

What's Coming Up:

Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila answer
your growing concerns
Issue #170, January 11, 2011

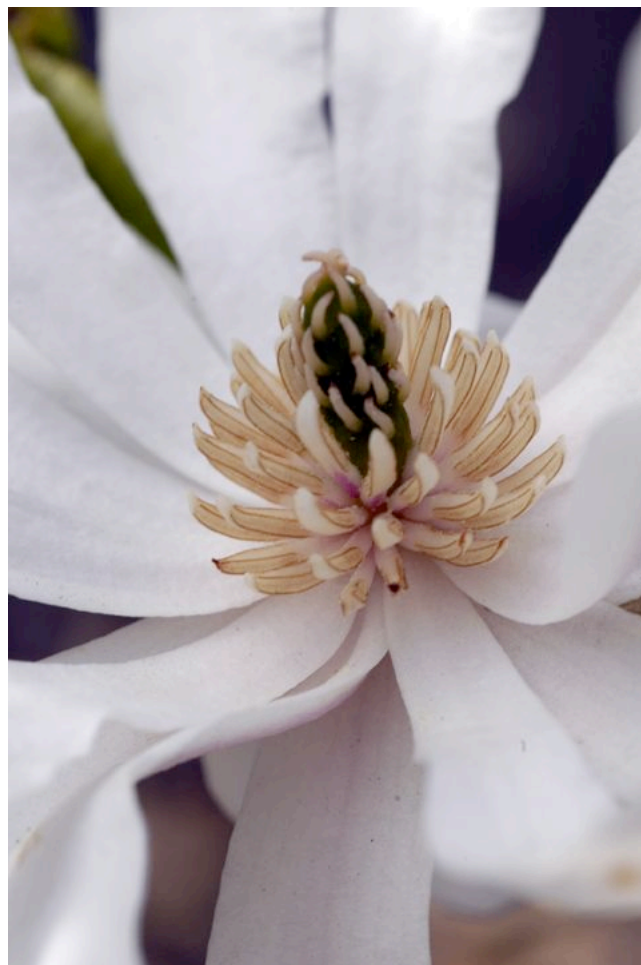
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And much, much more just one click away!

Today we're planning to keep a *Magnolia* small, celebrating some of the world's biggest tree flowers, and strewing rose petals along your route to our new domain, www.GardenAtoZ.com

Congratulations on a "deep" website: the more I look around the more stuff I see!

- Karen Bovio, digging in to our new site -



We're up! Come See! Go to <http://www.GardenAtoZ.com>

Over 800 articles

1,000 photos

And still growing!

By George, we've done it! News, back issues, calendar, discussion Forum, photo galleries...
Click here to come see! <http://www.GardenAtoZ.com>

Thaw's the time to manage that *Magnolia*

I have a friend with an overgrown Magnolia, probably 30 years old. When should you prune it, in December, or in January or just after it blooms? - L. W. -

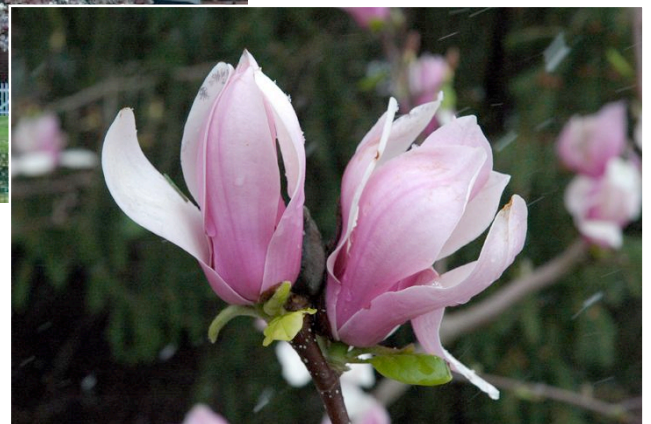
We prune *Magnolias* in a winter thaw or early August. If it has to be cut back major-ly and it's vital that it not lose much bloom, then we do it right after it blooms. If we're going to be cutting it regularly to keep it smaller than its potential, August is our first choice. Whenever we cut, we want things to be DRY that day and for a day after. There's a canker that plagues *Magnolia* -- a fungal infection of the branches. The fungus prospers on moist surfaces so it's not good to prune when the cuts will remain wet for long periods.

Cut to the chase

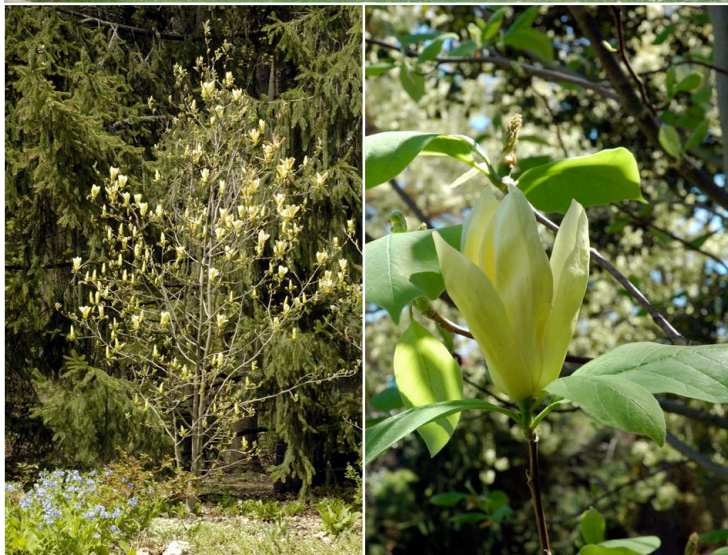
On February 19, we're going to prune this *Magnolia*. You can come learn how in that unbeatable way -- hands on. For details, See Page 10 under *Where to Catch Janet, Steven and friends*.



Few things are so pretty as a saucer magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangiana*) in bloom. Few are so venerable, either. They are one of the most ancient flowering plant species, and have changed very little over their 100 million year reign -- they must be doing something right! They have been cultivated in gardens for at least 1,400 years.



Left: Pink or white *Magnolias* are better known than the yellows. *Magnolia* 'Elizabeth' blooms later than the pink saucer magnolia. It is less often touched by frost.



Patience rewarded:

Most Magnolias become increasingly floriferous with age.

- New RHS Dictionary of Gardening -

The straightest answers in pruning: Cut and see what happens!

We're so glad you-all keep us on our toes about pruning's "Why," "when" and "how!" We've been pruning for a long time and have adopted certain schedules and procedures. We're pretty comfortable with them. The plants in our charge respond well, in general. Yet when you ask us to write things down, it does make us revisit our bases.

What we rediscover when we return to "Go" is that we must comb through many directives. Some conflict. Most lack a "why" that allows us to figure, "What if we do X, instead?"

To illustrate, check this collection of advice regarding *Magnolia* pruning we pulled from sources we respect. It's presented to show you how each item affects our pruning decision. Our "take" on the matter is on the right, from the directive on the left.

<p><i>The New Royal Horticultural Society Dictionary of Gardening</i> "(Magnolia) Pruning is... shaping the plant at planting time by removing weak and badly placed growth and tipping back long shoots. Routine pruning is usually restricted to removing deadwood and watershoots, but where a specimen outgrows its allotted space, it can be pruned hard back immediately after flowering."</p>	<p>A <i>Magnolia</i> can be kept smaller than its potential.</p>
<p><i>Arboriculture: Care of Trees, Shrubs and Vines in the Landscape</i>, Richard W. Harris, Prentice-Hall, NJ "Rapid plant development can be best maintained when the required pruning is done before the period of rapid growth that usually occurs in spring. Most deciduous plants can be pruned any time during the dormant period between leaf-fall and spring growth with similar results." Callusing should be somewhat more rapid if a wound is made a few weeks before or after growth begins, assuming that bleeding is not a problem. ...wounds on ash, honey locust and pin oak callused about equally rapidly in the next growing season whether cuts were made in the spring, summer or winter, but about 20 percent more slowly when they were made in the fall.</p>	<p>Winter's a good time.</p>
<p><i>From an interview with Dr. Alex Shigo</i> (1930 - 2006), pathologist with the United States Forest Service, and our subsequent correspondence, April, 1994 "If you make your pruning cuts correctly, you can prune at any time of the year."</p>	<p>Follow plant health guidelines: Clean, sharp tools. Respect the branch bark collar.</p>
<p><i>The American Horticultural Society Pruning & Training</i>, Christopher Brickell, Dorling-Kindersley Ltd., London "In general, avoid pruning established magnolias unless essential. Many species bleed and should only be pruned from summer to before midwinter." <i>The Pruning of Trees, Shrubs and Conifers</i>, George E. Brown, Timber Press "Magnolias usually show great powers of regeneration and may throw strong young growths from really old wood. Advantage can be taken of this by cutting damaged specimens back carefully... This power of regeneration is also a great help in overcoming the effects of bad training in a young specimen, especially with bush types such as <i>M. soulangeana</i>, which branch low. Large scale pruning, if it becomes necessary, should be carried out in late July, thus avoiding the risk of bleeding..."</p>	<p>Think twice before pruning a soft-hearted person's magnolia during rapid sap flow in March...</p>
<p><i>Arboriculture: Care of Trees, Shrubs and Vines in the Landscape</i>, Richard W. Harris, Prentice-Hall, NJ "Bleeding can be minimized if predisposed species are pruned in the fall and early winter instead of late winter and early spring... bleeding is usually not harmful to plants, but if it is heavy and persistent it can cause bark injury below the pruning cut and can retard callusing in the lower portion of the wound."</p>	<p>...even though bleeding doesn't usually hurt the tree...</p>
<p><i>The Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture</i>, L.H. Bailey, The MacMillan Company, NY As a general rule, however, the best time to prune is in late autumn to early spring, when labor can be had and before the rush of spring work comes on. In practice, it</p>	<p>Ah, so!</p>

resolves itself largely into a question of **the convenience of the operator.**

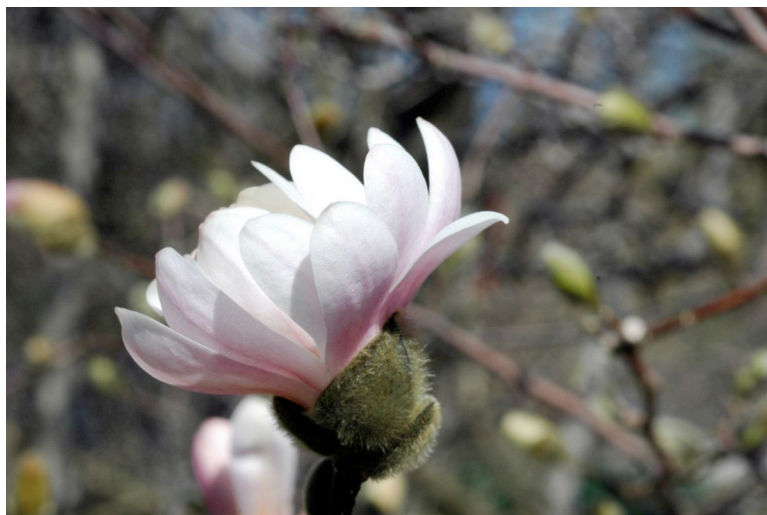
From "ah, so!", we know the truth: The human schedule is what matters

"What if we deviate from the rule?" We ask this often because it's rare that we gardeners can be everywhere we need to be, when the time is "right" for a given plant and particular procedure.

We've interviewed a lot of gardeners, including dozens who maintain public gardens and found one thing they all have in common is, "So many demands, never enough time!" For the home gardener, a child's soccer game causes us to put off a garden chore. At a botanical garden, it's the announcement that the Emperor of Japan is coming to visit so everyone must drop what they're doing to help finish the projects in the Japanese garden!



Magnolias bloom quite early in the year, and frost can ruin the show. The best hedge against that loss is just that -- a hedge of bigger trees between the Magnolia and the cold northwest spring wind.



The star magnolia (*M. stellata*) is better equipped to handle cold than most of its bigger cousins. It's hardy to zone 4 winters and is less susceptible to spring frost damage, which can blight all of a saucer magnolia's blooms.

Dark flowered saucer magnolias may be less hardy than the norm - those hybrids get that purple from a more tender species, *M. liliiflora*.



Saucer magnolias tend to have multiple stems but this is not pretty or healthy. Arrows mark trunks to be sawed, soon. As the trunks increase in girth, those in the middle of the clump will be squeezed

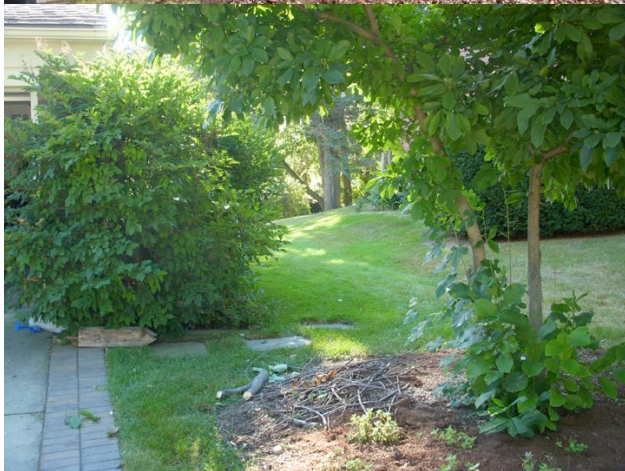


out. As George E. Brown wrote (page 3), it's "the effects of bad training in a young specimen..."

Right: Isn't this a beautiful root system? If we'd played by the rules, we wouldn't have seen it, and learned from it how far such a tree's roots can spread in just two years. We transplanted on a cold November day, contrary to advice from some who say these plants should be moved only in spring. But we watched and learned from the tree itself afterward, and are now better gardeners for knowing *where* to take care around a "magnolia's fleshy, easily broken and bruised" roots.



Below: A magnolia on April 4, just before pruning to remove an awkward trunk and low branches. Below, right and bottom left: 5 months later, it's offering new shoots. We'll allow one to remain. (And we'll remove the weed mulberry tree! Arrows point to magnolia shoots on the right, mulberry on the left.)



Want to inspect those bloomin' Magnolias and pruning examples more closely?

How about seeing even *more* photos than you do here? Read this story on our website*, where we have so much more leeway in photo size and number of images.

* <http://www.gardenatoz.com/what%27s-up!/what%27s-coming-up-this-week/cute,-cut-magnolias/>

**Please come see the new face of our News,
and share your views on our Discussion forum!**

<http://www.GardenAtoZ.com> is brand new, for you!

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

So much goes on in email exchanges between newsletters! We've wished we could include it all. And now we can. Come drop in on the questions and answers, and fun between newsletters, at www.GardenAtoZ.com. Click through to the Forum. Lately, we've talked about how we were using the unbelievably mild weather:

Transplanting, mulching, grilling!

January 8: ...moved a lilac today because, well, why not! - D -

January 9: ...well sure, and I barbequed last night, too! - J.K. -

January 9: We're raking callery pear leaves. We usually can't get them until spring; now we'll be ahead of the game. - G.M. -

January 10: Got the night lighting fixtures, bulbs and connections set right! - S.G. -

January 10: ...moved all the leftover mulch to my sister's to spread it there! - C.R. -

***It was one of those
perfect English autumnal days
which occur more frequently
in memory than in life.***

- P. D. James -

Phew! Makes us feel downright lazy...

Boxed in beech

...I purchased a home with boxwood closely circling a beech tree... - N.T. -

Want to know the story on this tree and its evergreen moustache? It's unfolding right now at our Forum!

Go to <http://www.GardenAtoZ.com>,

click through to the Forum

and follow this story in the Shrubs folder!

Expert Gardener Afield: Bowled over by roses... and seeds and petals.

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 an event you may have overlooked or not yet reached.

Dear Janet & Steven,



I did it, I helped make a Parade of Roses float. They really do it - use individual petals, seeds. You can't begin to appreciate how much labor goes into it unless you see it first hand!

I also made it into their "History" album* on the City of Burbank float site. Take a look, that's me on the right!**

Margot McCormack



Margot McCormack (right: in blue, standing) is a **Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener** who acted on a long-held wish to get involved in turning flowers into floats known 'round the world.



*<http://burbankrosefloat.com/history/2011/DecoWeek/>

**<http://burbankrosefloat.com/history/2011/DecoWeek/Slides/RonOlzick-12282010-521.htm>

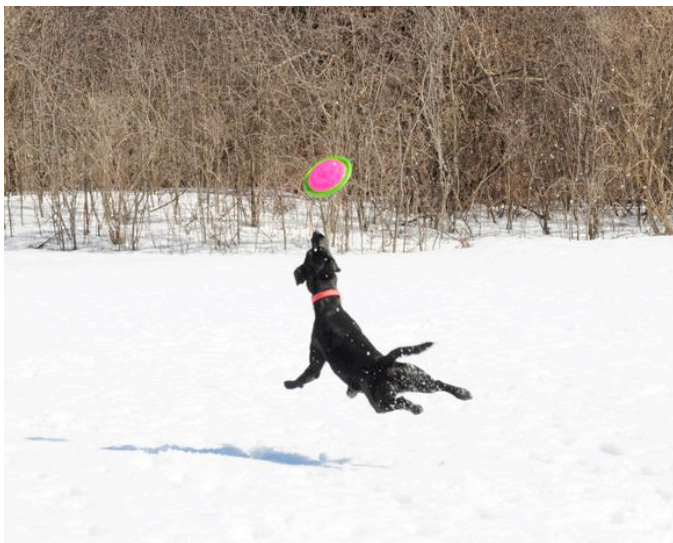
Close ups of this intricate petal work: <http://www.gardenatoz.com/what%27s-up!/expert-afield/parade-prep-no-bed-of-roses/>

This week in our garden

Grow with us! This week:

Clean the garage. There must be wicked pixies or possessed possums visiting our garage by night. We couldn't have made such a mess. Could we?

Revel in the whiteness of *real* winter! Sure, it was nice while it was unusually warm to be able to do some things outdoors but ugh, how ugly it is when there's so much brown. We love the brightness of snow!



Why are we jumping around? Would you believe it's because it's a leap year? Also known as a bissextile year. This one is unusual even as leap years go, in that it has 53 Sundays and three Friday the 13th's.



Now that our big project is done -- we have our website and Discussion Forum up, at www.GardenAtoZ.com!) - we must **get back to design work** set aside in November. It'll be spring in a blink, and we need the designs done so we can search the plants, line up the help and pin down the options.

When we resume sketching, we will remember to help others keep *our* resolutions: Move plants further from house, leave room for people in the design, and use usual plants in unusual ways. We'll be showing you how we do all three, during the next weeks.



That's a... yew bush?! What's the story on that massive plant? It's at <http://www.gardenatoz.com/about-us/gardens-we-love/>

Green thumbs up to being **able to read as many Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down as you like**, all at once. Search by keyword *Thumbs* at www.GardenAtoZ.com

Green thumbs down to passing up the chance to use our whole library of articles because you "don't know how to use the Internet." We've had a good-sized group of volunteers trying it out to identify the bumps for us. Quite a few let us know, "We really don't DO Internet stuff but what a surprise! We found our way around easily!"

I am stunned! ...I expected fantastic photos and flawless content, I still didn't expect to be able to use it. I am as far out in the sticks as I can get, so I thought I'd time-out, lose out and fail to load. BUT This web site works on my slow computer with a strangled land line that strings out so far to get to town it gets the hiccups every time it rains. What a gift! Thank you so much for all you do!
- Ester Lamb, after perusing our new website, <http://www.GardenAtoZ.com> -

Who's Janet? Who's Steven?

The toddler who asked "Why?" grown up and out in the garden. One day when her daughter was two and peppering her with "why," Janet Macunovich's parents laughed and said, "So now it's *your* turn! You used to drive us crazy with 'why' when you were little!" "Used to?" said Janet's husband. "She's still doing it!" Janet's been gardening professionally for over 25 years and loves to solve garden puzzles, from what to plant where to meet diverse expectations, to why a plant acts one way in one situation and differently elsewhere. She's studied at colleges, botanical gardens, professionals' workshops, in her own garden and extensive library but finds the most answers in talking to people with questions. "I'm glad to be able to help others garden better at the same time as I indulge my own need to know 'why'."



That quiet garden guy who spreads calm like a comfy blanket. Steven Nikkila, horticultural photographer and joint chief of a professional gardening service, is a safe port in the midst of energy that can spawn headaches in those less well grounded. He rarely loses the clear vision that lets him frame the shot or cut to the chase, even when his wife or family are so charged up with new ideas that the work of the day is in jeopardy. With a steady hand that once "put the magic touch" on his own infant children and ran a house full of his own and others' kids, he directs, does and also captures garden work and play of all kinds. His photos lend beautiful grace to many books, magazines and catalog pages.



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

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

*See January 18 and February 9, plus "Invite Janet or Steven" on page 11.

Saturday mornings, January 21 and February 4, 2012, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The 21st annual *Winter Seminar Series* offered by **The Detroit**

Garden Center (DGC) at Historic Trinity Church near Detroit's famous Eastern Market. Janet presents *Eight Months of Color* on January 21 and a *Propagation Workshop* February 4. Popular garden educator Cheryl English leads the January 28 session on *Trees, Shrubs and Vines for Your Garden*. You pay a pittance for a great deal of fun and learning, thanks to generous educational outreach by the DGC. For more information or to reserve a seat for one or all three, contact the DGC at 313-259-6363 or detroitgardenctr@yahoo.com

Upper right: Gardeners in groups put a new knowledge to the hands-on test.

Lower right: What a grand place to learn about gardening! Lots of room to practice design techniques and also plenty of comfortable chairs. What wonderful people gather there!

That's why we've been meeting on winter Saturdays for 21 years now. Join us! Call or email the Detroit Garden Center to reserve your seat!

313-259-6363 www.detroitgardenctr@yahoo.com

Wednesday, January 18, 2012, from 7:20 to 8:30 p.m. our friend, certified arborist Deb Hall, gives you help in *Pruning* in a presentation hosted by the Open Gate Garden Club. In **Fenton, Michigan** at the St. John Activity Center, 600 N. Adelaide Street. For more information contact Linda Blanco at 810-964-9989 or Mary Kaye Schmelzer at 248-634-7618.

Saturday, January 28, 2012, Janet & Steven give you design help in *Continuous Color in the Landscape* and share ideas in *50 Favorite Gardens, Before-After* at *A Winter Day in the Garden*. This is a conference sponsored for all gardeners by the Crawford County, Illinois Master Gardeners, in **Robinson, Illinois** at Lincoln Trail College. For registration information, contact hdennis@illinois.edu or 618-546-1549.



Thursday, February 2, 2012, Steven helps you employ *8 Months of Color* in your landscape designs. This is a talk geared for professional gardeners and landscapers who are patrons of Ray Wiegand's Nursery Wholesale Department, 47747 Romeo Plank Road north of 21 Mile Road, **Macomb, Michigan**. To register, call 586-286-3658.

Thursday, February 9, 2012, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. hear our friend **Deb Hall**, certified arborist, columnist and owner of the garden service Twigz. Deb will explain how to do ingenious and beautiful things with *Found Art for the Garden*. This talk is sponsored by The Shelby Gardeners Club at their regular meeting. The public is welcome. At the Burgess-Shadbush Nature Center, 4101 River Bends Drive off Ryan Road south of 22 Mile Road in **Shelby Township, Michigan**. For more information call club president Karen McCuen: 586-786-0816.

Thursdays, February 9, February 16 and March 1, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Janet leads *Rev up the Veg!*, a three-part series for eco-friendly gardeners whose aim is for their best year ever of growing edible plants. Hosted by the Beverly Hills Community Gardeners.

February 9, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. It's *Learn from Last Year*: The thinking gardener's review of last year's successes and challenges. What was best about last year and can we make it happen again? What were the problems and what might we do about them this year?

February 16, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. *Dreams and Visions* An in-depth look at tried-and-true methods plus new twists for growing specific plants. We discuss old standards as well as new varieties.

March 1, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. *Countdown to Get Growing* This session starts at step one and goes through all the basics of growing edibles. It's an essential "what to do first, and next, this year." It's great for anyone brand new to gardening, with plenty of tips for the experienced grower, too.

All sessions meet in the lower level social hall, Beverly Hills United Methodist Church, 2000 West Thirteen Mile Road, on the northeast corner of Evergreen Road and Thirteen Mile Road. The public is welcome but you must reserve a seat. To do so, contact Matt Roman at msroman6@gmail.com.

More on page 12, following this advisory...

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

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

So, whether it's a **how-to lesson for a garden club** meeting, a **hands-on workshop** at a site of your choosing or a **multi-part class** for a small group, we're game!

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

Steven Nikkila and Janet Macunovich (above, left) have been digging, shooting and teaching how-to for 22 years. They began producing conferences in the early '90s and then ran a gardening school for 12 years, featuring expert instructors who knew their stuff in the garden as well as knowing how to get their messages across in front of a group. Janet and Steven are glad to help you yourselves or refer you to these others to meet your group's need. Contact them at JMaxGarden@aol.com or 248-681-7850 when you want to set up a talk, workshop or class.

Garden by Janet & Steven - Bring your gloves and tools! for

Pruning Trees and Shrubs: Keep them small and shapely

A winter thaw is one of our two prime times for pruning woody plants to keep them small. We have these two appointments with trees and you can attend to learn, and try your hand at: How well popular landscape plants hold up to pruning, and how to keep plants within the bounds you set. Free, but space is limited. Call or email Janet & Steven to reserve a space and learn location details. Provide a telephone number in your email or when you call:

info@GardenAtoZ.com or 248-681-7850.

You can join us at these sessions:

- **Tuesday, January 24**, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. in **Troy, Michigan**. Pruning a **Japanese maple** to keep it small and give it better shape.
- **Sunday, February 19**, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. in **Taylor, Michigan**. Our focus is a **Magnolia** tree that's become too big for its place near the house.

Tool cleaning and sharpening parties!

Bring your tools, learn how and then make them like new.

Each winter for the past 9 years we've volunteered at gardeners' get-togethers to help you make your tools like new. We demonstrate how to, then help you get to it in work space provided by the party host. Try your hand on your own tools so you can start this spring with clean, sharp tools. The company is grand -- other gardeners bearing their favorite tools and pleased to set a spell with others and chat while working.

This year we'll be at the following parties.

Sunday, February 5, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the **Taylor Conservatory**, 22314 Northline Road, **Taylor, Michigan**. Email taylorconservatory.sbcglobal.net for more information or to reserve a seat.

Wednesday, February 8, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Janet explains and demonstrates **Garden Tool Care**. The Hartland Garden Club hosts this session at the Hartland Senior Center, 9525 Highland Road (M-59 west of Old US-23) in **Hartland, Michigan**. Public is welcome. For more information or to reserve your seat, call Judy Knitter at 517-552-8725.

Sunday, February 26, 2:00 p.m. at **Monroe County Extension**, 963 S. Raisinville Road, **Monroe, Michigan**. Hosted by the Monroe area Master Gardeners. \$5 at the door plus materials fees if you need materials from the community bin. Call Diane at the Extension at 734-240-3170 or msue58@msu.edu for more information or to reserve your place.

Thursday, March 1, choose one of two sessions: 2:30 - 4:30 or 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. At the **Wayne County MSU Extension**, 5454 Venoy Road south of Michigan Ave. in **Wayne, Michigan**. Hosted by the Extension and the Master Gardeners of Western Wayne County. Limited seats available. Email Char to reserve a spot: mgwwcorg@gmail.com or check the website www.mgwwc.org

Sunday, March 4, 2:00 p.m. at **Ray Wiegand's Nursery**, 47747 Romeo Plank Road, **Macomb, Michigan**. Call 586-286-3655 for more information or to reserve your place.

Monday, April 9, in the evening, in **Lathrup Village, Michigan**, at the meeting of the Village Gardeners. Only a very few seats are available. Call or email Nancy, 248-552-5095 or nstrod1@yahoo.com.

These are limited space workshops, so **call or email early to reserve a seat**. Most hosts offer seats free of charge or ask only a small contribution toward community-use materials.

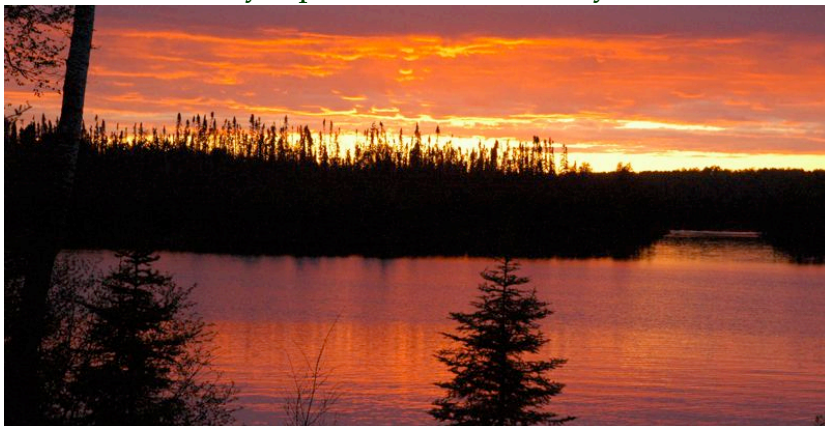
Come prepared -- check our *What's Coming Up* #29 for a description of what we do and what supplies you may wish to bring with you, along with your weeder, pruners, spade, etc. (For a copy of #29, email us or ask the party host.) See you there!

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 enough to explain 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."

Sun's up on a new way! <http://www.GardenAtoZ.com> for more on every topic here, fast and easy to use.



To Garden by Janet & Steven:

We're let-me-see, hands-on people. That's how we learn best. From time to time there are *Garden by Janet & Steven* sessions listed here to afford you that kind of chance to grow. You visit us where we're working to either watch or work with 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."