

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila answer your growing concerns
Issue #150, July 6, 2011

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Right: "Ahhh!" say the lettuce plants and melon.
"Those weeds were hogging the water and blocking
the breeze. Now we can grow!"

Steamed over weeds in a walk

My front **brick walkway**, which is flanked by two flower beds, is constantly plagued by **weeds that grow up through the cracks**. What's the best way to rid the walkway of its weeds without leeching any poison through the soil into the adjoining flower beds? I've heard that a super-saturated solution of salt and boiling water will do the trick, but I'm concerned about the salt reaching the soil of the adjoining flower beds. - L.G. -

Salt in the soil can be trouble. It's **toxic** to plants. It breaks down soil structure, turning airy stuff into a dense clod where air and water move sluggishly and roots die. It can also **erode brick**, concrete and other materials. Don't use salt or salty water anywhere near beds.



Hot water kills weeds, no additives required. It works best against **seedling weeds**, which die in a day or so and leave little residue behind. The routine is simple. Each morning, pour a kettle of boiling water onto a different section of the walk or patio. Caution -- don't do this while barefoot!

Older, larger weeds leave unsightly stubble when they die back, so **in already-weedy areas** we gouge-, hoe- and **pull** out the established plants, then **wait** a week or two for seedlings and remaining bits of root to sprout. Then, we begin to **use boiling water** to douse each area every two or three weeks to kill each new crop of seedlings. That will also kill sprouts from roots of older weeds before they can repay the root for the starch used in their creation -- knock them back enough times and you eventually starve them out.



Midsummer weed explosion

It's the time now when annual plants explode in growth. We like to see this in flowers and vegetables. The petunias we deadheaded two weeks ago now have six flowering stalks and twice the bulk they did, then. Even pepper plants stripped bare by the groundhog several weeks back have captured enough solar power with their green stalks and stems to be pushing out two shoots wherever one was before. Thanks to the geometric progressions involved when one leaf can make enough energy to create two new leaves, the annuals will take even less time to finish their next doubling in size.

Unfortunately, annual weeds are following that same track. The first time you look out at a garden and can't believe how weedy it became in such a short time, you simply think you did a spotty job weeding, or have misremembered how long it's been since you last weeded. Soon, however, we realize it's not our oversight or lost time, but the nature of weeds.

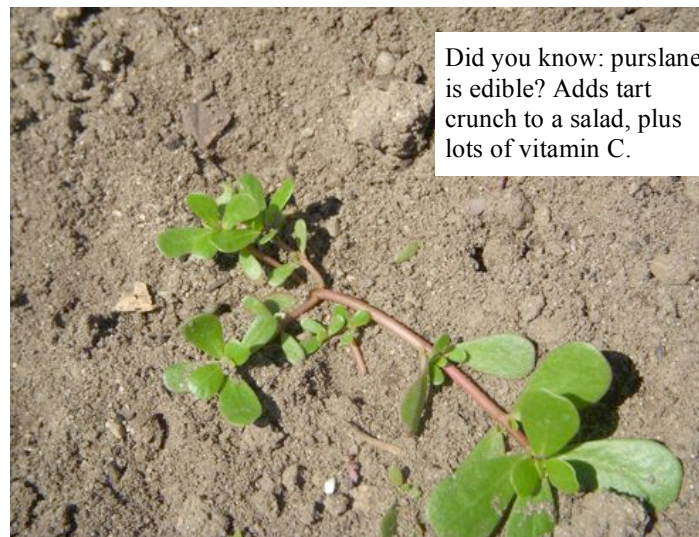
Moan about the weeds if you will, but it's better to applaud your annual flowers and vegetables, and clear space around them. Then stand back as they explode into all that available space, shading the ground and preventing new seed germination.

Left: Expert gardener and fellow instructor Pam Palechek pointed out this crabgrass plant to me, "It's that time of year when weeds take off. That's just ten days old. And you know it'll double in size by next week!" Annual plants do a lot of growing in a short time once the days are long and the plants had some leaf to build on.

Below: It can be very satisfying to parboil the purslane that plagues you.

Clean up with a steam mop?

We're always behind on gadgets for the home and so missed the advent of the steam mop. Now that we've seen one at work we recognize it as a wand that could be aimed at a spot on the ground, to bathe it in steam. Sounds like a weed killer to us, one less likely than open-flame "weed burners" to have inadvertent side effects. (It was a good thing D.H. noticed the first tendrils of smoke that curled up from the garage siding near the weedy area she was burning!)



Did you know: purslane is edible? Adds tart crunch to a salad, plus lots of vitamin C.

Unsightly and a whole lot more

Weed removal isn't just for looks. Weeds are formidable competitors for water, even before they outgrow and shade out desirable plants. They also clog up the airways, making it that much easier for fungus to take hold. Mildew prone plants surrounded by weeds are that much more likely to succumb to trouble.



Far left: While weeding the lettuce on page 1, we found some volunteers -- arrows point to a marigold (right) and a dill (below, left). Of the two, the dill is the one to spare, as weeds close in to the crown of a desirable plant are the fierce competitors for water and light, and the worst blockers of cleansing air.

Below: Just a few days of still air can bring out the mildew on cukes, squash and melon.



Cold shower puts a damper on mite-y midsummer trouble

We have two Dwarf Alberta spruce trees (*Picea glauca* 'Conica'). Suddenly they have turned brown. We have had one bush five years and the other bush one year. I have noticed in the area that several other dwarf Alberta spruces seem to be affected the same way. - M.D. -

Spruce spider mites - and most other mites -- thrive and proliferate in hot, dry weather. These near-microscopic arachnids suck foliage, first making leaves or needles look dusty / dandruf-y*, and eventually killing that foliage. Often, when we first notice the damage, they've been hard at

work for several weeks. Once they've fed so long that patches are brown and dry, that greenery can't be saved.

Here are two bits of good news to offset that bad. One, the buds set for next year on a woody plant and the spots on stems where new shoots can emerge on an herbaceous stem usually survive a mite attack. A spruce twig with a live bud can leaf out from there the next spring. Herbaceous plants can recover the same year.

Two, plain old cool water is the best remedy. Mites can't abide cool, moist conditions so hose off the troubled plants every few days, spraying hard enough to wet the interior and aiming upward so you hit the leaf underside where mites congregate. That's more effective and cheaper than any store-bought miticide. Begin showering the plant now and the damage will stop.

Unfortunately, on a spruce you'll be stuck looking at bare patches once those dead needles fall. You can avoid a repeat of this damage if you use showers as a preventive from now on. Mark your gardening calendar to begin bathing mite-prone plants in May.



When we see *Hibiscus* with leaves yellowing in a stippled/speckled pattern and dusty/scruffy leaf undersides, we are pretty sure that mites are at work. We prescribed frequent showers and lots of light for this plant. In addition, we looked for ways we could relieve other stresses, to free the plant's energy for mite-y self control. In checking the root ball, we found two issues.

One, it's been potted an inch deep -- the stem bases were buried. It will fare better with that excess potting media removed. Two, it's running out of rooting room at the bottom. So we depotted it, added an inch of moist soilless mix, set the ball back into the pot and tucked mix around its sides. In two weeks, it came around nicely, no pesticide required.

Seeing mites on paper

We hear it all the time -- tap a suspect leaf over a of blank piece of paper and you'll know it's mites because you'll see the dislodged pests moving around on that surface. Doesn't work for us, most of the time. Maybe our eyesight is just that poor. Perhaps we are fortunate enough to suspect mites before they reach full size** or become so numerous that they're easily seen.

So, when we see stippling on a leaf blade, and flip it over to find it scruffy and dusty, we know there are mites there. The "dust" is accumulated shed skins and egg cases of a lot of very tiny insects.

Enough said. Turn on that hose!

* Take a look at North Carolina's bulletin about *Critters, Pests & Diseases* for photos of what you might see in the case of mites or 20 other problems. Copy this URL to your browser and then click on a pest/problem name:
www.ces.ncsu.edu/johnston/homehort2/pests.html

** Full size for a spider mite is still really, really small. Even full grown -- by which time they've already done a lot of damage and laid a lot of eggs -- they may not be as big as the asterisk at the beginning of this note. There's a lot of good information and some highly magnified photos in Colorado State U's bulletin on mites. Copy this URL to your browser:
www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05507.html



Above, right: This is pretty much a life-size photo of aphids (our best guess: green peach aphids, *Myzus persicae*), plus their shed skins and debris. Now imagine: Two-spotted spider mite, probably the most common pest mite in greenhouses and gardens, lays eggs not even 1/20 the size of the aphids you see here. If an adult mite is a real bruiser for its kind, it could be 1/6 to 1/4 the aphid's size., That, after weeks of wreaking havoc while still much smaller. See how you "mite" overlook them?

Expert Gardener Afield: Report from Guelph, Ontario

The world is full of great gardens and even the widest ranging traveler can't see them all. Here's a chance to **peek through expert eyes** at a fine garden.

Hi Janet,

On my way to Toronto, stopped in Guelph at the University of Guelph arboretum, as usual. Also went into town and walked in a nice park on the river, with great gardens.



The Floral Clock garden, Riverside Park, Guelph, Ontario



It's Riverside Park. There were comfortable paths, lots of benches with different views and a nice water feature to provide a traffic dulling noise. I liked the way they used the natural shape of the land to have different levels and overlooks. I was also impressed with the level of maintenance for the garden, even in this large palette of plants which often makes maintenance more difficult.

Moral of the story: Even when we have a regular destination in a city, we should always keep looking for other green areas!

See you at home soon,
Steven

Another very nice area at Riverside Park in Guelph, Ontario: The Enabling Garden, along the riverbank.

Every one of us is expert afield! Email us photos of places you find and things you learn.

Aiming for Answers: Hit and Miss on Fig Trees

There are no sure bets in dealing with living things, and every situation we face reveals more possibilities. A great strategy is to combine our experiences. So we're glad to hear whether you used our suggestions, and "what happened next."

I've learned sooo much from you. BTW, my daughter in NC trimmed her fig tree following your suggestions & she had a bumper crop of figs last year. - S.G. -

That's good to hear, S.G., especially in a year when we may ourselves harvest only one fig because of our clumsy digging-up of the fig tree at our Detroit Zoo garden.

Right: We led our zoo crew in digging this fig tree out last fall, laying it in a trench and covering it with 18" of soil so it would survive the winter. We broke branches in the process -- limbs that would have fruited. Phil Gigliotti, who grew and donated the fig, is now fending us away from the tree until we prove ourselves worthy!



The 45mph garden: Chestnut tree

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.

Great big tree with white tassel flowers in July? It's probably a **chestnut**. Most you may see are Chinese chestnuts (*Castanea mollissima*) but a few of us may be seeing American chestnuts (*C. dentata*), the few survivors of the blight that devastated the eastern forests 60 to 80 years ago.***

3 billion American chestnut trees died over 30 years when a fungus from Asia marched through our forests. These trees that made up about a quarter of the eastern forest are now rare to non-existent in their native range. Perhaps one tree in 200 million survived.

Those that survived probably did so because they were separated by enough distance from the doomed masses that the disease spores did not cross the gap. So the center of the chestnut forest has fewer remaining trees than the edges -- just a few American chestnuts remain in Tennessee and the Carolinas, for instance, but there are hundreds at the edge of the native territory in Maine, and hundreds in Michigan where the tree was not part of the natural forest, but planted.

***For more about chestnut blight and the effort to breed resistant trees by crossing American chestnut trees with the blight-resistant Chinese chestnut, copy these URLs to your browser:
www.ppws.vt.edu/griffin/blight.html
www2.volstate.edu/jschibig/resurrectingthechestnut.htm

You can grow a chestnut tree. One good source
www.oikostreecrops.com



Giant becomes "Stumpy"

Many American chestnuts trees still grow within the native range as stumps that sprout and grow for a few years, then are killed back once more. It's tough to imagine them as they once were. The typical American chestnut was massive, 100' tall, with a trunk 10' in diameter. Individuals 150' tall with a 20' trunk were common, and open-grown specimens were often so wide-branched as to cover whole villages. (Such as the one Longfellow mentions: "Under a spreading chestnut tree, The village smithy stands...")

Our "messy tree" could move to the Old World to be appreciated

We mentioned chestnuts to L.B., who lived ten years near Napoli, Italy. "You asked about differences, here and there," she said. "Here, people might complain about nuts falling from trees. There, people go out and collect them -- chestnuts, pine nuts... So good! It's such a wonderful place."

This week in our garden

Grow with us! This week:

Anticipate and **head off vegetable garden problems**. Picking off discolored leaves, right away, is a good way to stay ahead off fungus problems. A squash leaf that's yellowing (page 3) may be infected with mildew but not yet white and infectious. A fading tomato leaf is better gone than left to fall to the ground and scatter its fusarium spores.

Looking closely at the plants may also reveal the bright orange eggs that were the first manifestation of potato beetle on potato, tomato and relatives. It's so much easier to squish eggs or remove the leaf they're on, than to find and kill the destructive, mobile hatchlings. The bigger they get (adults pictured here), the fewer days there are between the upper and lower photos.

Look at potato beetle eggs, and read about using your dust buster vacuum in beetle control. Copy this URL to your browser www.maineipotatoipm.com/ipmfactsheets/cpb.pdf



Make the last pinch on tall, late summer bloomers such as Joe Pye (*Eupatorium purpureum*), obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*), mums, hardy *Hibiscus*, *Asters* and balloon flower (*Platycodon grandiflorus*). No, you don't have to pinch them but you can cut all or some of the stems back by 1/3 to 1/2 to encourage more branching, shorter stature overall, and later bloom on some or all the stems.

Left: Some people say, "Who needs to pinch!?! The animals do it for us -- all we have to do is cage the plant before they go too far!" P.P. just found that deer pinched her asters, reducing them from bushy 3-footers to plucked, one foot stems. Yet if caged now, they can still bloom, reaching perhaps 18" tall in flower.



Left: Sure, Joe Pye flowers are forming now but they still have a ways to go. If you cut the stem below this flower, several new buds will develop on the shoots that emerge as a result.

Below: A groundhog stripped G's pepper plant of all but one leaf. Yet that one leaf plus the green stem conducted enough photosynthesis in two weeks to create all these new shoots. Given time and a groundhog-proof barrier, this plant will bear peppers!



Perhaps one of the greatest delights in life is to feel a part of plants' awesome will to live.

- Janet -



Trim **blighted juniper tips**. In a cold, wet spring the junipers susceptible to fungal infection developed a lot of dead tips. We avoid pruning them during that wet season, so the fungus spores would not have open wounds to spread into when they also had the moisture they need to grow.

Whenever you cut off dead plant parts, cut all the way to clean stems, and rinse or wipe your clippers or gloves with alcohol, peroxide or 10% bleach-water solution to avoid spreading trouble.



The junipers here (left, and below) are the same species, growing right next to each other. A wet, cold spring may have provided conditions that allowed tip blight fungus to infect the one. That the other escaped damage says there's more to the story. Thus, there is more than one thing to be done, here.

First, wait for dry weather and prune out all the infectious dead material. Be sure to cut well below the damage and wipe your pruners with alcohol, peroxide or 10% bleach-water.

Next, probe for differences between the two plants' lot in life. Look at the soil condition, the watering, the spread or restriction of the roots... *something* is holding one back. Change that factor and you will not have this tedious blight clean-up to do in the future.



Admire the big bold color of summer blooming trees like



golden rain tree
(*Koelreuteria paniculata*).

This 30' golden rain tree is in zone 5 not far from our home. It was planted in the 1940's.



Below: We admired the tree on page 10 and started our own from seed 15 years ago. Today our seedling is 15 feet tall, nearly 20' wide, and has hundreds of flower clusters. (We added yellow lines to show you a 6' panicle hydrangea growing about 10' in front of the golden rain tree.) We enjoy it, and are also glad it's a dependable pollen and nectar source for local bees.



Keep our **vigil for bees and butterflies**. They're both scarce this year and we've resigned ourselves to thinking it's a crash year, in which all the problems that can beset these insects have added up. It makes it even more clear than usual, why we should always look for ways to avoid using insecticides, so we spare the few and help the local populations rebound.

Scrabbling in the garden, word play

We gardeners earn admiring murmurs when we display garden produce in vases and on plates. We can also toss some admirable terms onto a word game board. For instance:

Pinch: verb; To clip back growing shoots to encourage branching, control plant size or stall bloom; *It's said we should **pinch** mums three times by the Fourth of July to have mounded plants with rather than tall, columnar plants or because we don't like a few dozen large flowers so well as hundreds of smaller blooms.*

Homogamous: adjective; hoh MAH guh mus; A plant having female and male parts -- pistils and stamens -- that mature at the same time; *A chestnut tree is **homogamous** but a lone tree does not bear so well as one with a mate because its female parts don't accept its own pollen.*

Axillarious: adjective; aks i LAYR us; Sprouts readily from the dormant bud where leaf stalk meets stem; *We pinch asters, mums and hardy Hibiscus to promote more **axillarious** growth.*

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** and the example set was often simple but golden.

Thanks to Ward Varns for this tip. We laugh to picture little kids racing to reach the biggest weeds that filled a bucket most quickly: (The term) Victory Garden... was used during WWII for our gardens. Food and many other items were rationed during that time and no ration coupons were needed to buy seed packets. Victory over the garden was achieving a pail full of weeds before going to play ball. With four siblings near my age there was competition and the early bird left little opportunity for the late comer. My mother's garden was large but even then the weeds didn't thrive. Big weeds didn't have a chance.

*Psychology for engaging children and advancing the growing:
Set smart and reachable objectives such as "Pull one bucket of weeds for me and then you can go do what you want."*

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

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

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

Nuts to that combo: Walnut and mountain laurel

Our neighbors have a black walnut that has now reached the size that flowers and shrubs in my garden mysteriously died. ...my very favorite Mountain Laurel. Any suggestions? - D.B. -

Four suggestions: Improved soil drainage, lots of water, raised beds and switch to juglone-tolerant plants. The plant-killing chemical walnuts produce



Walnut trees are big, and so is their reach. Like most trees, they have roots spread 2 or 3 times as far as the branches. When those root tips mingle with susceptible plants, those others wilt and die.

does not accumulate in well drained, frequently watered soil. In raised beds constructed over fine mesh or landscape fabric, contact between walnut roots and your garden plants can be kept to a minimum. Some species don't succumb to the walnut's toxins.

Right: The toxin that is concentrated in walnut roots is present in leaves, wood and nuts, too. So if you have a walnut, don't use its fallen leaves as mulch around susceptible plants.

Plenty of lists tell us what doesn't grow well in the presence of walnut and butternut trees. Known to wilt suddenly and die: Tomatoes and all their relatives, cabbage, alfalfa, rhododendrons and their kin (including mountain laurel), magnolias, white pine, peony, lilac, mountain ash...

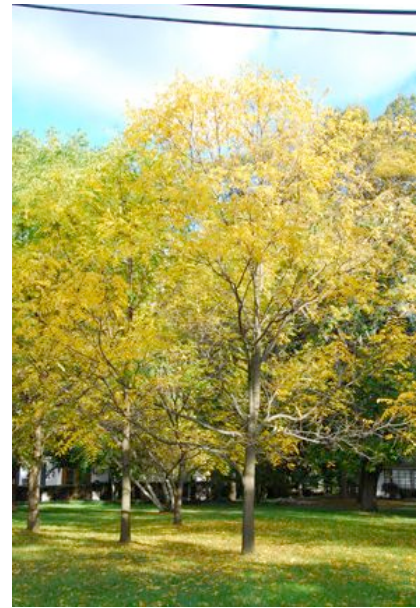
Finding walnut-tolerant plant lists is a bit tougher, but information is out there:

www.wvu.edu/~agexten/hortcult/fruits/blkwalnt.htm

www.mortonarb.org/tree-plant-advice/article/887/plants-tolerant-of-black-walnut-toxicity.html

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/info_walnut_toxicity.htm

The key to fact-finding is using the word juglone in your library- or Internet search. That's the name of the chemical walnuts and butternuts (*Juglans* species) exude into the soil.



Reason 987 for launching a website: Sharing out-of-print Extension bulletins

Sixty years ago, the University of West Virginia surveyed what grew within black walnuts' root zones and listed those plants in a "likely to be found there" progression. They published those extensive lists in bulletin #347 with over 20 other pages detailing walnut's interactions with garden and farm plants. That bulletin's out of print, replaced by one that's brief enough to suit the modern reader.

We liked the original bulletin's detail. The publication is in the public domain, so we would share it, but for high copy costs and postage. We look forward to having our website up so we'll be able to vault that hurdle.

At that point we'll call on you, C.B., S.L., J.J. and others, and take you up on your generous offers of input help. We're still getting to that point, however. We're just working on accepting and learning to use the web pages that were being designed for us while we handled the spring garden rush of work. Now that we have a bit more free time we'll learn, input, launch, input more....

Website bills covered, thanks to you.

We met our fund raising goal and were able to pay the designer's fees. Thank you to all who donated!

Good ideas - keep them coming

B.P. and L.S. both suggest that our website's forum include a distinct spot for discussions related to gardener health and safety. We'll do that -- thanks for thinking of it.

Thirsty bamboo, low pond level

...we noticed the pond needed to be filled more frequently than it had, so I went on an investigation to see if we had a leak in the stream bed. What I found was the bamboo, a lovely plant stream side, but very invasive, had put its roots into the stream bed. - G.R. -

We're never surprised anymore about plants drawing down the pond level. Not since we saw our own pond drop an inch a day from a single elm root that had snaked in over the top of the liner, dived into and divided within the in-pond bog area.

An inch of water from an 8' x 10' pond is 50 gallons. Seeing just one root imbibe so much, we can vouch for the ability of a tree to take up 1,000 gallons per day.

Once we found the root and cut it, the loss stopped. Now we patrol that edge and cut outside the perimeter regularly to keep roots from reaching the liner.

G.R.'s email went on to say the bamboo has been a great look but he's decided to remove it to end the problem.

Removing bamboo is never easy. In this situation it's a bit of a nightmare, because the pool liner will be threatened by digging and aquatic life endangered by any herbicide splash or drift. Have any of you tackled pond-side bamboo removal? Email us any tips and we'll share them with G.R. and all.

Recruit a robin to the gypsy moth war

I watched a robin feeding its young with pretty big caterpillars, last summer, and wondered which butterfly population might be feeling the impact... - A.E. -

Birds don't give any caterpillar a break for being big and beautiful once it's grown. We lost a whole outdoor crop of black swallowtail larvae to a sparrow family, one year -- but that's the way it goes!

We shared your picture around, including butterfly lady Brenda Dziedzic* in the loop, and feel pretty sure that your photo is evidence that our native birds have enlisted in the war on invasive pests. That's because we think that robin's holding a gypsy moth caterpillar.

We hope it develops a special taste for them, and raises many broods of like-minded robins, because North American forest trees sure deserve a break from this very destructive pest!

*Contact Dziedzic at brendad1@ameritech.net to purchase her just-released and excellent book, *Learn About Butterflies in the Garden* or find out which of your local garden centers is stocking the book.

Photo ©2011 Alicia Ellis



Advantage, wet spring: Fewer Japanese beetles?

I saw a little bit of Japanese beetle damage on a hibiscus, last week. Usually, within a few days of seeing the first of them, we see a ton of them. Not so this time. Do you think there are fewer this year for some reason? Maybe the hard freeze early last December killed the grubs, or the very wet spring? - G -

Anything's possible, and certainly beetle grubs would have felt something from environmental factors that drastically affected the soil. However, insect populations go in boom and bust cycles in large part because predators' populations tend to catch up with them.



These beetles aren't native to North American so natural predators are scarce. We know of one group of predators -- soil-dwelling, grub-destroying relatives of roundworms called beneficial nematodes** - which thrive in moist soil, and may have had a leg up this spring. If nematodes increased in number, that could account for a decrease in their prey beetles and weevils.

** Available through organic pest control catalogs including www.arbico-organics.com and www.gardensalive.com

Think clay soil's bad? What about smelted- or ceramic soil?

We had a lightning strike... the downed wires burned a path through the back

garden... The fires burned for several hours. Plants in the path of the wires were vaporized, and the soil under the hottest part of the fires has been turned to a substance not unlike

volcanic rock, reaching down 6-8 inches. A few small sandy areas melted to glass, and we also have some copper lumps (from the wires) that were molten and are now hardened. ... I know that light burning as in forest fires can create a rejuvenating cycle, but this is something quite different. When digging around I didn't see any earthworms or soil creatures, so imagine everything was killed. What do you think we should do? - K.N. -

Whoa! No first hand experience here! We've been involved in relandscaping after some bad house fires, but none so hot that adjacent garden soil *melted*.

Our instinct is to remove glassy blocks and copper lumps, since water and air can't move through the first and the second can be toxic if it leaches. Then, for the quick reestablishment of a balanced bunch of soil microorganisms, spread soil from unburned areas over the strike zone and keep it moist this season. That reduces the odds that only the most aggressive, "weedy" microorganisms will move back, first.

Any advice from someone out there who's "been there?"

Watering for beginners, and old-timers and everyone in between

I'm a sub-novice and not sure about the best way to water vegetables. A little each day? A lot once in a while? - C -

Even for an super-expert, watering is a critical task, something simple but constantly changing. In simplest terms, keep vegetables consistently moist.

We'll put together more detail to send to you and include in our next issue, but for now, do this: Water really well now -- use any means you like to sprinkle or soak the area until the soil feels cool (that means it's moist) 3 to 4 inches deep. Then water again, a little, every time the top inch of soil begins to feel dry and warm.

Water: Steady as she grows

Many fruits and vegetables can develop cracks, bad spots, and lose flavor if soil moisture is inconsistent -- wet one day, dry the next. Do all you can to **even out the water supply**.

Zucchini zapped!

Our zucchini vine kind of collapsed overnight. When we pulled it up, we saw the problem -- a squash borer had gotten into the base of the main stalk and killed it. It looked just like a picture you showed at an organic pest control talk you gave to our Master Gardener association. Too late for our plant but can you show that photo to others? - N. -

Thanks for the timely reminder, N. Here it is -- and this plant could still be salvaged. Use a small, sharp knife to slice from the borer's hole (arrow) longwise up the stem an inch or so. That would slice and kill the borer.



Green thumbs up to field bindweed. Despite its nasty nature we can't deny its beauty. The ground-covering, fence-smothering vines are in full bloom at midsummer. The white flowers blushed with pink resemble miniature morning glories. Don't waste time admiring them, however. Dig out what you can and then make a weekly commitment to pull or apply herbicide to every piece that re-sprouts. Even with this schedule it takes years to exhaust the root.

Green thumbs down to communities that give start-up community garden groups a hard time about things like fencing to enclose the whole area. When a local church or business allows the use of its land for sun-starved or space-less residents to grow their own vegetables, that community should show off that garden and celebrate the values, cooperative effort and spirit involved. We don't understand the motivation that was in operation in the town that seriously considered denying a community group a variance for its 'street visible' fencing.

Be in an upcoming special issue: Share your gardening-for-others

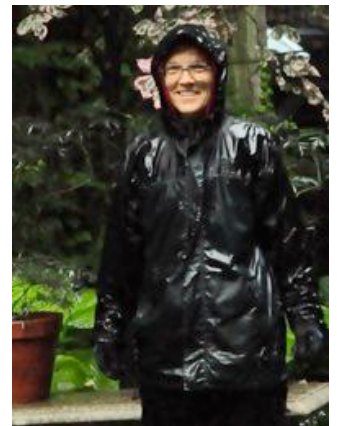
A whole generation of **avid gardeners** is now happily **lending a hand to** its grown children and young friends as they acquire property. We think this is a learning opportunity for others who are looking forward to helping the next generation grow on and up. If you're assisting your **son or daughter** 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. Your efforts will be in a special issue of the newsletter or a page on our upcoming website!

Who's Janet? Who's Steven?

A **professional gardener and educator** since 1984, Janet Macunovich has been operating for twice that many years as "**Practical Patty**," a title bestowed by her Aunt Melrose. She's helped a great many people improve their gardens and their lives by sharing her experience and knowledge in understandable terms and practical tactics. When not writing this newsletter she's designing, planting and tending gardens through her business, Perennial Favorites.



The guy with the dirty camera. Professional gardener and horticultural photographer Steven Nikkila is often on both ends of a "shoot" -- working in a garden as well as capturing it for the enlightenment and enjoyment of others. He says a camera's worst enemies are water, sand and the camera owner. When you see his shots of gardens and gardeners at work, and hear his explanations how-to, keep in mind that he was peeling off gloves between every shot. Nikkila feels that, "actually doing the work that I describe in my articles and photos makes me better at teaching, writing *and* photography. Yet even after 20 years of doing this, I'm still lousy when it comes to keeping cameras clean!"



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

The yellow coneflower we used as a donation telltale went all-blue two weeks ago. Thank you - we've paid the design and programming bills and will very shortly be proofing and learning to operate all the component parts of the site.



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

We go where we're invited! That's taken us all over the country and then some over the past 20 years. We address many topics, drawing from our list of **100+ talks**. We also continue **to meet groups' needs** and expand our horizons with new material and "hybrids" from our basic 100.

- a **how-to lesson for a garden club** meeting,
- a **hands-on workshop** at a site of your choosing or
- a **multi-part class** for a small group,

...we're game!

JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850. Our calendars fill about a year in advance for spring weekends, and six months ahead for most other times.



Steven Nikkila and Janet Macunovich (above, flanking their friend and fellow instructor Chuck Martin of Dow Gardens, Midland, Michigan) have been digging, shooting and teaching how-to for 22 years. They began producing conferences in the early '90s and then ran a gardening school for 12 years, featuring expert instructors who knew their stuff in the garden as well as knowing how to get their messages across in front of a group.

Tuesday, July 19, 1:00 p.m. *Beyond the Bloom: All the other color and texture in a garden.* This is a talk by Janet in **Elk Rapids, Michigan** sponsored by the Elk Rapids Garden Club at Sacred Heart Church, 143 Charles Street. Free. No reservations required. Call Kay Goodall at 231-264-6019 to register or for more information.

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Gardeners, contact your program director or Montgomery County counterparts to register for this continuing education opportunity.

Wednesday, July 27, 1-4 p.m. *Great Plants and Combinations for your Garden -- Right NOW.* This workshop by Janet in **Cheboygan, Michigan** is sponsored by the Perennial Garden Club at St. John Lutheran Church, 8757 N. Straits Hwy. Call 231-625-2827 or email jmateer49711@yahoo.com for more information.

Wednesday, August 3, 7-9 p.m. *August Garden Magic.* This talk in **Belleville, Michigan** is Janet's round-up of what can shine in a garden in August and how you can make great changes even in high summer is by Janet at the Belleville Area District Library, 167 Fourth Street. For more information or to reserve a seat call 734-699-3291.

Tuesday, August 16, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. *Garden Rooms and Structures: Creating outdoor rooms and entrance areas with plants and hardscaping.* This talk by Janet in **Novi, Michigan** at Tollgate Farm (28115 Meadowbrook Road at Twelve Mile Road) is sponsored by Michigan State University Extension in Oakland County in cooperation with the Tollgate Garden Volunteers. \$20. Contact Linda at 248-858-0887 or smithlin@oakgov.com for more information about this and other classes in the Evening in the Garden series. Mail-in registration required; print a registration form from www.oakgov.com/msu/assets/docs/brochures/2011_eitg.pdf

More chances to *Garden by Janet and Steven* -- observe or try your hand. These sessions are free but require registration. Here's the what, where and when. See page 20 for more about the why and how of such sessions.

Thursday, August 18, 9 a.m. - noon, *Garden by Janet & Steven* in **Waterford, Michigan.** The objective this session is *transplanting and pruning* Japanese maples. Come to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register; we'll provide you then with the address and directions. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

Friday, August 19, 9 a.m. - noon, *Garden by Janet & Steven* in **Rochester Hills, Michigan.** The objective this session is *pruning* to reduce the size of a crabapple. Come to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register; we'll provide you then with the address and directions. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

Friday, August 19, 6-8 p.m., *Garden by Janet & Steven* in **Dearborn Heights, Michigan.** The objective this session is *pruning* to reduce the size of a weeping white pine, star magnolia and other woody plants. Come to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register; we'll provide you then with the address and directions. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

Saturday, August 20, 9-11 a.m. and noon - 2 p.m., *Garden by Janet & Steven* in the northwest **Detroit metro area.** The objective these sessions are *pruning* Japanese maples to keep them small. Come to one or both sessions (driving between locations required) to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register, and to learn the address. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

Monday, August 22, 8-10 a.m., *Garden by Janet & Steven* in West Bloomfield, Michigan. The objective this session is *pruning* a full size yew tree to maintain its size and natural appearance. Come to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register, and to learn the address. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

Friday, August 26, 9-11 a.m., *Garden by Janet & Steven* in Hartland, Michigan. The objectives this session is *laying out a garden* and determining what to do for a young tree that won't "take." Observe, or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register, and to learn the address. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

Thursday, September 29, 5:30 p.m., *Garden by Janet & Steven* in Macomb Township, Michigan, to diagnose and determine what to do for an ailing shade tree. Come to observe or to pitch in with any work and learn by hands-on. This is a free, limited-size workshop. Call or email Janet & Steven to register, and to learn the address. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call. JMaxGarden@aol.com, 248-681-7850.

The Garden by Janet & Steven series:

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

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

2) In the ***Detroit Zoo, Adopt-A-Garden*** program where we're 22-year veterans. Many people have worked with us there, some for a day and others for years. We have fun, we learn, we accomplish much. You can check out this program by coming in as my student on a temporary pass. ***To join us at the Zoo,*** email mstgarden@gmail.com with the subject line of your email "Help at zoo."

Where we Garden by Janet & Steven

Sometimes we are asked "Can you come do one of your workshops in my garden?" It's possible! 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 so we can explain to you how that affects 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."

Even after all these years of going to your classes and workshops, every time I do, I pick up something new. Thank you!

- Ginger Reichenbach -

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

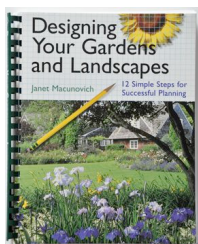
36 x 48' no-fade **cloth tapestry**, \$215

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". 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

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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Our *What's Coming Up* e-newsletter.

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Email JMaxGarden@aol.com to join the mailing list.



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We accept orders by mail with check or money order, and in-person orders any time you come to one of our educational events or hands-on gardening session.