

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila answer your growing concerns
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In this issue:

Decisions pave the way, pp. 2-3
Safe timing, late planting, pp. 3-6
Bugged but not beaten, pp. 7-8
Shorty's own tools, pp. 8-10
Cutter, spare that daff! Page 10
Quick clips, about:
Dogwood leaf spot, page 11
Wondrous wisteria, page 12
Ticked off & healthy, pp. 12-13
Anemone anomaly, page 13
Fast, seedless birch, page 13
Requiem for Japanese maples, page 14
'Scaping for adult "kids", page 17
Veg & fruit: Just do it! Page 18



Above: Time to give lilac, variegated dogwood and other shrubs a cut. Page 14.

Left: Pinch Joe Pye (*Eupatorium purpureum*) and other summer bloomers to delay the show, page 15.



In our garden

Time to cut back spring bloomers, page 14
Annuals beat the crowd, page 15
Buried tree-sure, page 15
Late, great divides & clips, pages 14-15
Handy, pleasant smells, page 17
Sturdier tomatoes & clematis, page 16
Propping floppers, page 16
Who are Janet and Steven?
How can I contact them? Page 18
Where to catch Janet & Steven
in-person, page 19
Invite us or our expert friends
to your town, page 20
Website update: A smidgeon to go! Pg. 20
Photos, books, magazines and CDs, pp. 20-23

**Did you miss us? Last week while out of town we were unable to make a high-speed connection to transmit the gardening news. We're back now and doubled up on things to report...*

The cost of outdoor flooring

I have a large yard with several out-buildings that we use for storage and kids' play. I think it would be charming to connect these areas to the house with some curving paths. I would love to use brick pavers but they are too costly. What can you recommend that is easy to do and **inexpensive to create a path**? - P.W. -

Several inches of **bark mulch** make an inexpensive path. Renew it annually. If the path will run next to a mulched garden, use a different color mulch for each. At the Detroit Zoo (below), where our garden is beautiful but low budget, we use pale, fresh wood chips for the path next to beds covered in dark, fine-particle bark, cocoa hulls or a mixture of the two. The visual cue helps people stay on track.

Other times, we've used **gravel** as a low-cost answer.

Once, we were collaborating with students making a garden for a community fund raiser and wanted more formality than bark but less expense than brick. We were also looking for a surface that would be fine in texture -- one solid color rather than a pattern. (Check out textural differences on page 3.) There, we excavated the paths, lined them with

landscape fabric to prevent stone from gravitating into the soil, and filled those spaces with about five inches of finely crushed gravel (called 21A crushed gravel, hereabouts.) We packed the gravel with a tamper to create a seamless, fine texture surface.

The digging and wheelbarrowing for 200 feet of 18-inch path involved about seventeen gardener-hours plus \$200 in stone and delivery charges. The same path in bark might have cost \$85 and taken less time. Brick paving would have run \$1,500 - \$3,000.



Above: Our Detroit Zoo paths are covered with lighter color mulch than the beds, and edged with logs.



Right: We wanted this path to stand out, aimed for low cost and knew the route would not be used by people in high heels or formal duds. So we shopped local landscape suppliers and covered that ground with bark that contrasts with the bed's mulch.





A walkway with a distinct pattern of lines or colors is coarse in texture (left, and center). One constructed of a material whose particles blend and appear more smooth is fine-textured (bottom). Brick pavers and flagstone walks tend to be coarse in appearance compared to gravel or concrete. Mulch made up of big chunks or bark or wood has a coarser in appearance than finely ground bark. Covering the ground with coarse paving may be just the right look in some situations but make a scene too busy where buildings and plants already display lots of texture.



Plants' scientific names give some people fits. Yet there's a great reason for them, which is to insure accuracy. People all over the world can be certain as they talk or write about a (scientific name here), that they are talking about the same plant. Working recently with rock, we wished stone products, too, had universal names. If they existed, we could order them by phone. Alas, it's necessary to go look at a "bluestone" or "small gravel" to be certain you're ordering what you really want. One supplier's "21 double A crush" with "Canadian dark flagstone steppers" may be another's "#9 screenings with Pennsylvania blue irregular flagstone" or "rotten granite with Oakfield flag." If you're in the thick of it, keep in mind that the Internet may help you sort things out, since some suppliers do post illustrated product lists.

Safe bet: Safe planting date is the annual dilemma



We're new to gardening and were told it **wasn't 'safe' to plant flowers until** the middle of May. We bought petunias, moss rose, snapdragons, lobelia, and pansy. We also got some tomato plants, cantaloupe and cukes. The neighbor saw the vegetable plants and told us we had to wait until the *end* of May to plant those. How are these dates figured?

That's not our main question, however. Since it was really cold in the middle of May we figured it wasn't good to plant anything. Then it was soaking wet when we had time, so we didn't go out to work in the yard. Now there's so much going on that we won't have time to plant anything until early June. We've been keeping the little plants in the sun, and watered. They still look okay but is it going to be **worth planting them this late?** Should we buy new plants? Or just give it up this year? - L.L., north of Lansing, MI -

Welcome to gardening, in which every year is like no other, and even guidelines based on decades of careful record keeping are only our best guess.

You live in an area that's having the latest, wettest spring in over a century. Fortunately, your local growing season is long enough that even a late start can be productive.

Starting with **"safe" planting** dates: It's smart to hold off planting most annual flowers and vegetables until **the danger of frost is past** in your area.

Traditionally, it's considered "safe" when the likelihood of spring frost has diminished to less than 10%. These "average last frost" or "freeze free" dates are based on weather history and shown on maps developed by our weather and agricultural services. Look at those maps* which show "freeze free" dates, "average last frost" or "start of growing season." There you'll see, for instance:



* Such maps are often reproduced in gardening books, catalogs and websites. Since changes in climate can affect those maps you may prefer to go to the source to be sure of most current data. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is one source. Several maps are available at <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/freezefrost/frostfreemaps.html>

Since each map has a lot of detail, download it so you can use a magnification or zoom function to make the most of it.

For areas around	Average length of growing season is:	From a last freeze in spring between:	To the average date of first killing frost in fall:
Boston, MA Chicago, IL	180 to 210 days	April 15 to May 1	Oct. 1 to Oct. 15
Cape Cod, MA	180 to 210 days	May 1 to May 15	Oct. 1 to Oct. 15
Dayton, OH	150 to 180 days	April 15 to May 1	Oct. 1 to Oct. 15
Detroit, MI Madison, WI	150 to 180 days	May 1 to May 15	Sept. 15 to Oct. 1
North of Cedar Rapids, IA	120 to 150 days	May 1 to May 15	Sept. 1 to Sept. 15
South of ~	150 to 180 days	April 25 to May 1	Sept. 15 to Oct. 1
Minneapolis, MN Marquette, MI	120 to 150 days	May 1 to May 15	Sept. 1 to Sept. 15
Grayling, MI	90 to 120 days	June 1 to June 15	Aug. 15 to Sept. 1

Those are general guideline for putting annual plants in open ground. There are **exceptions**, including the likes of edible peas grown from seed, potatoes, perennial pansies used as annuals, and other **cold-tolerant species** which can be planted before the "safe" date. On the other hand, wait at least a couple of weeks

past the frost free date for **warmth-loving** beans, coleus and tomatoes that not only need to grow frost free but like their roots to be downright toasty.

Late can still be great

May planting may be traditional but in a productive vegetable garden new things are being set out all through June and again in fall. Cucumbers given just 60-70 days in warm soil can produce a crop, so they can be planted in mid-June for harvest in late August. They might follow a cool crop such as radishes (30 days to harvest) and precede another, like salad greens (30 days to harvest). Watermelons need 85-90 days and warm soil the whole time, so starting them in June means banking on September's warmth. If your fall weather can't be relied upon to measure up, warm the soil in spring before you plant by spreading clear plastic tight against the soil in late May to let the sun warm it for a week, or start with seedlings rather than seeds.

Rate a veg

Cornell University's *Vegetable Varieties for Gardeners* web page is a fine and fun way to shop vegetable cultivars (cultivated varieties). You can select or type in a vegetable or fruit type and read up on what Cornell and backyard experts have to say. You can also add your experience to the variety ratings.

<http://vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu/index.php>

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

Most of us had a **parent, neighbor or other veteran gardener** to guide us through our first attempts to grow. The **gardening advice they gave us** may include facts that took many years to develop and generations to confirm and tweak. Think how many growing seasons and observant eyes led to this directive:

Plant corn when oak leaves are the size of a squirrel's ear.

Growing food crops has been a life or death operation for much of human history, and the timing involved is critical. Plant too early, and frost may kill the seedlings

Don't start a season with cold feet

In terms of soil and growing plants:
"Cold" is below 40°F
"Cool" is between 40 - 60°F
"Warm" is over 60°F

If you don't have a soil thermometer, **use warm-season weeds as a gauge**. When soil is warm you'll see seedling crabgrass plants and also purslane appear. Purslane is a relative of moss rose known to many as a weed that sprouts in cracks and seams of sidewalks and driveways to become a succulent mat that hugs the warm pavement.

Where farm bureaus track soil temperature for you

Ah, to live down in farm country:
Illinois:

www.isws.illinois.edu/warm/soiltemp.asp

Michigan:

www.agweather.geo.msu.edu/mawn/

Garden hot spots

Soil temperature can vary widely between beds, even within a single yard. On our frost-free date in the shade north of our garage, sweet alyssum may be just starting to germinate. 100 feet away where it's sunny and the ground slopes to the south, the self-sown sweet alyssum plants are already old enough to flower and the soil is so warm that heat-loving crabgrass seed has sprouted. On that same date in a client's yard protected from wind and warmed by brick walls on three sides we have already planted out frost-intolerant, heat-loving basil.

or cold soil incite root rot that stunts the plants all year. Plant too late and high summer's drought and heat may kill tender young plants, or fall frost end the season before the crop ripens.

Yet calendars are a modern invention. Earlier, people learned to pay attention to Nature's calendar. They settled on reliable, never-fooled plant species as telltales.

So, here's to those generations of long-ago gardeners who noticed and handed down the fact that oak leaves' development is a reliable indication of soil warm enough to nurture corn.



The problem with cold soil...

...is that some plants just can't function in it. The roots cannot take up essential nutrients in soil cooler than 60 or 65 degrees. Such plants become stressed and susceptible to all kinds of secondary problems, from nutrient deficiencies to root- and stem rot. Some even become more attractive to insect pests.

Give 'em warmth or they give you trouble

There are some plants to which warm soil (+70°F) is so important that they may be stunted and become especially susceptible to infections of the stem and root when planted in colder soil:

Ageratum, basil, begonia, caladium, canna, celosia, coleus, corn, cucumber, *Dahlia*, geranium, impatiens, lima beans, moss rose, nasturtium, okra, peppers, pumpkins, salvia, squash, sweet potato vine, tomatoes, and watermelon.

Wait an extra week for soil to warm above 75°F for cantaloupe, eggplant, zinnia and caladium.

Solarize to heat soil

Problems that begin in cold soil may not kill a plant outright but become chronic conditions that reduce size and performance for the whole season. To prepare soil so heat-lovers can be planted a bit earlier than otherwise, spread clear plastic tight over a bed and let the sun warm that soil for a week before planting.

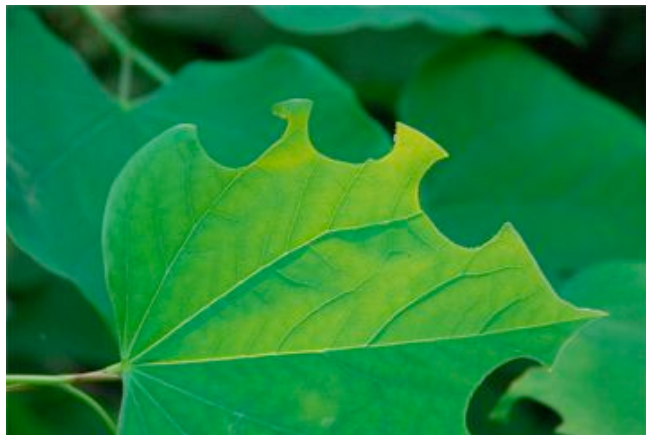
Is there pass-along gardening wisdom in your hands now? Want to pay public homage to all those generations of effort? Tell us about it -- we'll pass along all we can.

Bugged? Your best first step is to identify the buggers!

The bugs have arrived! My newly planted witchhazel's **leaves are being eaten**. It looks almost like the damage that a slug would do. I have been out at night and don't see anything and haven't caught anything in my beer traps. Also the redbud in the same vicinity is being eaten, mostly the new leaves. Are the Japanese beetles hatched yet? Could that be the problem? Some bugs have started on my weeping cheery in the front yard, too. The

Japanese beetles usually eat these leaves, but it seems early this year. I know you don't advocate chemicals, but these three are showcase specimen trees and I need help. - D.K. -

Japanese beetle grubs (below) won't finish their development and emerge to make an adult meal of leaves for nearly a month. (In this interim, they are *not* eating and so are pretty much immune to poisons. So please don't pour such stuff on your lawn, now.)



Even if you can't find the pest itself, the pattern of damage is often telltale of a particular insect. Top: Leaf cutter bee cuts in from the leaf edge. Spittle bug (above) distorts the stem and leaves above the spot where it camps out. It surrounds itself with protective foam. We prodded this spittle mass to roust its inhabitant -- arrow.

However, **many butterfly and moth caterpillars have begun feeding** now. Almost all are still very tiny, under 1/2 inch long. Some are so cleverly colored that you have to look three or four times to see them. Others feed within tightly curled emerging foliage, crawling up to the next

new leaf when the one they have been chewing unfurls enough to expose them. Some even keep new leaves furled by tying them with silk.

Find a culprit before deciding how to deal with it. Insects feeding within curled leaves are usually protected from chemicals that kill on contact, yet they are easy to squish. In a young tree only a dozen larvae may be causing the trouble. Can you pick up a tissue and kill a spider in the house? Same thing here, but you don't need the tissue since a leaf is already wrapped around the insect.

Most garden poisons must be eaten to work. Timing is everything, because the older the insect, the tougher its gut. The younger the bug, the easier it is to kill, and the less damage it's done when dispatched. A monarch butterfly caterpillar (top right) is so tiny when it first emerges from its egg in July (right; that's a pencil point with the egg) that you need a magnifier to find it. It's eating voraciously right from the start, yet takes several days to make a hole big enough to be seen.



Locust plant bugs sting and suck emerging foliage on honey locust trees. Enough of that and the locust drops that foliage. (Below, this locust twig's lost all its leaflets already. The bumps on the twig are scale insects; their sucking weakened but did not destroy the leaflets.) Many people don't notice damage until it's extensive and the bugs may even be gone for the year! A young locust that has had severe leaf loss for several years may need help, so watch for the seasonal debut of these light green bugs. Shake a branch from your honey locust over a piece of paper, to see what bugs are there. A few bugs are acceptable but if dozens fall out, think about cleaning them away with a daily hosing -- plain, forceful water -- or spraying an insecticidal soap.



Short gardener looks for leverage in garden tools

Are there **garden implements** such as rakes, hoes, spades with handles **for short people**? I am 5'4" and have a "ladies" spade I've had for years. I guard it carefully as I use it all the time. But rakes and hoes are just too long.

I've checked garden centers but have found nothing shorter than what I have. Some manufacturer is missing out -- not everyone is six foot tall! - S.S.

This 5' 4" lady and 5' 6" guy appreciate your predicament. We've never found a "line" of tools for short gardeners but have found items here and there, and are always looking.

One flag that draws us to try a tool company is a **catalog description including handle length** -- for instance, "42 inches overall, handle 28 inches." Another is the offer of spades and forks with different handles. We aren't particular about the length of long-handled tools -- anything with a straight wooden handle can be cut down from its standard 63 or 64 inches. It's the "D" and "T" handled tools that must be the right length.

We have ordered **Clarington Forge** forks and spades from their distributors for many years. Last year in issue #88 we steered you to www.claringtonforge.com to order direct from the maker, or to the Gardenviews store in Northville, Michigan which is stocking the fork and spade for those of us who only buy an unfamiliar tool after giving it the heft test.

Clarington Forge items (www.claringtonforge.com) we can recommend to our fellow vertically-challenged gardeners:

- Border fork, 37" overall (vs. standard garden fork, 40"; an even longer handle available).
- Border spade with short handle, overall 37" (vs. 39" standard)
- Shrubbery spade, known as the Ladies' spade for its short handle, overall 36" (vs. 43" standard)
- Replacement handles, 28" and 32" long.
- Children's digging fork (overall 33"). We bought one for our son when he was 7 years old and should have let him take it with him now that he's a gardening homeowner. However, we'd found it to be such a great and comfortable tool for weeding and light digging that we kept it for ourselves.
- Children's digging spade, garden rake and hoe.

There are also tools for us shorter stature gardeners at www.gardentoolcompany.com including:

- Border spade by DeWit, with T handle, 38.5" overall
- Children's garden spade with T handle, overall 29"

The universal quest for good tools.

Well designed, well made tools are simply not easy to find. We have a garage full of not-quite-right's we think are worth keeping if only we can find a better handle, get the head to stay on the handle, find someone to



Try this test to learn what length D- or T-handle tool you should use. First, put on your garden boots.* Now stand at ease, arms hanging, and have someone measure the distance from ground to the bottom of your elbow joint. Get a tool about that tall, because its handle will be at that point where your body is accustomed to exerting bent-arm force. Janet (5' 4") prefers a 27" or 28" handle for a spade or fork, for an overall 39-40" tool (the spade on the left in the photo). Steven (5' 6") prefers implements 42" long. *If you don't have boots, put them on your shopping list. They make such a difference in what you can accomplish, and in avoidance of foot trouble. Red Wing boots won our allegiance for offering women's sizes when no one else did, and have remained our choice for over 30 years.

forge a blade of this shape and angle from metal that will hold its edge, etc. You may have to order by mail for the most choices.

Finding the perfect tool is rarely simple, regardless of one's height. Tools differ not only in length of handle but angle and composition of blade, overall weight, and quality of construction. Janet still seeks a replacement her most favored short spade -- loved not only for its short "D" handle but for the weight and reliable sharpness of its blade. Worn thin by fifteen years of hard use, the blade cracked. We've looked, made due and even grown to love other tools in the 17 years since then but have yet to find the perfect replacement. We've actually learned to enjoy the search and the gradual accumulation of fine, almost-perfect tools!

(To those gardeners who worked with us that year, vying to use that spade whenever Janet wasn't around: Do you believe it? **17 years** have passed since you put that plaque on her spade!)



Aiming for Answers: Hit or Miss?

Cut daff leaves? Not all the way too early!

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

Daffodils and tulips--I cut mine down to 6 inches after blooms are spent, just to tidy up the garden. A friend says absolutely not to cut down but let stems die back. What is your expert opinion? - D -

Thanks so much for asking, because our expert opinion has been changing this past year. We've **always cut our daff foliage when it begins to bug us**, some time after bloom but usually long before it goes yellow. We started doing it when we considered that cutting the foliage by half is the equivalent of cutting it *all* at the half-way point of its aging process, and no worse than folding or braiding it as some do so that half its photosynthetic surface is covered. The total cut always worked for us.

However, some people who heard our advice have now written (thanks, F.A. and R.S.) and caused us to look at gardens where people cut the foliage pretty much right after bloom. Cut that way, the plants had fewer flowers the next year:

This is an FYI re daffodils. In 2008 I took your advice and cut back the daffodil greenery when you said it was OK to do so. The next Spring I only had one daffodil in a spot where I normally would have dozens. Lots of greenery, but only one flower. That was the year I believe that you said was a bad year for daffodils.

So, in 2009 I did the same thing when you said it was OK to cut back daffodils. In Spring 2010, same thing--2 flowers this time. So, last year I didn't cut back the daffodils until everything turned brown. Result: dozens of flowers blooming right now. Perhaps cutting back early doesn't work in all soils. My soil is poor. Perhaps my daffodils need more time to absorb nutrients. - F.A. -

So we've revised our advice and now say, go ahead and cut it if you don't want to see that foliage and/or have no other plants growing up to hide it. But don't cut it drastically right after bloom. Give it a few weeks. Or cut it just by half.

You're in a position to be able to check this further for us: Cut some of yours, don't cut others. Mark the un-cut bunch and note your calendar how many weeks after bloom you made the cut. See if next year there are more, less or the same number of flowers between the bunches.

If you do this, please let us know so we can pass it along. One day all this may turn into a specific days-after-bloom recommendation.

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

So much goes on in email between newsletters! We wish we could include it all. Excerpts:

Redtwig shows its spots

I have 2 variegated red twig dogwood shrubs. They look beautiful in the spring when they leaf out, and also in the winter... The rest of the summer and fall they are ugly. The leaves get some ugly black spots... what is wrong...? Is this common...? - S.J. -

...Redtwig dogwood is susceptible to leaf spot, which can also infect new shoots so the branches carry chronic infections called cankers that eventually kill twigs or limbs. Redtwigs growing in dry soil or shade seem more likely to fall prey to this fungus. Can't blame 'em, as they're native to constantly moist soil.



Wow, what a Wisteria!

We wrote to you about an out of control wisteria of a couple of years ago. It is absolutely stunning this year. Don't know what we did and don't care, but it is literally covered in blossoms...

Good for you for taking the photo. Now label the photo with the year, so that you may someday recognize the pattern. It'll happen when you say, "Ah ha! That was the year after we cut it back to paint the arbor. This year, the year after the visiting relatives knocked into it with their car so that we had to chop half of it off, it's doing it again." (By the way, these are real incidents...)



Photo ©2011 P. Hausen

Sage advice: Doesn't grow? Let it go!

I have learned to not get too attached to a plant or a shrub. If I really like the plant I will move it to another location, if after a couple of seasons it is floundering. If it still doesn't do well, then it goes. I have gotten rid of 2 viburnums, V. Carlesii and V. Burkwoodii in this one area of a garden. I donated one to a local public garden's viburnum collection. It is doing better. I planted a ninebark (*Physocarpus* 'Copper Glow') in its place. It is doing very well. - S.J. -

Ticking off Lyme disease cautions

...May is Lyme Disease

awareness month. I wish I had more definitive facts to tell everyone about Lyme disease but it's rather complicated and at times controversial. So I'd just like to ask everyone to be aware of ticks in your yards and fields and forests and to prevent being bitten by covering up as much skin as possible or using (and I hate to say it) Deet spray.

Go to the Michigan Lyme Disease Association website for more info: www.mlda.org

If you do get a tick attached to you please remove it carefully and let your doctor know. Nymph ticks can be the size of a period and very hard to see. Do a tick check on yourself and children and pets every time you come in from working or playing outdoors. Watch for unusual rashes and flu-like symptoms followed by joint pain which often signal the beginning of Lyme disease. - B.K. -

Thank you, B.K. We feel for you in the frustrations involved in identifying and then finding treatment for this disease. To see you, such a vigorous person and enthusiastic gardener, laid low but keeping on, is an inspiration and a caution. We hope everyone will realize how important it is to cover up and to check for tick bites.

About covering up while gardening

Just recently we overheard the comment,

"Sunblock? No thanks. My grandfather worked outside on the farm every day of his life until he was 85. He never had a problem."

If we'd been invited into that conversation we would have said, "Be careful about comparing apples to oranges. We've known a few old-time farmers, too. They didn't expose much skin -- didn't wear shorts, and almost always worked in long sleeved shirts and hats."

Crossed *Anemones*

After you wrote about woodland anemone, I ...bought some anemones this spring. But the package says to lift them in fall. ...thought you said they are hardy perennials in zone 5... - M. N. -

Woodland anemones (*A. blanda*, and *A. sylvestris*) are hardy in zone 5. You may have their less hardy relative, *A. coronaria*, also known as St. Brigid's anemone. *A. coronaria* is often sold in spring as a summer bulb. Its flowers are taller, bigger and more brightly colored than woodland anemone but the corms do indeed need help surviving a zone 5 winter.

We admire *A. coronaria* flowers enough to think the annual replacement expense is acceptable, as is the effort to find and dig the corms each year. Yet we don't grow them because spring tends to be short in our area. The weather usually goes from frigid to cool and on to hot in just a few weeks, as compared to the long, slow spring some areas and this plant enjoy. St. Brigid anemones grow best when it's cool and poop out once the heat kicks in, so they are unlikely to perform for us as they do for spring-blest gardeners.

When the catkins away, the birds are disappointed

We planted a river birch at our new house because we loved one we had before. We especially enjoyed watching the little birds that would come to it to pick the seeds out of its catkins in spring. But our new tree is on steroids or something, growing like a weed but without a single catkin. When will it get catkins? What can we do to make it flower so it sets seed? - N.R. -

That's a billion dollar question. When someone comes up with a formula to make a plant bloom, they'll be able to sell it 'round the world. Until then, all we can do is put plants where they'll get the growing conditions they've evolved with and know that sooner or later they'll develop the chemical mix in their cells that spurs flower formation.

Most woody plants that have not reached flowering state -- "juvenile growth" trees, shrubs and vines -- do grow much faster than their mature counterparts and may have unusually large

foliage, too. Once some of that energy's devoted to developing flowers and seed, growth and foliage scale back.

Japanese maple losses mount

We're heartbroken. Our Japanese maple, which is just a normal 'Bloodgood' more than 15 years old, hasn't leafed out on some of its branches, and others have lost the leaves that started to grow. The buds seem to have just quit growing, shriveled and died. What happened? what should we do? - K.K.

-

You have our sympathy. Lots of Japanese maples took a hit this winter, and as you point out, the sufferers are not only brand new trees or especially sensitive varieties. These trees are native to the understory, where they can take their time hardening off in fall in an environment where temperatures are moderated by the branches of bigger trees overhead. Grown in the open, and exposed to very sudden severe cold such as we had last December or following a mid-winter thaw, they experience cambium damage that can have the effects you describe.

For some trees that are acting this way, we've already pruned back to vigorous wood. We're waiting on others, because the dieback is still ongoing and we'd like to cut just once. Next, it's wait-and-see how much new growth develops, what shape the tree will have left and how long it may take to regain its former size.

The spring of 1996 was the last time we saw so much Japanese maple damage. That time, the cause was a freakish January warm up and absence of snow cover followed by an Arctic blast so severe that the episode became the subject of a special publication* by the USDA.

*www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/special_summaries/96_1/

There's much more illustrated detail on how Japanese maples are damaged in winter and ideas for protecting them, in issue #68.

Looking for back issues?

Maybe we mention it, or you're directed to it as 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 can often 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. (Pg. 21) Or,
- 4) Donate to help us get our website up so all back issues will be available at a click. \$20 is great but even \$1 helps! Send checks payable to Janet Macunovich to 120 Lorberta, Waterford, MI 48328.

This week in our garden

Grow with us! This week:

Cutting and cutting, on:

- Spring bloomers that need to be kept small: Lilacs, forsythia, *Viburnums*, cherry trees, etc.
- Perennials that have finished flowering and can produce neater new foliage, pretty quickly, if we clip them: Perennial *Geranium*, bigleaf forget-me-not (*Brunnera*), columbine, etc.



Prunings from a weeping cherry (1), Burkwood *Viburnum* (2) and an elderberry (3) cover the lawn.

- Groundcovers and perennials that are lapping over or very near the edge of a bed.



- Perennials and shrubs that have not bloomed yet but may be pinched to bloom later and stay shorter. (Below: Joe Pye before and after its pinch.)

Planting annuals. Not crowding them. We know you see it done everywhere -- annuals jammed together, bare inches apart, despite tags that specify "space 12 inches" -- but that doesn't mean it's a good thing! Crowded plants are stressed, less full, less floriferous, more prone to trouble. If we want more immediate effect than proper spacing can provide, we do what is done in botanical gardens -- start with larger individual plants.

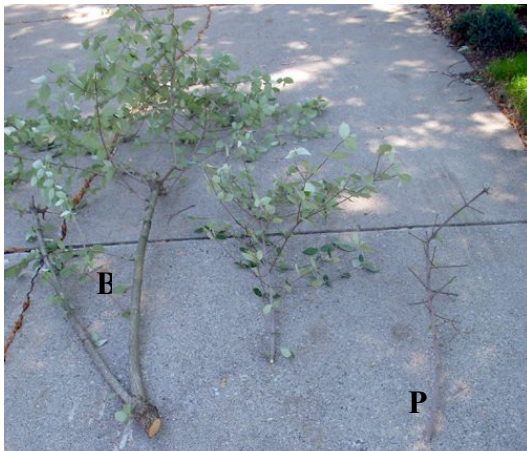


Rescuing new trees from grower error, as we put them in the ground. Look for the tree's flare. Remove excess soil piled on top of the roots and against the trunk if you must, to set that tree at a depth where the flare can be seen.

There's a long story involved but the majority of trees and many shrubs are now coming to us "too deep in the ball," a condition that can doom the plant. Last week we peeled excess soil off six of the 15 trees we planted, and three were six inches too deep.

Encouraging sturdier stems. Tomatoes and *Clematis* are two that can develop additional roots if we pull off their lowest pair of leaves and set them into the ground at a bit of an angle and deep enough to bury their leafless nodes. In the moist darkness the new cells that form at the point of injury will develop into root cells rather than more leaves.

Placing props for plants unable to support their own summer / fall blooms and fruit: Tomatoes and Japanese anemones were this week's targets.



Above, left: We reduced branches (B) from the *Viburnum* pruned on page 14 to props (P) and pushed them in among Japanese anemones (above, right) as a support system the anemones will soon cover.

Pussy-footing around beds that filled in with lightning speed once spring finally arrived. They're full of plants and also full of work we couldn't accomplish while the weather was bad.

For instance, shrub cut-backs still need doing that we put off while plant development lagged during our normal late March/early April pruning time. Perennial moves and divisions can still be done now that were delayed when beds were too wet to work.

However, fully extended perennials are more likely to suffer broken stems during the operation. So we gently truss up the stems before digging, water well right after the move or split, and supply extra water or shade until new growth resumes.

Digging into beds full of lush, fully-leaved plants is a challenge. Some of our tactics:

- Tie back neighboring plants and place temporary stakes.
- Slice out portions of clumps without lifting the whole, then backfill with compost.
- Cut back a woody plant we aim to remove, then use a trowel to scrape soil from its crown so we can saw it loose from its roots.
- Set thick blocks of wood or bricks between plants and span them with planks to form a walkway.
- Bite the bullet: Cut back surrounding plants, do our walking and working, then just wait while new foliage develops.

It's tedious work and slows us down, but it can be worthwhile. And oh how good it feels to be out working productively rather than running before one storm or another!

Sniffing pleasant things to clear our noses of the sour stink of grass clips left too long in wet heaps or bags. Grass clippings make good mulch -- there's free nitrogen in that tissue cut while still living. Yet lawn care is another job that fell behind during rough spring weather, so clips couldn't necessarily remain where they fell and we're being given sodden piles and bags of clips to work with.

We apply fresh-cut grass in a one to two inch layer and keep topping that up as it decomposes. Avoid grass that's been treated with any weed killers during the previous two weeks. Don't use hot grass -- first spread out and cool off clippings that have been stacked or bagged in plastic and allowed to heat up. Clumped, slimy grass clips are okay but unsightly. We hide them under prettier mulch - what we call a veneer mulch.

Nosegay: n. In modern use, a posy. In medieval times, a twist of fragrant sprigs carried or worn to "keep the nose gay" amid the stink of unwashed bodies and open sewers.

Non-gardeners are missing out. Those who know their garden plants can easily snatch up a nosegay whenever it's needed. These bits of Chinese spicebush (*Lindera angustifolia*), sweet fern (*Comptonia peregrina*) and cooking sage (*Salvia officinalis*) can be rolled between the fingers to release scents that make us temporarily forget the sickly sweet scent of hot, damp grass clippings.

Looking beyond the first answer when we see trouble. Sure, it may be that grubs grazing on roots accounts for dead patches of lawn but soil compaction and chronic drought can create the same effect. Aerate, rake, reseed and keep those areas well watered. Reinvigorated, healthy lawn will be able to withstand feeding by a dozen or more grubs per square foot.



Green thumbs up to helping the "kids" garden. Between 1980 and 2005, gardening in North America became more common and more intense than it ever had before. Now those gung-ho gardeners are handing off what they learned to their children and young neighbors. The recipients are people who grew up during the gardening boom and so expect more than flat grass and sheared evergreens. Realtors say they are unique, too, in wanting useful rather than simply ornamental outdoor spaces. Experience and enthusiasm, able people plus energetic crew, new ideas all 'round... what an exciting venture.

Green thumbs down to **worrying whether a vegetable or fruit crop will grow** for you or you have it "right" in terms of numbers or spacing. We've heard many veteran gardeners exclaim, "Oh, is *that* what this does!" when they first see the fruit of their labor in this row or that of a vegetable bed. So we know we aren't the only ones to simply grow it, eat what develops and be glad. Tomatoes are fun but so are peanuts, okra, potatoes and pak choy. Learn as you grow and improve it next year. This month, just get it in the ground!

Keeping up with the Jones' ...kids!

We know that a whole generation of **avid gardeners** is now happily **lending a hand** to its grown children. We think there must be advice there for others who are looking forward to helping the next generation grow on and up. If you're assisting your **son or daughter** with a landscape or garden, or sharing your experience, plants or muscle with young neighbors, **send us a photo** and drop us a line of what you've done. We think your efforts are worth a special issue of the newsletter or a page on our upcoming website!

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 the summer of 1973 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 and her hobby -- helping others in their gardens -- grew into a 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"), 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 it was my last day on Earth, I would simply take my pole and waders and go fishing up Schlotz Creek where Dad and Poppa and I fished. Now, 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 gardening clients. There, he might customize a rocky channel made to lead water away from downspouts to add "eddies" of small stone and larger rock "where a big trout could lurk." Plants from the edges of "his" streams go into the rain garden of that runoff water: turtlehead, cardinal flower, Joe Pye.

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



Photo ©2010 Deb Hall

Where to catch Janet and Steven in-person:

More chances to *Garden by Janet and Steven - bring your gloves and tools!*

June 10, Friday, 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.: *Garden by Janet* in **Orchard Lake, Michigan**, pruning those shrubs we like to touch up after spring bloom is done: *Weigela*, ninebark, *Forsythia* and others. This is a limited-space session. Email or call Janet & Steven to reserve a place and learn the location: JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850. See below "About Garden by Janet..." for more about this hands-on opportunity. This session is free.

June 18, 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 **weeding and trouble-shooting** in a perennial garden. To join us at the zoo, email mstgarden@gmail.com with the subject line "I'll garden at the Zoo." This session is free. See below ("About Garden by Janet...") for more about these sessions.

June 16, Thursday, 7:00 p.m., Janet helps you get more out of your garden by focusing on the tactile sense, in *Touch: Feeling your way around a garden*. This is your chance to spend some time going beyond the visual to discover why you and others might like and dislike certain plants, why some are well suited to welcoming entranceways, others are great for barriers, some are guaranteed conversation starters and others make an elegant finish to a bouquet. Warning: some delightful touching of samples involved! For all volunteers at the Michigan State University Tollgate Farm and Education Center in **Novi, Michigan**, Meadowbrook at Twelve Mile Road.

June 25, Saturday, at Chicago Botanic Garden:
9:00 a.m. - noon Janet presents *Profitable Perennial Garden Maintenance* for gardening professionals and serious hobby gardeners. \$59 for CBG members, \$74 to non-members. Call (847) 835-5440 to register or go to <https://register.chicagobotanic.org/tickets/show.asp?shcode=1215>

1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Janet provides the why and how of *Estimating Planting Costs* to professional gardeners. \$59 for CBG members, \$74 to non-members. Call (847) 835-5440 to register or go to https://register.chicagobotanic.org/tickets/load_screen.asp?screen=symposia&cgcgcode=16

June 26, Sunday, 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. at Shades of Green Garden Center in **Rochester, Michigan**, 496 East Avon Road, East of Rochester Road. Janet explains how to *Keep the Color Going* this year after your garden's big spring fling is done, and then helps you make *All the Best Sense* of your garden with ways to enhance its dimensions of touch, scent, sound and taste. Call 248-651-1620 for more information or to reserve a seat.

About Garden by Janet & Steven dates:

Gardeners are let-me-see people who learn best with hands-on. So 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.
- 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, subject line "Help at zoo."

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

We go where we're invited -- 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 **meet groups' needs** and expand our horizons by developing new material or "hybrids" from what we already have.

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**.

Janet, Steven, how does that website grow?

It's our dream, an open library of our work where you can find what you need while we keep going forward (no repeats!) with this work we love... perhaps for another 30 years.

It will have a live forum, so everything we discuss with any of you is available for all to see, and join in. We're planning webinars and video... We don't have a launch date yet but it will be this year, thanks to you. You've been adding your dollars to ours, so we've been able to keep design work going while we prepare the library and newsletter archives.

We're almost all blue (right), which is pure gold. Thank you to those who've given us a boost toward meeting the development and hosting costs. If you can help us with this last bit, **send your donation**, check payable to Janet Macunovich, to 120 Lorberta, Waterford, MI 48328. \$20 is great, but every dollar is appreciated.

Blue: a cool color!

Below: Our **Donatelltale** coneflower is just a smidgeon away from fully blue! That's great timing, in that we'll have the development bill paid just as we finish our spring ~~crazy~~ busy season and can get down to the loading and launching. Help us fill in that tiny remaining bit of yellow, please!



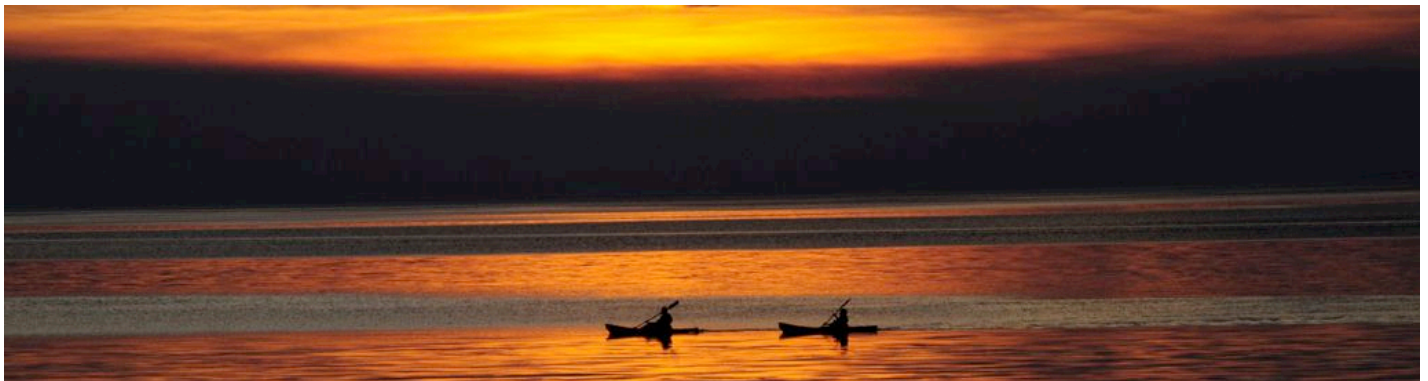
Steven's Photos for You -- Would you like to own some of Steven's images? Perhaps you're wishing to decorate your kitchen with garden songbirds, hang a sunset in your kitchen, make greeting cards, or have a cloth banner for your patio. You might be looking for something you saw here in a newsletter*, an image from one of our presentations, or you have your own wish list of subjects. Send us a description of what you would like, such as "a goldfinch close-up," "a collection orange flowers", a specific flower, seasonal event... You name it, Steven will show you what he has! He'll assemble a custom sampler for you and then size, frame, matte, print on cloth or create greeting cards to your order.

Prices vary based on the project. For example:

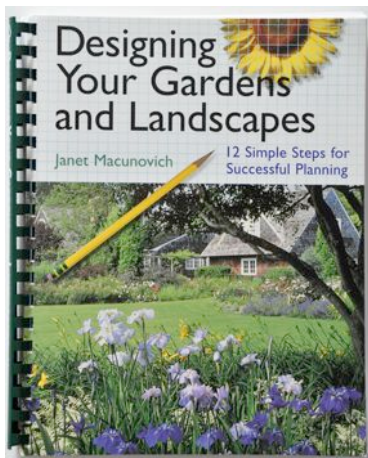
Matted, framed, 11 x 15", \$48
36 x 48' no-fade cloth tapestry, \$215

Call or email for your custom sampler.
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*Please note that images in our newsletter are in low resolution format in order to maintain a manageable newsletter file size, and may lack clarity when enlarged. Images available through *Steven's Photos for You* are at full resolution with so much clear detail that they are sharp even when printed poster-size and larger.



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.

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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 & 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.

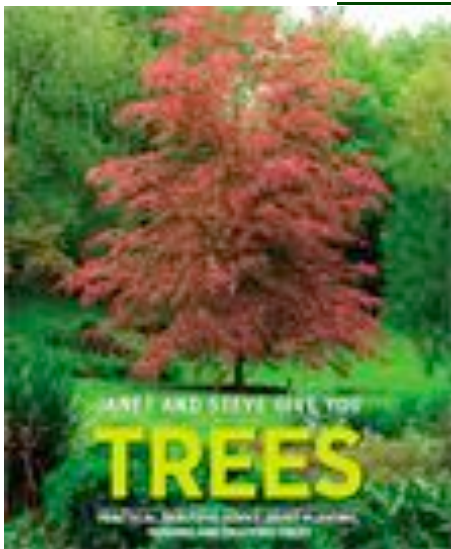
Bonus on this CD: Steven Nikkila's Daydream Screen Saver, 74 of his most vivid works from gardens and nature.

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*

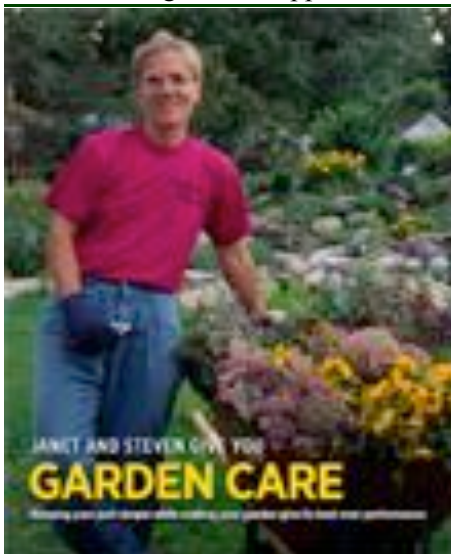
Vital how-to for tending a garden, from Janet and Steven's favorite articles on: bed preparation; soil testing; making a weed-free bed; spring start-up; improving hard-packed soil; fertilizing; watering; cutting back and deadheading; repairing irrigation; drought-tolerant plants; sharpening tools; tweaking 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.

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