

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila
answer your growing concerns
Issue #148, June 22, 2011

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Foxtail lilies (such as *Eremerus* 'Spring Valley hybrid' at right) are spectacular exclamation points in the last days of spring. They also remind us to finish spring pruning! Pp. 2-7

Take heart and make more of that *Dicentra*

Janet and Steven: Love your outlook and views. Could you give me advice on disturbing and dividing a bleeding heart plant?

I have a bleeding heart that is entangled with ostrich fern and what appears to be an Asian lily that the garden fairies planted. Ferns are against foundation and must be moved (My husband needs to repair winter damage to foundation) but that means digging up everything in the area. I know that the timing is bad, but we live in the Van Wert-Lima area of Ohio and you know what kind of spring we've had. If it must move I would like to divide bleeding heart in half if not thirds. It is a 3-4 ft area of plants. The area is very wet and is that good black sticky mud that we have to be careful not to pack when wet or you'll have brick. - W.G. -

Go ahead and dig it. Once you have it up out of the ground you'll see that it does divide easily. You can just crack off sections, each complete with rooted stems.

However, an easy division isn't always graceful, and that can be the case with old fashioned bleeding heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*) when you divide it during its growing season. The divisions are likely to sag and droop in their new places, and they may go dormant early -- turn yellow and fade away even sooner than normal. If they do fade and fall before August, that's okay. They'll be back the next spring.

If you need assurance of its intent to come back, you can clear the soil from the crown of a gone-down bleeding heart to see its pink-ish growing buds all set there for next year. That tells you the plant didn't die, but simply checked out for the year.

We moved two bleeding hearts three weeks ago. This week we cut them down, when we noted that they had hopped onto that fast track to dormancy -- still green and upright but becoming pale overall, with stems beginning to splay. We could have staked them to arrest their sprawl, netting two or three more weeks of show. We decided to move on! After we cut, we planted some *Coleus* near each *Dicentra* crown. That won't bother the bleeding heart but will fill the vacated space with bright foliage.

Cut in the act: Clipping along in catch-up mode!

Where have you been? Are you guys all right?

You are so kind to be concerned! Thank you!

We're A-OK, just tired and further behind than we ever have been, in this goofy spring... And yes we do know it's summer by the calendar, but we're *still* plugging away on spring work! As a result, in the last 3 weeks each time we made time to write for this newsletter, we ran out of time before being able to send it. Then, quickly, the topics timed out and we had to start over.

Which is why we're just having you walk along with us for the rest of this issue and the next, too, to show you what we're up to right now. By the time we finish this walk-through and email it out, there will be only about four days left when we might still be able to do what should have been done in May had the weather cooperated. After that, we'll give up the dead run pace we've been on and our newsletters will go back on track, on time and featuring Q & A.

This week in our garden

Grow with us! This week:

We're making the last cuts of the year on spring-flowering shrubs and trees that we want to keep small but full of bloom. We make the end of June our deadline for pruning *Forsythia*, *Viburnum*, flowering cherries, ninebark, *Magnolia*, lilac, *Deutzia* and the rest of the pre-solstice bloomers. All the wood that remains and what develops after this clipping will have time to mature and set flower buds before the end of the growing season.

Bug beatin' garb

M.K. recommends

...the Bug Baffler. It included an attached hood for the gauzy jacket that could zip shut, enclosing you from waist to the top of your head. The company said it would protect against no-see-ums as well. I wore it and it was the end of the banquet for those wretched little fiends. If it stops no-see-ums, wouldn't it stop ticks too?

I love it and this year will be going back for the pants too! You can take a look at their products here :
www.bugbaffler.com/products.htm

This week... (Continued) Rejuvenate a bored lilac

This lilac has gone so long without pruning that all its trunks are big enough to host borers, and all show signs of borer damage. The insects feed under the bark and weaken the shrub. Then it blooms less well, thins out and dies back.



So Ginger Reichenbach and Janet took up the saw and put it on a course of rejuvenation. From its twelve trunks they selected the three least productive and sawed them off at ground level.

Over the next few years, they'll cut out all of the existing trunks and keep the best new shoots that arise from the base, as replacement trunks. By year three, shoots that arose this year will be four- or five feet tall and blooming, but too small in diameter to interest borers.

Rejuvenated, the lilac will then go on an annual pruning program, where one of

its oldest trunks is removed each year. That keeps it full of young, borer-resistant wood and, as a bonus, full of trunks that never get much taller than six feet. All the fragrant flowers are at nose level rather than two stories up.

We've also been engaged in helping Ginger map her garden -- acres of it. You can visit her amazing garden on July 9. It's one of seven on the Four Seasons Garden Club's tour. We'll be there. Buy tickets at McHattie Park, 300 Dorothy Street in South Lyon. Or call Rebecca Wilder at 248-437-1539 for more information.



This week... (Continued) Make the most of two-bloom *Weigela*

Weigela blooms on old wood in early June, and then produces a second flush of bloom on the wood that comes of age this summer. To make the most of the shrub, keep it pruned so that it's always producing lots of new wood.



We prune this *Weigela* at our Detroit Zoo garden twice each year. First, in very early spring, we cut back wood that bloomed the previous July.

Second, as its first crop of blossoms begins to fade, we cut out all those stems that bloomed, clipping below the lowest flowers. Only the current-year wood remains -- the shoots that have been growing up from the stubs of our spring pruning and are now showing above the flowering stems. (Arrows.) Those will bloom later this summer.

Meanwhile, more new shoots will begin from the bases of the branches we've just cut. Those will bloom next spring.

Here's a variegated *Weigela* (right and below) that hasn't had that attention. Typical of its kind, it's filled up with old wood. So we started it down the road to perpetual youth by cutting out all the old and dead limbs. New growth will begin from within, this summer, and get itself set up to bloom next spring. Early next spring, we'll cut back everything but that new growth. Then, the shrub will be on track to be small but smothered in bloom twice a year..



Left: The rejuvenated shrub. What we cut out is heaped in the right foreground.

Plants don't hold it against us that we prune. They themselves are heartless shedders of unproductive wood. - Janet -

This week... (Continued)
Spring cuts pay off as everything comes up roses



Climbing-, ramble-, and shrub roses are blooming up a storm right now, all the more beautiful because of the pruning we did in spring. We took out old wood and shortened the blooming spurs to leave stout, vigorous stubs that would bear only big flowers.



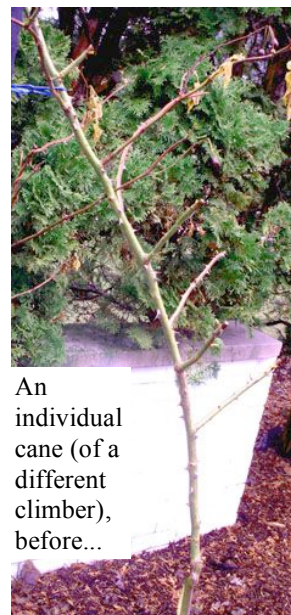
The same rose on April 7, before pruning (left) and after pruning (right).



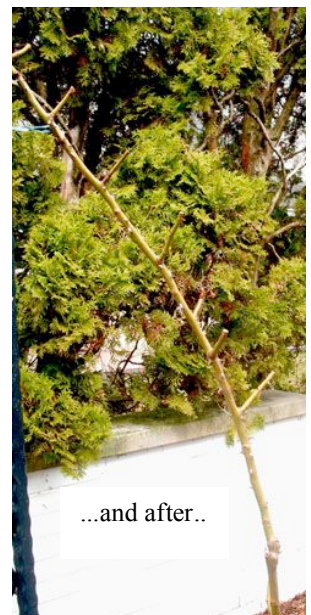
Before...



...and after.



An individual cane (of a different climber), before...



...and after..

This week... (Continued) Keep the spice, tame the bush

Our native spice bush (*Lindera benzoin*) makes a nice show of yellow flowers in earliest spring, before the *forsythia* blooms. These plants can be fragrant (simply bruise a leaf, snap a stem, or burn the wood), beautiful small trees (15') or large shrubs, unless the garden's too small to

accommodate that.



These two spice bushes are in our Detroit Zoo garden. We sic a brave gardener on them each year, to lop them back hard sometime after bloom and before July 4. The plants will not need any other pruning but will end the season just a few feet taller than the finished cut, with every branch primed to bloom right to its tip.

Top photo -- two spice bushes on the morning of June 18. Bottom photo, a few minutes later.

To show you what it is to cut back "hard" we asked fellow volunteer Dawn Miller to stand in to provide scale. The arrows indicate other reference points that you can see in both "before" and "after" photos.



Pruning's bottom line

"What if it dies?"

That's the question we hear most often after we describe how a shrub or tree might be cut to bring it down to size.

Our answer is, "Good riddance then, to something too big that couldn't live by our rules. Now, what can we plant there that will be better...?"

This week... (Continued) *Viburnum*'s determined but we keep it under control



Leatherleaf viburnums (*V. x rhytidophylloides*) are very good at growing, and it can be tough to stay ahead of them.

With two cuts a year, we keep this pair of leatherleaves at about half the size they would be, without missing out on bloom or berry. In spring before growth begins we cut back hard on some branches, and do the same again now after bloom's finished and shortening days are coming that will dampen the plants' tendency to sucker.

It's not a task for the faint of heart -- the shrubs are almost two feet shorter when we're done, and we lopped some limbs back by *four* feet. That's our big heap of cut limbs in the foreground in our "after" shot (above, right).



#86: Chock full of pruning how & when

Issue #86 contains our ultimate guide to shrub pruning, with detailed how-to for cutting every which way, for all kinds of reasons, on 62 types of shrubs.

Looking for back issues?

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 availability and computer 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. Or,
- 4) Wait for our website, where back issues will be available at a click. We'll have it up and running sometime later this year!

This week... (Continued) Sawfly trouble: Aim for prevention, not revenge

Pruners learn that plants routinely make comebacks from big losses, and that even **the worst-looking damage done by pests may add up to less leaf loss than a hard pruning**. However, it's not a good idea to ask a plant to put up with our pruning withdrawals *plus* big losses to insects or disease.

Early summer is **sawfly season** -- that time when the **caterpillar-like larvae** of tiny wasp relatives turn their host plants into lace. For almost every plant from rose to pine, there's a sawfly specialist. In most cases we first learn of them by finding the plant already eaten. The key to control is to mark the date when you found the plant gone lacy and **then look for that pest** on that same plant species three or four weeks **ahead of the date the next year**.

When they're small and the damage has just begun, sawflies are simple to kill by hand or with soap. Then, too, the plant's looks can still be salvaged.

Like most insects, sawflies cycle through boom and bust -- some years they're out in force, other years they're scarce. So even if you don't see them for years, don't let your guard down.

Top; These sawflies, eating cranberrybush (*Viburnum trilobum*), are just about fully grown. They're tough to kill at this point and the plant has already suffered heavy damage.

Middle: If you know to look early for signs of feeding, you can knock the bugs for a loop and still enjoy the plant that year.

Bottom: A couple weeks after it starts, all the leaves may be skeletonized. Bug killing then is not very effective, since many of the insects have already left and entered their wait-for-next-year stage. (An established plant can weather even that big loss, so you can follow the "let it be" strategy.)



This week... (Continued) Prune annuals now for best show throughout summer



Aren't we funny creatures, afraid to sacrifice any flower? Do it -- deadhead those annuals now so they'll be stupendous throughout July and August and September.



Above: This little bitty *Petunia* has two blooming stems. The oldest has one open flower, one just opening (a) and a whole batch of developing seed pods below that point. The second flowering stem is topped by one open flower (b) and has two developing seed pods (one is noted at "c").

Right: The same plant after we've clipped off the oldest flowering stem. Flower "b" is now only partially in the picture. Seed pod "c" is now on top. We clip it off, and seed pod "d," as well. We've made just one cut, sacrificed just 2 flowers, and gotten rid of a stem that was spending almost all its energy on developing seed.

Below: No big loss, visually! Here's the whole batch, before and after deadhead. Bet you have to look close to detail the losses! Alternately, we could clip off every seed pod but that's so tedious, and it leaves the plants with flower-tipped but lank stems. We go for bushy plants able to make 3, 4, or a dozen new flower stems with the energy they had been spending on seed.



Deep in their roots, all flowers keep the light. - Theodore Roethke -

This week... (Continued) Perennials up for annual cut-back

Hardy cranesbill (*Geranium* species) and other spring blooming perennials contribute mightily in their time but in summer their few remaining flowers can be upstaged by developing seed pods and foliage that fades as the stem that holds it finishes its run.

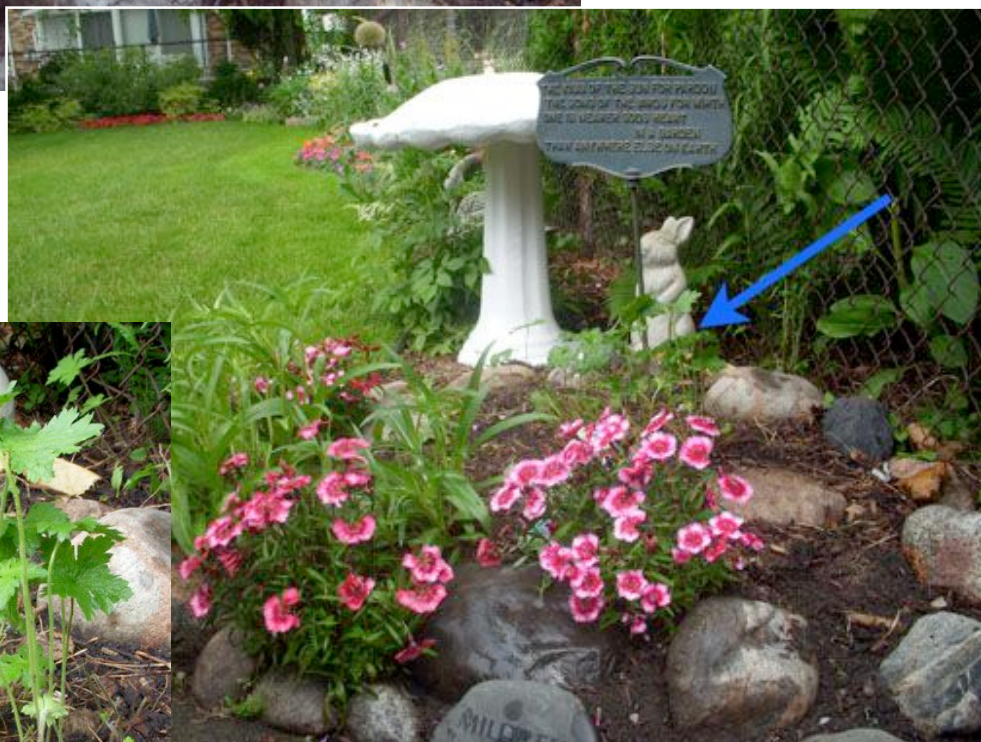


So, again we say: "Off with their heads!"

Left: A few flowers (a) still grace this cranesbill (a *Geranium himalayense* hybrid) but they take a back seat to the seed pods (b) and aging leaves (at c, an old leaf succumbs to leaf blotch).

Below: So, we swooped down and cut off all the flower stems, left just the bit at the arrow.

Below: New leaves will emerge - all of these were already coming on. We took the time to clip around them but didn't have to. More will come, even if we had clipped these off along with the old stems.



Above: The overall look is cleaner. Note: We deadheaded the pinks, in the foreground, as well, albeit with more selective cuts since they are still in early stages of bloom.)

This week... (Continued) Wise move to cut the sage



Perennial ornamental sage (*Salvia superba*) has a long bloom time. However, in its last weeks as seed pods begin to outnumber flowers, its seed stalks elongate and relax outward, the better to drop seed onto bare ground. We try to deadhead before the lean begins. Or, once we see it leaning, we simply cut all the flower stems down to the ground or to a clean, sizable basal leaf.

Above, left: We do lose remaining flowers in the cut-back...

Above, right: ...yet the look is so much cleaner afterward...

Right: ...that we also cut back the zebra iris, to finish tidying the scene.

Kelp helps: Comeback without the burn

Liquid organic fertilizers such as kelp and fish emulsion are a good choice to give perennials a lift after a late spring or early summer cut-back. It imparts disease resistance, too!

But... Don't ever fertilize dry plants. Water first!



This week... (Continued) Bringing spike-form flowers to heel



Many flowers that we clip back now have **spike-form flower** stems -- they produce new flowers at the tip even as seed develops below. For these flowers, we have a **rule of thumb**:

When the length of spike occupied by seed pods is greater than that filled with flowers and unopened buds (a), it's time to cut off that spike.

Cut the flower spike just above a sturdy side-shoot that is preparing to bloom (b).

If there are no new flowering shoots to be seen, cut the flowering stem off above a sizable, healthy leaf. The next flowering stem is likely to come from the place where that leaf joins the stem.

Learn to distinguish between seed pod and flower bud, and you will be able to follow the pattern of flower stem development as you deadhead.

- Janet -

Dead man's fingers - ugly but essential

The hard, blackened eruptions between this crabapple stump and the fieldstone are the mushrooms known as **dead man's fingers**. They're the fungus *Xylaria polymorpha*, which won't hurt live plants but does eventually **transform the dead wood** of roots and stumps into fertile soil.

In a rainy year we see mushrooms we have never seen before. The fungi that produce them have been there all along, storing energy as they turn organic matter into fertilizer, biding their time until conditions are right for spores released by mushrooms to "take."



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This week... (Continued) Ah, how it's grown... Now, make a date to cut it!

Many trees and shrubs that we keep small qualify for late summer pruning. We prefer to clip them then, when their growth buds are set for the year and cuts don't stimulate multiple new shoots.



So we've been setting dates for you to join us in August at Garden by Janet and Steven sessions. This star magnolia and weeping white pine in Dearborn Heights are two from that list. They would love to be bigger and shaggier but we keep them in check.

Dating the flowers, too: Catalpa rules in June



We continually refine our bloom calendar, so we can design for non-stop color. *Catalpa* is often overlooked but great for filling a stall, between spring- and summer-blooming trees and shrubs.



The 45mph garden: A low purr-ple blanket on the roadside



You can put a gardener behind the wheel but you can't take the flowers out of his eyes. Look at what's catching driver's eyes and raising questions this week.

In some parts of the country, people have become tired of catmint (*Nepeta mussinii*) as a ubiquitous planting along highway shoulders.

In other regions, it's only recently made the jump from garden bed and occasional use as a groundcover, to appear en masse along the Interstate.

We have planted it and seen it in use for decades but still haven't tired of it.



When a plant is good at what it does -- in this case, putting up with drought, covering ground, preventing weeds, flowering in spring and again in summer if clipped or mowed after first bloom -- we say, "More power to it!"

One thing we do regret when a plant becomes very popular, is that it may be taken to be a plant-of-all-trades and planted where it cannot thrive.



Perhaps this happens because landscape designers who fill their plans with just a few "everywhere plants" aren't inclined to go back to see how a planting fared.

We hope somehow some of them will see this, and realize the only place for catmint is in the full sun and well drained soil.

Above: a split planting of catmint (*Nepeta mussinii*).

Right: The plants on the right are in full sun.

Below: Those on the left receive only about two hours of sun each day and are half the size, much less floriferous and unable to block weeds.



Pruner and planter, always ask: Can the sun reach here?

In pruning a hedge or placing a plant be aware that even an hour less sun makes a big difference. Clip a hedge to be narrow at the top, so its upper foliage doesn't shade what's below. Look up and read the sky for hours of sun before you plant. (The how-to is in Janet's book *Designing Your Gardens and Landscape*. See page 21.)

Green thumbs up to weeds with strong, distinctive roots. We can hate quack grass and *Houttuynia* (chameleon plant, below, left) but we gotta love how their roots hold up as we tug,



allowing us to track down every last bit. They're a dream compared to (grrr!) brittle Canada thistle runners or horsetail / scouring rush roots (left) that yield only their vertical bit without even a hint that there are power-packed, thickened horizontal pieces left behind.

Green thumbs down to those who spray insecticides over wide areas when they find aphids or

caterpillars on one plant. Tone it down and narrow your focus. Insects tend to be host-specific, unlikely to harm unrelated plants nearby. By contrast, insecticides tend to be broad-spectrum, killing even the beneficial insects that could do most pest control work for us.

Tiny wonders

Our day was made recently by miniscule pearls on plant leaves, like this one on bronze fennel, along with barely-there caterpillars. More on pages 17-18.



Euonymus scale, round 2: If you spray, make it count

When you must intervene in a plant-pest situation by using a pesticide, do it right so you achieve the positive outcome that counterbalances any negative impact. So abide by the directions on the product label, including follow up. For instance, if you applied dormant oil to control *Euonymus* scale, then use an insecticide in early summer to kill insects that survived the oil application.

Alternatives to pesticides

Every pest control measure has pros and cons. Choose for the least negative impact. Options to control *Euonymus* scale: 1) Look the other way. 2) Take steps to improve air circulation (*Euonymus* grown on a solid wall is scale heaven). 3) Rinse the plant frequently and forcefully throughout spring to dislodge immature scale. 4) Release ladybugs. 5) Apply insecticide.

Expert Gardener Afield: Report from the butterfly hatchery

The world is full of great gardens, some right at our elbow but unexplored. Here's a chance to **peek through expert eyes** at places you may have overlooked in your own yard.

Dear Janet & Steven,

It's done! My book *Learn About Butterflies in the Garden*, is done. Here are places where you can purchase it:

Barson's Greenhouse - 6414 Merriman Rd
(Between Ford Rd and Warren Rd) in
Westland, MI 48185, 734-421-5959

Goldner Walsh Nursery - 559 Orchard Lake
Rd, Pontiac, MI 48341, 248-332-6430

Gray's Greenhouse - 8820 Lilley, Plymouth,
MI 48170, 734-453-1220

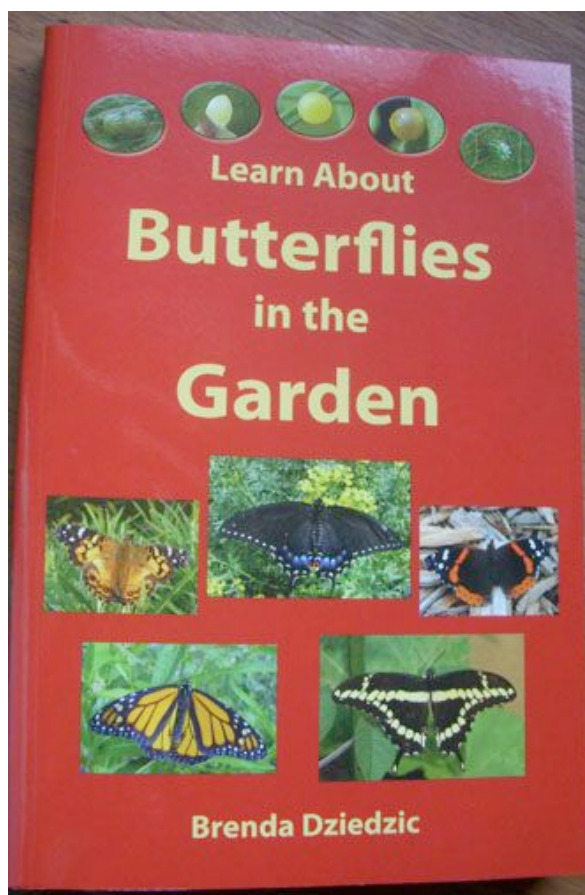
Master Gardener of Western Wayne County
- 5454 Venoy Rd, Wayne, MI 48184, 734-
727-7238

Nankin Mills Interpretive Center - 33175
Ann Arbor Trail, Westland, Michigan 48185,
734-261-1990 (ask for Carol Clements)

Steinkopf Nursery - 20815 Farmington Rd,
Farmington Hills, MI 48336, 248-474-2925

or write or call me: 1263 Springer St., Westland, MI 48186-3721, 734 326-0578

Brenda Dziedzic



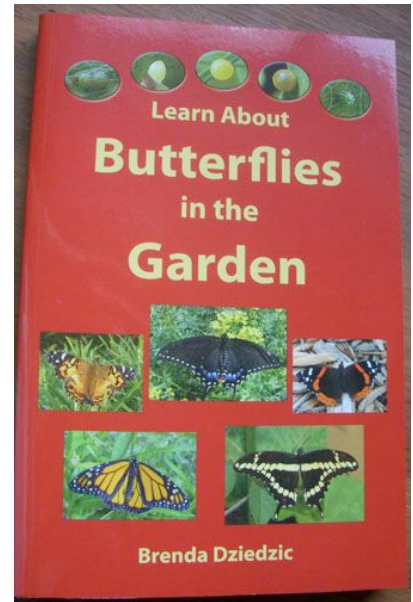
Brenda Dziedzic is the president of the Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association who has been raising butterflies and teaching others about them for decades. Her book includes what she's learned people need most -- photos of the eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises and butterflies most likely to inhabit a Great Lakes garden.



Thanks, Brenda. We went right out and got a copy. It will be *perfect* for the next time we have a day as at our last Detroit Zoo workday. That was when with other volunteer gardeners we watched a black swallowtail butterfly lay eggs on a fennel plant.

Since we were looking, passing visitors to the zoo stopped to look, too, and for much of the morning we all conducted impromptu butterfly gardening sessions for people of all ages.

Sometimes there were so many eyes trying to get a bead on a tiny egg or just-emerged caterpillar we were pointing out, that it would've been great to have your book. we would have said, "Check page 18 then look right here!"



Brenda Dziedzic has a 60' x 120' city lot that's chock full of dozens of types of butterfly. In an eight year period, she hand raised 2,909 caterpillars, photographing them for her book and talks, then releasing them as butterflies back to her garden.

Photos here are of pages from Dziedzic's new book.

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.

Gardens are a form of autobiography.

- Sydney Eddison -

(Eddison's book, *Gardening for a Lifetime*, is a guide to those who have been making a garden for many years and aim to keep on doing so even as age affects our abilities and needs.)



**A special issue in the making:
Show us how you've gardened for others**

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!

Janet & Steven, how does your website grow?

It's our dream, an open library of our work where you can find what you need while we keep going forward with this work we love... perhaps for another 30 years. How good it will be to have archives right at everyone's fingertips, helping to support our 'write new- no repeats' policy.

And what a relief to be able to post our news once and tell you it's there, rather than finding the time each week to compose and send it as an attachment.

The website will have a live forum, so everything we discuss with any of you is available for all to see, and join in. We're also planning webinars, video, notification services so you know whenever we post the types of information you are most interested in, and a catalog and/or links so that worthwhile products can be easily accessible to you.

We don't have a launch date yet but thanks to you we now have the funds to finish the programming and know it will be later this year. We'll have a firm schedule within the next few weeks, and let you know!

You're true blue... and so is our coneflower!

This past month while we ran full tilt in gardens, making up for uncooperative spring weather, you sent the last few dollars we needed to meet our goal. Thank you! We'll start loading and launching as soon as we can.

Donations always accepted

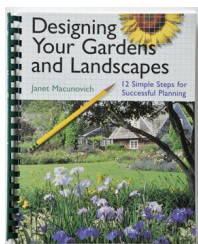
You've helped us pay for the expert help we need to insure that our site will be clean, easy to use and secure. Now the project's back on our desks, our labor of love to load and run the site. We plan to keep our site ad-free and we will need to eat to keep working, so we will always accept donations. **Send donations**, check payable to Janet Macunovich, to 120 Lorberta, Waterford, MI 48328.



Where to catch Jane and Steven in person

Our calendar of appearances will be back in the next issue, coming is just a few days!

You can have our advice "on paper". We wrote and sell these books plus CDs:



Designing Your Gardens and Landscape

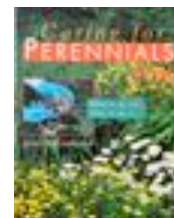
First published in 1990 as *Easy Garden Design*, a 150-page step-by-step recipe that's become a design classic. Janet developed, uses and has trained thousands of others to use this process. People say: "This is exactly the simple, clear approach I need!" This design process is applicable world-wide.

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

Caring for Perennials

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

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



Asking About Asters CD.

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

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



Potting Up Perennials CD. New for 2011

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