



Digging It!



All the Dirt from the Allen County Master Gardeners

MARCH 2021

Notes from Joanne

~ Allen Co. OSU Master Gardener Coordinator

It has been so nice to have temperatures above freezing. Let's hope the warmer weather continues. I will bring you up to date on what our office has been working on this month.

As you are aware, the Master Gardener state office is working on getting us a new VMS. It is called HOC or Hands on Connect instead of VMS. As soon as it is set up and I go through the training, I will be passing on the information to you. I am not sure at this time if you will get information about logging on and navigating the system from me or from Pam Bennett. I will make sure you receive some type of step-by-step guide to use for the new system. It looks nothing like the other system but does seem easy to navigate.

We will start using the Allen County OSU website for our newsletters starting the first of April. The new HOC will not allow newsletters or photos. These will be kept on our website under the Master Gardener Volunteer tab. I will be receiving training on the website setup and moving things over during the month of March. I will let you know when things are complete.

Clint and I are working on setting up training for new volunteers. We are currently working on setting up the on-line training system for Allen County. We should start advertising for the training in the next month or so. This is an excellent opportunity and allows new members to adapt the trainings to their own schedule. They will be free to do their training chapters whatever time works for their schedule. They will even be able to work ahead a little if they see the upcoming week is busy. One of the counties that is currently testing the program is having excellent luck. Clint is working on setting up in-person labs, so there will be some hands-on training involved. These labs will probably cover more than one chapter at a time. We will try to come up with a time for the labs that accommodates the new volunteers.

February has been the month of change around here. We are learning many new things and trying to adjust. Please be patient as we work on getting all these new things set up. We are learning too.

Spring is just around the corner!

Joanne



Tidbits from Teresa

Skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) is one of the earliest spring appearances. The reason for its early appearance at a time when the ground is often frozen and snow-covered? The skunk cabbage is what's called thermogenic, meaning it can generate its own heat through its process of cellular respiration, melting the surrounding snow and ground with temperatures far warmer than the air around it. This warmth not only allows the plant to bloom and thrive in harsh conditions, but also attracts the pollinators that help it to spread.

Another sure sign of spring is the unmistakable call of the spring peeper. These small frogs are recognized by their outsized chirping, which serves as the call of the male of the species during the early spring mating season—females choose their mates based on the quality of the male's call. But despite their loud voice, adult spring peepers average only one inch in length. They are easily identified by the dark X shape on their backs. The northern spring peeper, *Hyla crucifer crucifer*, is found in all of Ohio's 88 counties.

March chores to get you ready for spring:

- Clean and repair tools and equipment. Get that mower ready to roar.
- The Ohio Cooperative Extension Service can test your soil to make sure you are applying the proper nutrients. (Fee involved).
- Spray dormant oil to smother overwintering insects on fruit trees and ornamental shrubs and trees.
- Remove mulch from perennials and roses gradually as plants show signs of new growth. Trim off dead parts.
- Remove those overwintering weeds such as chickweed and henbit growing in your planting beds; rake and fluff mulch after soil is dry.
- In March, after the ground has warmed some, it is safe to plant onions, asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, grapevines, small bush fruits, fruit and shade trees, evergreens, shrubs, and roses.
- Prune fruit and shade trees, grapevines, and shrubs which bloom in summer and fall. Wait until spring bloomers such as lilac and forsythia are finished blooming before pruning them, though, or you may trim off the flower buds.
- Trim ornamental grasses to 4-6" above the ground so that the fresh new growth can grow up through them. Clean up any other debris from perennials.
- Fertilize fruit and shade trees, evergreens, shrubs, and lawns. Plan the right spot for herbs in the garden. Many of them will come up year after year.
- Start fertilizing houseplants now for proper growth. There are some great organic choices now. Any that are root-bound should be repotted to a larger size. Also, check for any critters that have overwintered.
- If you have started a compost pile, it would be good to turn the compost pile.
- As tulip, narcissus, and other large bulbs begin to emerge, set pansy plants between them for added color.
- Late in the month, divide and transplant summer and fall blooming perennials (such as astilbe, aster, bleeding heart, coral bells, daylilies, phlox, and Shasta daisies). Perennials grow best in well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter. Repot those perennials for our plant sale.
- Prepare your vegetable garden for planting once the soil is workable adding compost.
- Depending on weather conditions, plant hardy vegetables such as onion sets, peas, and kale crops (cabbage and broccoli).
- Start growing healthy greens in containers.

After being cooped up all winter and with Covid, it is time to rock and roll outside. I'm READY!

Teresa Diehl

March 2021



March Notes from Sandy B -

Happy Spring on the horizon! Not too much new to report about our meetings for the 2021 season. Soooo, my plans are centered for the present time on planning my garden for this upcoming growing season. This year I'm going to test the companion planting concept that, if you plant blue hubbard squash around your other varieties of curcubita plants, squash bugs and vine borers will be attracted to the blue hubbard vines and leave your other crops alone. Trouble is, I'm having a very difficult time locating blue hubbard squash seeds! If anyone can help me out, I'd be grateful. Enjoy the sunshine and longer daylight hours!

Sandy Bindel



Greetings from Gretchen



MISSING YOU ALL THIS MARCH

The melting snow and warming sun have put my mind and spirit to memories of planning for the Spring seminar. The greatest joy of the day for me has always been seeing you, my friends! I will miss seeing you in March but look even more forward to seeing you again in April! Be well!

PLANNING AHEAD

While nosing around my garden on a recent sunny afternoon I am already seeing perennials that are in need of division, and while planning my seed starting I have a few annuals not typically found in the greenhouses that I am planning to start for the plant sale. I hope you will start planning and preparing for the sale as well as you move forward toward spring!

~ Gretchen Staley, President

Happenings from Kay

Happy Spring!!!

Submitted by Kay Studer

Spring Peeper

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring_peeper

