very little damage. Two years of good eating had probably given local aphid predators a boost. Birds had learned that aphid-egg tidbits were readily available in winter, while survival rate and number of offspring increased among the summertime predators -- ladybugs, hoverflies, and miniscule parasitic wasps.

When we see insect damage on a woody plant, our first move is to identify the pest and look for the weak points in its life cycle. In this case we learned that this pest, like many sucking insects, overwinters as clusters of eggs on the twigs. So we know that even in winter we can look for the eggs, assess their concentration and predict the coming year's trouble.

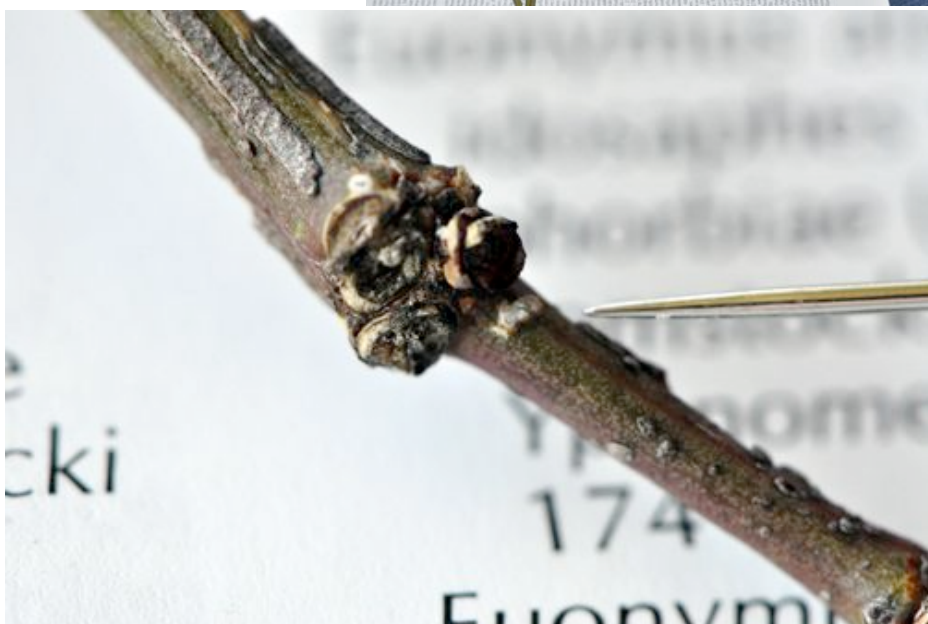
Janet first examined the deformed twig with a hand lens, then used a pocket microscope to zoom in on a suspect spot. (Right and below; a sewing needle tip points to the spot.) With the microscope, she confirmed it as an egg cluster and located two others in the twig's growth bud. That's fewer than we've seen before, so we'll stay the course and let Nature reign.

We wish we could show you the indicated spot as it appeared under the 'scope, because it's pretty neat. Imagine a tiny sheet of sparkling bubble

wrap, stretched over the eggs and lacquered in place.

A heavy concentration of eggs might warrant intervention. We can smother aphids by clogging their breathing holes with an oil spray (Volck, Sunspray, even soybean oil if it can be made to mix with water). That tactic's only effective just before or as the eggs hatch. No sense doing it earlier, during that time when deft chickadees can reach the eggs, but no pesticide can penetrate their protective shield.

We always think hard before we intervene, because it's hard to target only the aphids. An oil, for instance, would also kill overwintering aphid predator insects. We lean toward manual controls, such as forceful rinsing at egg hatch time. Since pests "find" their plant only by being laid there as an egg, they're unlikely to regain a perch. Predators are more resourceful.



Wanted: Better back yard hedge

...several spots in my garden (are) challenging. Against the very back fence I have 'Techny' arborvitae. They're not doing so good... they get shade most of the day. My 'Techny' arbs on the side fence get more sun facing south... (they are) fuller. I **wanted a green fence..** more privacy. But, I don't know what to put back there! Mostly shade, black walnut tolerant? Would an 'Allegheny' viburnum work? - E.H. -



Brown rarely bodes well for rhodies

2 of my 4 rhododendrons are more brown than green. Are they dead?

Could be. Or perhaps only the leaves were killed and the plants have enough reserve to come back strong from dormant buds. **Water well and wait three weeks.** If they sprout new growth, watch and decide if you can live with them while they recover.

We suspect your **arbs may be struggling as much with drought** as shade. Established trees are tough competitors. Use a trowel to check how well roots have grown out of the planted balls, and assess the soil moisture while you're at it. Install a trickle hose along the outside edge of their roots balls and run it frequently, or dedicate a sprinkler there and use it every day the soil around the arbs' roots is dry.

Then sit in your usual spot in the yard and look for a way to **plant layers and levels** that increase your privacy, rather than focusing only along the fence where there are already so many plants. (More on page 6.)

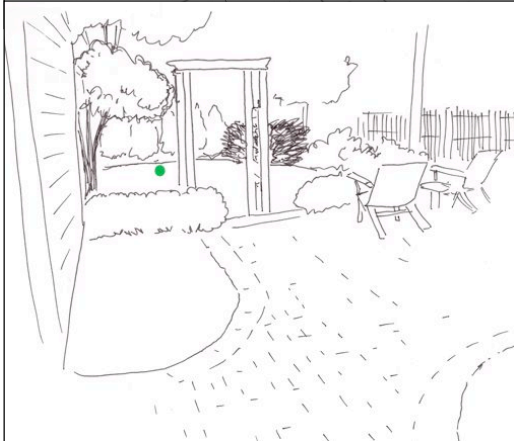
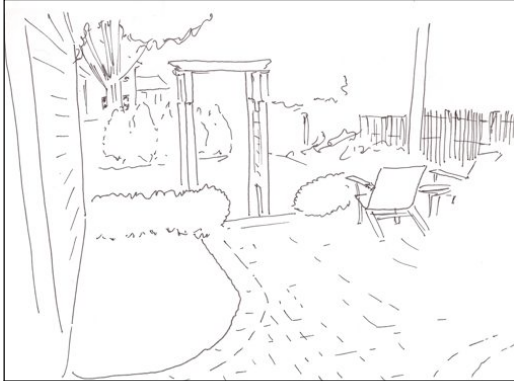
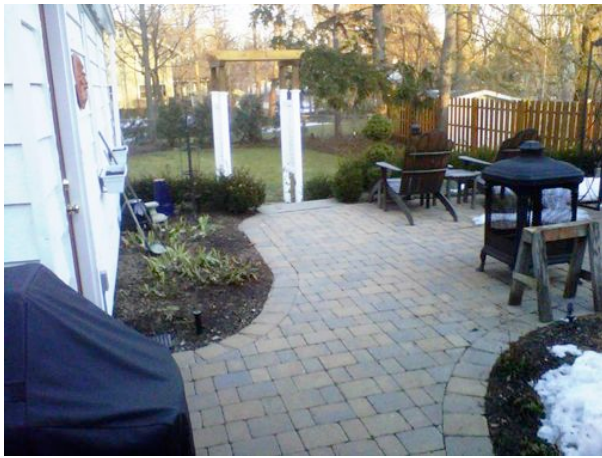


Woody plants appear to stop growing in late summer, but they've only put a lid on it. This beech has just popped its bud caps to reveal the entire shoot within -- stem, leaves and flowers. That shoot is completely formed, all cells in place but not filled up with water. If fill-up happens quickly, vulnerable new tissues harden quickly and pests have a tougher time taking a bite or taking hold.

Key to the whole year: Just add water

...Water is critical as plants start growing. Do check whether lawn, trees and shrubs need water, even before the sprinkler system is turned on. Don't just feel the surface, dig down about eight inches to check if the soil is dry. It's surprising how dry it can be down deeper, even when the surface is damp. ...Feeling the soil is the best way to check when to water, and how much. Clay soils stay moist much longer than sand, and mulched beds may not dry out as quickly as bare soil.

- Mary Wilson, Michigan Statewide Master Gardener Coordinator and Consumer Horticulture, Michigan State University Extension -

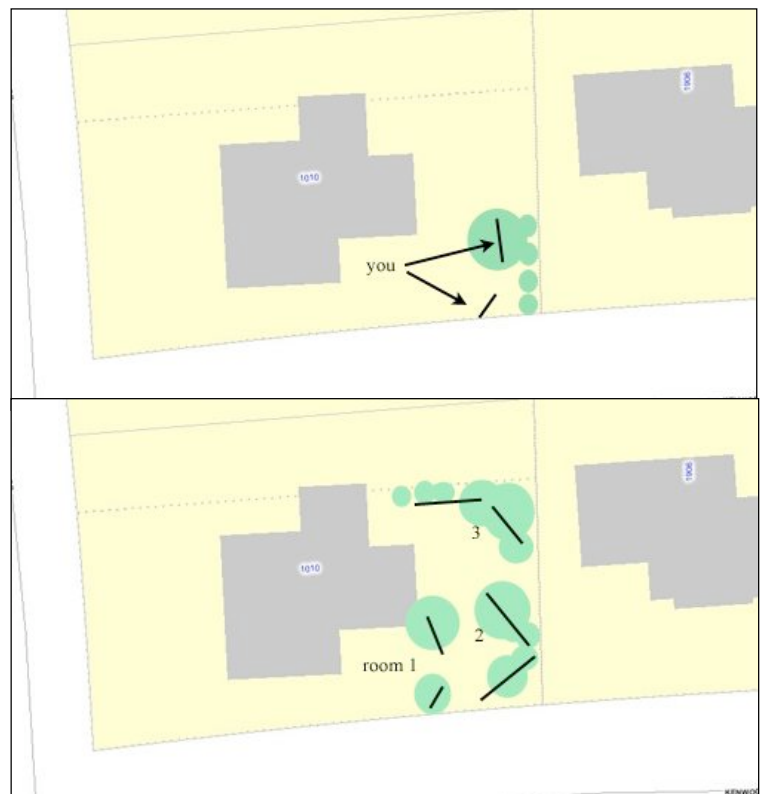


Left, top: Looking out into your yard along this line, it seems there is no need for any screen from ground level to about three feet, and much need for something six feet tall and broad. Imagine a small tree or large shrub where we've sketched it into the photo (left, bottom), to see what we mean. From the vantage point of your patio chairs, a similar broad-crown plant placed at the green dot in our sketch could hide the building to the left, and something spreading at 4-6 feet could mask the fenceline.

Privacy can also be a matter of divide and conquer. You might put in screening plants just beyond the patio, making it a distinct room with a "window" or "open door" aimed at the green spaces beyond the fence. The window might be your arbor, moved out but still connected via angled path to the step off the patio. For the viewer that takes that path out through the arbor, there could be more carefully-placed shrubs and trees defining a second room. The door out of room #2 could lead to a third room with shrubs and small trees as walls.

We'd use redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) for its broad crown and small-tree stature. Beech (see pages 10-11) or Hicks yew would serve where an upright form's needed. Witchhazel, spicebush and blackhaw work where a slightly lower blocker is needed, and *Hydrangeas* or yews for a fence-high spread.

One way to locate the right spots to place blockers: Obtain property sketches from your city or community assessment office. These may be available on-line. Draw lines between your vantage point to an unwanted view, such as a neighbor's shed. Screen that line of sight, keeping in mind that a small item close to you can block more than one at a distance.



A little spice for the black walnut garden

The simple presence of a black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) can stunt and kill plants in the family Ericaceae, which includes rhododendrons and azaleas, as well as tomatoes and others in the nightshade family. Lilacs, burning bush, mountain ash and white pine are also sensitive to the chemical output of a walnut.

However, black walnut can co-exist with: arborvitae (*Thuja* species), beech, blackhaw *Viburnum* (*V. prunifolium*), flowering dogwood, snowball *Hydrangea* (*H. arborescens*), spice bush (*Lindera benzoin*), and yew (*Taxus* species). Perennials for that garden include goldenrod (*Solidago* species), asters, *Geum*, ironweed (*Vernonia*) and bee balm (*Monarda*).

The list is based on our own experience plus Extension bulletins from Universities in Maryland, West Virginia, Michigan and California. Many other plants can be added to this list if irrigation is steady, since water can dilute and push the walnut-produced toxin below a companion plant's root zone. (U. of CA)

Scrabbling in the garden, word play

We gardeners earn admiring murmurs when we display our garden's produce in vases and on plates. Why don't we stir up a bit of that admiration by tossing a nifty horticultural term or two on the table during the next Scrabble game? For instance:

miner: noun; any of numerous insects that in the larval stage excavate galleries within the substance of a leaf; *If you notice discolored, raised areas on boxwood leaves in spring you can probably peel back the skin of that leaf and find a boxwood leaf miner larva inside.*

Boxwood leaf miner damage, April in Michigan. The larvae will complete its development and emerge soon to lay eggs.

stolon: noun; STOH lun; a horizontal branch from a plant's crown, which is either at or below the surface and produces new plants from its tip or at nodes; *Many mint family plants including spearmint, bee balm and oregano are known as bad actors because they send sneaky stolons into other plants' areas, grow up from there and shade out the other plant.*

crown: noun; the region of a plant where stem and root merge, usually at ground level; *Many non-woody perennials die back to their crown each fall and set new buds there, so everything above ground can be cut back in spring to make way for the new shoots' emergence.*





node: noun; a point on a plant where subsidiary parts originate; these points on a stem are often swollen or otherwise modified, and are where leaves or shoots attach; *When we cut a stem, the next **node** below the cut will usually become dominant and decide the direction of growth of that branch.*

Left: This wood was weakened by borer but the node remained undamaged and produced sound wood.

notch: noun; and indentation or hollow cut into the edge of a leaf; *An insect's feeding pattern is a clue to its identity; black vine weevils feed on the leaf edge, creating **notches** on the leaf edge whereas slugs rarely start on the edge, preferring to rasp holes within the leaf blade.*

blotch: noun; plant disease characterized by dark, irregular and often diffusely margined spots on the leaves or fruit; *Many plant diseases are named for their appearance, so when faced with a new ailment you may find it in diagnostic texts under its description: **blotch**, scorch, spot, wilt, etc.*

pith: noun; central tissue in the stem, pulpy rather than woody; *When you see discolored pith as you prune, recognize that it indicates the cane has been weakened by the likes of rose cane borer (in roses and raspberries) or dogwood borer (in this Hydrangea stem.)*



Left: Discolored pith (left twig end) can be your cue to protect the plant from another round of damage. For instance, a rose grower may dab each newly cut cane with white wood glue to seal in the smell of rose wood which might otherwise attract cane borers.



Left, below: Although some woody species' develop hollow stems naturally (various honeysuckles and *Forsythia*), when hollow pith is natural, there are no exit holes on the cane or borer tracks within!

skeletonize: verb; to consume the soft tissue of a leaf so that only the veins remain; *Japanese beetles' feeding is distinctive, in that they scrape at leaf tissue until only one skin remains, as we might scrape the flesh from a cantaloupe to leave only the rind. Since these beetles do not eat veins the leaf is eventually **skeletonized**.*

Right: Skeletonized grape leaf. Grape foliage is a favorite of Japanese beetles.



Big mistake, big lesson: Will we ever learn how big trees are?!

Since **mistakes are learning experiences**, our biggest blunders could be viewed as great treasures. If only we didn't have to pay the price!

Can we avoid the cost and advance as a group by pooling our bloopers? Let's try. Here's a **worst mistake** described in various ways by several people:

We thought it would be nice to shade the house with trees but never thought they'd get so big. Or maybe the plant tags understated the size. Anyway, when our trees got to the size we wanted they just kept growing. After ten years waiting for shade and a few years enjoying it, we had to take them out and start over! - Ann Gehrke -

This is an aspect of tree planting that most people do not take into account. Planting on a property line can be disastrous if someone wants to put in a fence somewhere down the road, or place a shed in the tree's shade...or park a car under it...or even worse, trim the half of the tree hanging on their side of the property line. I struggle with people who want to plant "that little tree" too close to the house, on lot lines, or under power lines without taking into consideration the mature size and what (the utility company) will do to the poor tree someday. - Alain Bush, professional gardener -

We brought tree after tree home from the local nursery in the back of our VW Rabbit when first we landscaped our place... When we were admiring our work 20 years later, a common remark as we gazed up into the branches of a spreading shade tree was, "Can you BELIEVE we brought this home in the back of the CAR? - Corky Smith -

In the 1950's, with the Dutch Elm disease running rampant, I feared for my 4 elms... At a local nursery, I found a Silver Maple, 3" diameter trunk, 12' or 15' tall. \$5.00, dig it yourself. Hauled it home atop my '53 Ford, planted it in the back yard, west side. It's now 60' tall, 10'6" in circumference at 3' above grade...

- Frank Harney, gardener-poet -

Poet Frank wrote,

"My poet's muse... has deserted me!"

Yet he went on to write:

Dashed hopes - when will it dry up
and let me do my thing?

I wrapped up and prowled the 'back
forty' looking for what?

Nothing there that wasn't there
yesterday.

Tip cuttings: Growing on from what people are saying this week

Sounds like poetry to us, Frank. Pent up, bring on the spring verse!

So much goes on in email exchanges between newsletters! We wish we could include it all here - as we will on a live forum, once we have our website (see page 15). Until then, here are this week's most useful excerpts:

We move everything else, why not bulbs?

...Can I move tulips and daffodils now? - C -

Yes, you can. Water them well the day before the move, dig deep to keep the roots intact, and water them immediately after planting. Sometimes the root disturbance ruins this year's flower show, sometimes not. At least they'll be in the right spot next year.

Janet was renovating a garden one May and wanted to add bulbs under *Hibiscus*, around peony and in among ornamental grasses. No reason to wait for fall -- she dug some of each of what she wanted from other gardens, split them, re-set them even deeper (to help the disturbed stem support its flower) and enjoyed them blooming in their new home over the following weeks.



Some fare best when moved in spring: Snowdrops

...A friend has snowdrops. They've been blooming for well over a month and I love them. Where can I buy them? - M -

Many local garden centers and bulb catalogs offer snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) for fall planting. A better bet is to beg some from your friend. Along with another early spring bloomer, yellow winter aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*), snowdrops move best "in the green."

Move forsythia

... I planted a forsythia two years ago, but now know it doesn't belong there. Should I wait until it blooms to move it, or move it now?... - B -

We're often accused of rearranging shrubs like furniture. There's some truth to that, but we do give them more consideration than sofas. We try to make those moves in early fall or early spring, so the plants have time to reestablish roots before they must cope with summer's heat.

Go South for sun, not for season's first plants

Early planting is fine, but be sure your plants are ready to be outdoors. Ask if what you're buying was grown in a greenhouse or came from a nursery down South. Those plants are advanced for our season and need hardening off. - Cindy Richardson, landscape designer -

Any beech makes a peachy hedge

...you wrote about using beech trees as a screen device. Ever since that article, I have become more aware of their beauty -- especially in the winter months.

...I would like to plant a row of beech trees in my backyard to hide the view of my neighbor's backyard and a chain link fence. The problem is I don't recall the name of the beech tree you recommended for use as a screen... - K.S. -

Any European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) will do in a hedge; and we think American beech (*F. grandifolia*) will, as well, but doesn't have the track record yet. The one we mentioned was the tricolor beech, since its colorful foliage attracts lots of admiration. But green-, copper- and purple- leaf beeches are all pretty as a hedge and all of their leaves are the same pale salmon color in winter.

(More about beech as a hedge in *What's Coming Up* #64 and #65.)

At Elm Bank, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society garden in Wellesley, tricolor beech is becoming a fine hedge



Ants!

My problem is ant hills... have had one significant ant hill... for several years. ...have

made some half-hearted attempts to get rid of it... but mostly I have ignored it.

I have heard that ants are actually beneficial and I do not like to use insecticides... (We have a Wildlife back yard.) But, they are expanding their territory... Where are the Flickers when I need them?! - G.D. -

Ants are pretty nearly impossible to roust (more in *What's Coming Up* #100). When a site is right for them, we can perhaps kill some of them but they will keep surging back. Overall, they are beneficial but sometimes they cause trouble, drying out soil above a certain part of the colony, or biting. (We've gardened with friends in South Carolina around fire ants. Yikes!)

This week in our garden

Grow with us! This week:

We're **cutting hard** where we find weakness in a tree or shrub, since damaged limbs and insect-infested wood won't produce the strong new growth we want.

Looking for back issues?

Maybe we mention it, or you're directed to it when you use the index we send to all readers each winter. If you've lost one, or weren't on board 'back when', you can:

- 1) Send us an email. We may be able to re-send an issue or two. (Our response time varies; be patient with us.) Or,
- 2) Ask a friend who also reads *What's Coming Up* to relay a copy. Or,
- 3) Order our CDs. (Order form returns in #140) Or,
- 4) Donate to help us get our website up where all back issues

This week, J.H. asked about hollow *Hydrangea paniculata* stems: "...looking down into the main trunk of one of the trees, I noticed a hole going into it... Is this caused by a wood boring insect?"



Like most wood borers, dogwood borer (a misleading name, as it can live in quite a number of plants including *Hydrangea* and *Viburnum*) is not good at finding its way into sound wood, but it can chew through the bark at weak points or wounds (below). From there it tunnels inside for a year (below, left) before emerging as an adult moth, in search of more weak wood to lay eggs. So where we see weak wood, we take it out.



Lavender (left: plant indicated by the arrow) stems have less strength in humid, hot summers than they do in the Mediterranean. They become susceptible to twig-weakening fungus infections, which enlarge over years. So we cut the plants hard each spring, insuring most of each plant will be lively, pest-free wood.

We cut the indicated lavender to nubs in early April.

It grew back well. Here it is, in July after bloom).



We're noticing what needs division. We might not divide it until we're finished with weeding, but in the next couple of weeks we would get back to a sedum so weak it had to be propped up. That situation probably mortifies the plant, since it's from a species that's naturally quite sturdy.

Below: When so many stems arise from one *Sedum* crown, something has to give. That's usually the middle stems, scrawny from being shaded by their fellows as they develop in spring, and scrawnier because they have fewer openings in which to grow roots than what's open to outer sections.



Right: Tall stonecrops (*Sedum spectabile*) sometimes flop in fall because they were rushed in spring. Short days are this species' cue to stretch up and bloom. Cold air normally suppresses that response in spring, so the individual buds stay hunkered down, growing roots and accumulating sugars. By the time those stems begin to elongate, they're well anchored below and hefty above. However, the buds can bolt when spring is early and warm. Then when they develop flowers, they're unable to support the weight, and fall.



Just cut back your lavender? Use it as carpet deodorizer.

Toss the dried stems and leaves of lavender onto your carpet. Dance, stomp, and otherwise smash them into your carpet. Rest five minutes, then vacuum. Extra benefit: The vacuum bag will smell lovely.

- From Coleen French of French Garden Creations -
coleenfrench@power-net.net
for info about her soaps and herbal products



Left: Old age happens even to the longest-lived perennials. When we see the open center on this *Hosta* we know it will be stronger if divided. We'll send all of the oldest portion to a hot compost, and get rid of 3/4 of the outer edge, too. A single division with 6 or 7 strong eyes is plenty to repopulate this space.

Clip away what harbors established pests.

Bearded irises are plagued by caterpillars that eat inside the folded leaf and down into the thick, horizontal stem. Their chewing might be bearable except these insects invariably drag bacterial rot along with them. So we control the borers to control the rot.

Iris borer moths flew last fall and laid eggs on iris foliage. Those tiny larvae are about to emerge from the eggs and follow that old foliage to the new. So where we've had borer trouble, we eliminate eggs by

removing anything that may have been there last fall. Don't worry - it looks drastic but it's only leaves lost. The node on the stem has plenty of time to produce new foliage and a flower stalk.



Spread fertilizer before weeding, a slow release organic product. Slow, to avoid burning plant tissue with soluble salt. Organic, so that it contains carbon to renew the soil's structure. Before weeding, so no separate effort is required to mix it into the soil and old mulch. The scuffling, scraping and digging we do while weeding and dividing will do that. In the end,

it will be tucked in under the new mulch.



Green thumbs up

to **barberry cut-back** via the **one-bundle method**. We tie up trouble-making plants *before* we cut them down. We end up with a neat package to haul away, less cuts from ornamental grasses (oh, those saw-like leaf margins!) and fewer thorns to remove from our fingers.

Green thumbs down to **clematis in climbing rose**. It sounds romantic and can look beautiful now and again during summer, but what a nightmare to manage at pruning time. Is there anything more vicious than a rose cane, anything more fragile and tangled than a clematis?

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 of wonderful things over 25 years of gardening, writing and teaching but the flexibility of the process and its never-ending newness is the best fact of all. 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 and each one is unique, even those that are full of the same plants. The plants behave differently in each place. All of this makes it a delight and a privilege to work for others and to help readers who ask for advice."



The voice behind the captions of many gardening books and articles. When publishers began asking him to not only supply photos for books, magazines, catalogs and calendars but suggest captions, Steven Nikkila's voice began to develop 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 about a dozen years. Both aspects are both fresh and enduring.

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

Janet, Steven, how does your website grow?

We get home each day, wash off the fertilizer residue, stash our latest "lookit this!" samples, then dig in on the website. It will be an open library of our work, where you can find what you need and we can keep going forward (no repeats!) with this work we love... perhaps for another 30 years.

We have an email lag now, but it's a spring thing. (Thanks for bearing with us.) Oh, for a live forum *now* where all the topics we see each week are open to everyone. Oh, for webinars and video and more... but this project is just like a garden, which must grow at its own pace!

We aim to have the site up this year. Some readers have given us a boost toward meeting the development and hosting costs. If you can help, too, **send your donation**, check or money order payable to Janet Macunovich, to 120 Lorberta, Waterford, MI 48328.



Above: Our **Donatell** tale coneflower is tracking our website development progress and answering the question, "How much more do you need for the website?" We're featuring it here so you know how far we are toward our goal.

When the flower's **all blue**, we're gold!

Where to catch Janet, Steven and friends in-person:

April 17, Sunday, 3:00 p.m. Plymouth Nursery's Open House in **Plymouth, Michigan** features Janet's **Best Foot Forward: Ideas for Entrance Gardens**. Free. No reservations required. Call 734-453-5500 for more information

Saturday, April 30: Janet's double-header in **Saginaw, Michigan** at Abele Greenhouses: **Gardening on Clay Soil 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.** How to work the soil and what to plant so you can reap the rewards of the richness of clay without breaking your back.

and **Hardy Hydrangeas 1:00 -2:30 p.m.** For those coaxing blue hydrangeas to bloom in zone 5, perplexed about pruning hydrangeas, fighting the Annabelle hydrangea flop, and more. Abele's is on Wadsworth Road in the crook of the I-75 / I-675 elbow. \$6 per session or \$10 for both. To register, call 989-752-5625.

More chances to Garden by Janet and Steven - bring your gloves and tools! These two sessions are free. See page 17 for more about such sessions.

May 7, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to noon, **Garden by Janet** at the Detroit Zoo, in Huntington Woods, Woodward Avenue at I-696. Your chance to volunteer at the zoo in exchange for hands-on instruction in cutting back after winter, early season weed prevention, and pruning. To join Janet at the zoo, email mstgarden@yahoo.com with the subject line "I'll garden at the Zoo."

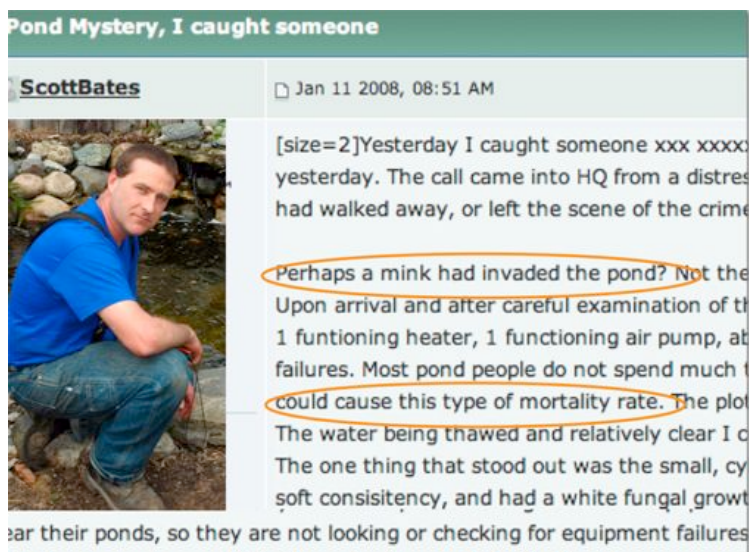
May 28, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to noon, again a **Garden by Janet** at the Detroit Zoo. Email mstgarden@yahoo.com with the subject line "I'll garden at the Zoo."

May 11, Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. at Theodore Roosevelt High School, 540 Eureka Road in **Wyandotte, Michigan** the Wyandotte Beautification Commission presents Janet sharing her ideas for **Best Foot Forward: Ideas for Entrance Gardens**. \$12.00. For more information and registration form go to www.wyandotte.net/egov/apps/events/calendar.exe?path=03&search_timeframe=30&id=1098

Time to Tend your pond! Above: Scott Bates, owner of Grass Roots Nursery, is one of the most knowledgeable people in the country regarding water gardens. More than that, he explains how to and makes you laugh at the same time. As a moderator of the website forum that Janet and Steven administered along with expert friends, Bates not only answered questions and checked the accuracy of others' statements on the site, but gave us humorous, helpful pond puzzles.

At this nursery in New Boston, Michigan, Scott offers free weekend how-to sessions for pond owners. Check his website, grassrootsnursery.com or call 734-753-9200 for more information.

Right: Water garden expert and humorist Scott Bates was, and will be again, a voice on our live web forum.



May 14, Saturday, 2:00 p.m., the Burr Oak Garden Club brings Janet to **Burr Oak, Michigan** (327 N. Third Street) to give pointers on *Easy, Beautiful Landscapes*. \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door, call 269-489-2230 for ticket information.

May 17, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. at the Plymouth Library, 223 S. Main Street in **Plymouth, Michigan**, Janet discusses the *Garden of the Future*. Free. Call 734-453-0750 for information or to reserve a seat.

May 21, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. at Four Seasons Garden Center in **Oak Park, Michigan**, 14471 West Eleven Mile Road, between Greenfield Road and Coolidge Road. Janet explains why you need more *Fabulous Foliage* for your garden. Free. Call 248-543-4400 to reserve a seat.

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**,
- a **multi-part class** for a small group,
- or a **hands-on, on-site workshop** ...we're game!

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

About Garden by Janet & Steven dates:

Since gardeners are let-me-see people who learn best with hands-on, from time to time we list *Garden by Janet & Steven* sessions here to afford you that chance to grow. You visit us where we're working to watch or work as you choose. Generally, there is no charge and we're in one of two types of locations:

- 1) At a **garden 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 our work may be of interest to you, we invite you in.
- 2) In the **Detroit Zoo, Adopt-A-Garden** program where we're 23-year veterans. Many people have worked with us there, some for a day and others for years. You can check out this program by coming in as our 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."

Scheduling a Garden by Janet & Steven

Sometimes we are asked "Can you come do one of your workshops in my garden?" It's a possibility! At these sessions:

- Someone pays for the time, or we're on a site where we volunteer regularly. Although we love to share what we know, we need to eat and pay our bills.
- Our client knows our work well enough to allow us free rein, even to experiment.
- Our client allows strangers on site and trusts our supervision if they pitch in.
- We know the site and plant history enough to explain how these affect the work's "what" and "why."
- We've determined that the plants and site will serve as clear examples.
- We know from questions we've received that the work is of common interest.
- With rare exception, the site's visible from a public way so students can drive by to keep track of "what happens next."

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 you can request your dream. His library includes tens of thousands of plants and natural images, so Steven can assemble a customized photo sampler 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

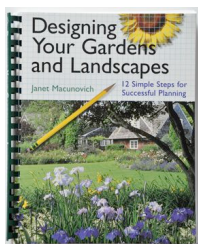
36 x 48' no-fade **cloth tapestry**, \$215

Describe your dream image or color to Steven at JMaxGarden@aol.com. He'll send you a photo sampler and price list.

^{*}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.



You asked for our advice "on paper". Here are our books and CDs:



Designing Your Gardens and Landscape

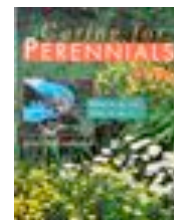
First published in 1990 as *Easy Garden Design*, a 150-page step-by-step recipe that's become a design classic. Janet developed, uses and has trained thousands of others to use this process. People say: "This is exactly the simple, clear approach I need!" This design process is applicable world-wide.

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.

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



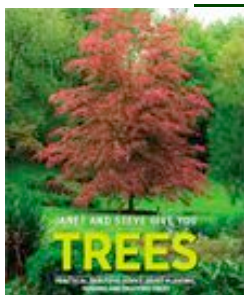
Potting Up Perennials CD. New for 2011

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.

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

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.

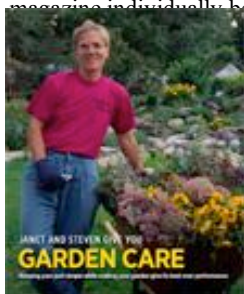
10" x 13" magazine, 48 pp. Color Ill.'s. \$12.00



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.

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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