



Digging It!



All the Dirt from the Allen County Master Gardeners

April 2019

Tidbits from Teresa

Evening primrose, *Oenothera*, (Onagraceae) originates from the American continent. They came to Europe in the seventeenth century and were called "primroses" because their flower resembled the yellow spring primrose (or first rose) of Britain. Here are about 124 species of evening primroses. As early as 1729, the Quaker gardener John Bartram had twelve different kinds of evening primroses growing in his botanical garden near Philadelphia. His garden formed the first collection of American native plants, and he traveled all over the East Coast to find them.

Bartram was the king's botanist and responsible for most of American plant introductions of his time to England but he never had a flower named after him. Evening primroses do not all open in the evening. Most are recognizable by a cross-like stigma across the top of the style. The same formation is shared by the passion flower and was used by missionaries to illustrate the Crucifixion. Oil of primrose is sold nowadays by most health food stores with claims of curative powers but did not seem to have a use in the pioneer days.

Its botanical name is from the Greek *oinos*, "wine" and *thera* "to hunt." Etymologists seem to think this name came from another plant, now unknown, that was used to stimulate the appetite for wine. Both the leaves and the roots are said to be edible and somewhat resemble parsnips in taste. Who knows, maybe you needed wine to make the leaves and roots taste palatable! (Picture below.)

I decided to bone up on my houseplant tips since it seems like we have another six weeks or so to try to keep them alive before they can travel outdoors. The article I read suggested that your potting mixture should be a third each of soil, vermiculite and perlite....probably close to a good commercial mixture. If the tag says bright light you want a south or west window and for low light an eastern or northern window. Sometimes you have no choice available but if they lean towards the window it indicates they need more light. To check for water needs: stick your finger in the soil up to the second knuckle (I was just poking the top surface). If the pot is deep: use a dowel rod and see if it comes up clean just like you would check your cake for doneness. Then, when it is truly dry, water until it runs out the bottom. I bought some succulents at the seminar and Sandy said they don't need any water for two weeks or so. My tendency would be to water them too often and that is the main reason we lose houseplants. Dryness can be a breeding ground for spider mites and cause plants distress. More humidity is like a spa treatment for your plants. Keep an eye out for other pests like mealy bugs (looks like lint), scale (brown tiny bumps), and white flies. Our houseplants can help us get through the last of the indoor weather.

Teresa Diehl

April 2019

Onagraceae: *Oenothera biennis*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onagraceae>



From Sandy Bindel:

Yay! Spring is here so our thoughts turn to all things gardening! Our first meeting of the Allen County Master Gardener Volunteers will be held on April 17th at Lauer Historical Farm Park, 800 Roush Road, Lima 45801, at 7 o'clock. Our own Chris Fetzer, who most of you know is the volunteer coordinator for the Park District, will take us on a tour of the premises and give us the history of this unique working historical farm, as well as plans for future additions. Just guessing, I think the plans for a 1930's wartime garden will be of particular interest to us! This newest addition to the Johnny Appleseed Park District is truly a gem for Allen County and we are fortunate to have a very enthusiastic Chris to present this behind-the-scenes look. The meeting will be held rain or shine. Chris has assured me that she will access shelter if need be. Bring a chair and, if you like, a guest. Light refreshments and drinks will be served.



WELCOME SPRING!!

Writing this with remnants of a surprise evening snow on the ground makes me laugh at our desire to plan and control the world around us! It is certainly a reminder that nature is in control and the calendar is irrelevant!

From a gardening standpoint it is a good reminder that while nice spring like weather is on its way, we still have significant cold and frost to be prepared for! In a discussion at a local garden center yesterday I smile when the proprietor discussed selling potato and onion sets to people who refused to heed the advice that the soil is still too cold and wet for success. So, they will sell more to those overanxious gardeners again in a few weeks when the first ones have succumbed to rot. Another reminder for patience and perseverance!

I suspect that when Spring springs, it will be all at once and with gusto and we will feel caught behind the 8-ball trying to get all the work done yesterday! Ah, the joys of gardening!

SOIL AND WATER TREE PACKAGING

I usually only get a week's notice of the tree packaging event but it is generally held in mid-April starting at 8 a.m. and continuing until lunch time. The event is held at the Allen County Fairgrounds in one of the buildings. This community service event counts toward your volunteer hours if you participate. Stay tuned. I will send more details when I receive them via a separate email.

ACMGV MONTHLY MEETINGS BEGIN WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

Vice President Sandy Bindel has lined up a full slate of meetings for 2019 and we are going to have a great time this season! Please mark your calendars for the 3rd Wednesday of each month, April through October and plan to join us around the area for interesting evenings of fellowship, organizational planning and management, education, inspiration and fun!

See the full slate of meeting attached to the end of this newsletter and review Sandy's article about this month's meeting here in the newsletter! See you on the 17th!

WORK FOR FOOD DAY – SATURDAY, APRIL 27

It will be an "ALL HANDS ON DECK" day at the Children's Garden on Saturday, April 27 from 9 a.m. until noon when we "wake up" the garden and unpack the shed to begin the growing season. I have invited the Kohl's Associates again this year and hope they will select our project to assist with again this year. Please plan to help if you can, there is a lot to do and it is great when we have experienced gardeners available to lead and educate volunteers from Kohl's while they work, too.

STORMWATER SUPERSTARS

Teresa and I represented the ACMGV's and the Children's Garden at Real American Sunrise event last week to accept an award from the Allen County Soil and Water District as Stormwater Superstars for our efforts to plant and support native plants and to conserve water at The Children's Garden.



DUES ARE DUE

If you didn't already pay your annual dues at the seminar, please send your check for \$20.00, payable to ACMGV to:

Allen County Master Gardeners, PO Box 521, Lima, OH 45802

PREPARE FOR THE PLANT SALE

As you begin waking up your gardens, please plan to pot up some of your divisions and volunteers for the plant sale. Remember that we do need to identify each plant for the sale and can not and will not sell "mystery plants". Plant label stickers will be available at the first meeting and will also be available at the shed beginning on Work for Food Day. We will also be able to provide extra pots and soil from the CG shed as needed. If you don't have plants to share, please consider making a cash donation to the Children's Garden to defray the cost of the annuals we plant each year.

CONGRATULATIONS, CANDY NEWLAND!

Candy was nominated by her associates at the Kiwanis for a Jefferson Award in recognition of her service to the community, including her volunteer work with us! Congratulations, Candy on this well deserved award!

PLANT DONATION REQUEST

Marsha Mangin is assisting Jesse Lowe with a garden project in an open lot adjacent to his business. She has designed a garden border of red, white and black plants and has a specific list of desired plants that she would like to help Mr. Lowe acquire for the new garden. If you are interested in sharing a start of any of these plants or in making a cash donation to the project, please contact Marsha at: mjm032266@embarqmail.com

6 Burning Bush; black hollyhock seeds; 'Autumn Bonfire' Azalea; 12+ white Yarrow; numerous white Coneflower; 3 Black Lace Elderberry; 3+ 'Phaison' Canna; 'Winecraft' or 'Velvet Cloak' Smoke Tree; Lobelia 'Black Truffle'; 1 white Knock Out Rose; numerous white Zinnia; numerous black and white Minstrals Dianthus; 3 'Midnight Wine' Weigela; 1 'Diane' Witch Hazel; 3 Salvia Windwalker 'Royal Red'; 'Chocolate' Joe Pye Weed; Helenium 'Mariachi Salsa'; 2 white Butterfly Bush; numerous red Zinnia; 'Red Riding Hood' Penstemon; 'Purple Baron' Millet; numerous red Bee Balm; numerous white Phlox; numerous white Bearded Iris; numerous black Iris; numerous white Liatris; 2 red Knock Out rose; 3 'Firefly' Heather; 'Midnight Marvel' Hibiscus; White False Indigo; 3 'Double Play Red' Spirea; 'Major Wheeler' Honeysuckle; native Sassafras tree; 'Blue Kazoo' Spirea; dwarf 'Cherokee' Crape Myrtle; 'Natchez' Crape Myrtle; some of any color Elephant Ear; 3 Salvia-Texas Sage Hummingbird 'Forest Fire'; 3 Honeywort 'Purpurascens'

~ Gretchen