



# Digging It!



All the Dirt from the Allen County Master Gardeners

MAY 2021

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## *Notes from Clint*

Last May I had to write an article for this newsletter about program cancellations and how they affected you, our Master Gardener Volunteers. I feel like it's only fair that I get to break the good news to the group as well. Effective immediately we can begin all programming efforts for events less than 300 people without going through the university's exemption process. While we will still need to follow the health and safety protocols currently in place, this is a huge step in the right direction. Obviously, as conditions related to the pandemic evolve, we can expect changes from the Centers for Disease Control, the State of Ohio, the Allen County Health Department, and the university. Those changes could potentially impact our programming efforts, but I hope this allows us to have a more "normal" season at the garden in 2021.

The other exciting news I have is that we are nearly ready to roll out our new MGV class. I shared a few details at the April meeting, but the class will consist of an online portion and in person labs. This will allow students to work at their own pace on the classroom modules and then get together to work on the hands-on activities. If you know of anyone that is interested in joining the ranks, or if you are interested in mentoring a new member please share that information with Joanne.

Thank you for your patience through all the challenges we faced over the last year. I look forward to seeing you around the garden this summer.

- *Clint*



## *Notes from Joanne*

~ Allen Co. OSU Master Gardener Coordinator

It was so nice seeing everyone at the monthly meeting last week and opening day this past Saturday. Our weather is finally starting to shape up. We sat through our first meeting of 2021 and watched the snow pile up outside last week. I want to thank all the people who worked so hard opening the garden. I could not believe how fast everything was put out, signs hung and even some garden cleanup was carried out. Thanks again for everyone who chipped in. Your hard work is so greatly appreciated!

We will continue to work on Tuesday morning at the garden and in June we will bring back the Brown Bag Lunch Series on Tuesday. You are free to work in the garden any time that your schedule allows. I have posted a To-Do List on the shed door. You can pick a project to work on from the list or find your own. If you complete an item on the To-Do list, please cross it off.

Please continue to keep track of your hours on paper until the new Hands on Connect system is up and running. We are having meetings to work out the bugs and get things set up. This system looks totally different than the old one, but we are trying to make it very easy to use. This has taken a lot of work for the state office to find a new program that will fit everyone's needs. The VMS system is no longer being supported by the owner and is being taken offline soon. This will not keep track of your hours, so do not use it. I will be sending an email with instructions when the new Hands On Connect system is up and running, hopefully later this month.

The Plant Sale is Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to 2 pm. We would love to have donations from your garden. If anyone needs pots, the wall beside the stairs is full of pots and so is right at the top of the stairs. Please, feel free to help yourself. You will find labels on the "desk"/ table under the window. There are several sheets printed off inside the package. We ask that all plants are labeled, and the information filled out. We will also be needing lots of volunteers for the plant sale, so please keep this day open to volunteer.

Again, thank you to everyone for all your help and I hope to see you on Tuesdays, monthly meetings and at the plant sale.

**Joanne**

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## **Tidbits from Teresa**

May ushers in one of my favorite plants (I have dozens of favorites!) the old fashioned lilac. Lilacs evoke memories of my youth as most homes had one in their yards and the old lilacs seem to be more fragrant than the new varieties. *Syringa vulgaris* is in the olive family *Oleaceae*, and is native to the Balkan Peninsula where it grows on rocky hills. The outstanding quality of many lilac varieties is the fragrance of their flowers. The bloom is a branching cluster or panicle. Each flower is only about 1/3 inch across.

In the 1500's it found its way to Northern Europe and settlers brought it to North America in the 1700's. New Hampshire made the lilac its state flower. There are more than 1,000 varieties including trees that can reach 30 feet. They can live to be more than 100 years

old, so you can often find them on deserted farmsteads. The shrub is fire-retardant so they can be considered as candidates to be planted near homes in areas susceptible to wildfires. The leaves are food plants for 3 species of butterflies; underwing, scalloped oak, and Svensson's copper underwing.

Lilacs grow in zones 3-7 and need at least 6 hours of full sun each day. They like loamy, somewhat moist and neutral to slightly alkaline soil (6.5-7.0) and they need good drainage. They don't need much fertilizer and excess nitrogen can harm the plant. Lilacs require good air circulation to deter diseases as they are prone to powdery mildew. Pruning helps maintain optimum shape, size and health of the plant. The ideal time to prune is just after bloom. Lilacs fall under the 1/3 per year pruning guidelines. Remove any stems that are thicker than 2" in diameter to keep the plant from getting too tall.

Lilac's colors range from purple through pink to white. There is also a variety called Primrose which is yellow. Dwarf varieties (3-4') are also available. They attract birds, including hummingbirds, butterflies and other pollinators to your garden. Miss Kim is a late bloomer so its buds are less likely to be damaged by frost. The Bloomerang lilac is one of the few types of re-blooming lilacs.

Spring is here! Come up and smell the lilac at the Children's Garden that we inherited with the property. We are easing our way back to a "normal" garden season and I am looking forward to see my fellow volunteers and get the garden looking awesome. We can find a way for you to help no matter what your limitations. Don't forget to pot up your "passalong" plants for the May 15<sup>th</sup> plant sale.

Teresa Diehl

May 2021



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## May Notes from Sandy B –

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### May Meeting

Our native species of plants are certainly interesting and diverse! Dave McPheron, retired MG coordinator for Hardin County, has a retail business selling plants that are native to this area. He will be our speaker for our May ACMGV meeting. The meeting will be held at The Children's Garden on TUESDAY, MAY 18th at 6:30 p.m.

If you have questions, I'm sure he'd love to hear them. He will bring some plants along which will be available for purchase.

Bring a chair and a mask. Hope to see you there!

Sandy Bindel

## Greetings from Gretchen



### **STRONG BACKS AND DETERMINATION**

Thanks to the dozen or so ACMGV's who helped open the garden on April 24<sup>th</sup>. We got a really good start getting items out of the shed and signs and displays out into the garden. Now the fun of weeding and replanting begins!

Please carve out a pocket of time to help getting the garden up and running this month!

### **PLANT SALE APPROACHING FAST**

April was a great time to get out into the garden and start dividing plants. Hopefully, you've set a few volunteers aside to contribute to the Plant Sale. If not, there's still time.

There are plant labels, pots and soil available at The Children's Garden shed. Help yourself.

We will also be digging and dividing plants for the sale on Tuesday workdays. Your help is needed.

The sale is on Saturday, May 15 from 9 am – 2 pm at The Children's Garden. Set up will begin at 8 am.

If you are available to volunteer for one of the two shifts, please contact Joann immediately at: 419-296-5623.

### **BROWN BAG RESUMES**

Teresa Diehl has agreed to be the hostess for Brown Bag this year. Vicki Jacobs will be her lovely assistant! We need your support to make Brown Bag the awesome event it always has been. Please consider giving a 30 minute talk on your favorite gardening topic. Our mission as MGV's is to share our knowledge with the public. It's the heart of what we do! If you are nervous, consider buddying up with an MGV friend for a talk. Gain a new skill! Polish your rusty ones! Life is short – do what scares you!

### **WORKDAYS AT THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN**

As Joann noted, she will be at the garden on Tuesday morning and early afternoons effective immediately. In May, I have a couple Tuesday conflicts so my plan is to be at the garden from around 5 – 7 PM on Tuesday, May 4. So if you work days, feel free to join me THIS TUESDAY EVENING for some work time. The irrigation guy had to shut the water back down because of last weeks freeze and then had to leave town. The water is not currently on at the garden so we are waiting to start planting for a few more days. We will need to get a lot of plants into containers soon though, so watch your email for additional planting times!!

~ Gretchen Staley, President



## *Happenings from Kay*

### **DAFFODILS**

Daffodils are exceptionally hardy and can be an excellent permanent addition to your garden. Most tend to increase easily and all are deer and rodent proof. They are easy to grow, in the fall just dig a hole at least 6 inches deep in well-drained soil, and cover. They do well in full sun to light shade. After blooming in the spring, once the flowers are spent, simply snip off the flower head. This will prevent unnecessary energy being spent developing seeds. This will allow the bulb to absorb nutrients from both the leaves and stem. Also resist the temptation to cut the leaves, or fold them into bundles, because this reduces the ability of the plant to channel vital nutrients to the bulb hampering the plant's future health. It is best to simply let the leaves die back, turn brown, and then cut them back about eight weeks after blooming. If you plant annuals around the bulbs or place among plants that leaf out later (like hostas) you can hide the leaves quite nicely.

It is thought that Roman soldiers carried daffodil bulbs in their kit as kind of a cyanide pill, should they be captured or seriously wounded. All parts of the daffodil are toxic, containing the chemical lycorine, the highest concentration in the bulb. The bulb also contains a family of chemicals called oxalates, which can cause severe burning and irritation. Because of this, daffodils provide excellent rodent control even against moles.

Narcissi were originally native to the shores of the Mediterranean and were known to have been grown by the Egyptians and Greeks. It is also known they were in English gardens by the 13th century, probably brought back by the Crusaders. Despite their Mediterranean origins, daffodils are remarkably hardy in many hardiness zones except the most extreme.

One of the amazing “fun facts” about narcissus is they have the uncanny ability to drill themselves down in the soil to their optimal depth and the reverse if planted too deeply. They can also twist their blooms according to the wind. If you ever put cut daffodils in a vase and notice the ribs going up the stem, that is how they accomplish this. They use the ribs to twist the blooms into a safe position. Sadly, some of the newer, fancier hybrids can't do this because the flower is too heavy for the neck of the stem.

*From: “Celebrating Daffodils” Robbins-Hunter Museum*

### **ARBOR DAY**

Arbor Day was yesterday, and I doubt if anyone planted a tree after 2.4 inches of rain fell during the night. Here's a little info on Arbor Day from *Wikipedia*:

Arbor Day was founded in 1872 by J. Sterling Morton in Nebraska City, Nebraska. By the 1920's, each state in the U.S. had passed public laws that stipulated a certain day to be Arbor and Bird Day observance.

National Arbor Day is celebrated every year on the last Friday in April; it is a civic holiday in Nebraska. Other states have selected their own dates for Arbor Day.

The customary observance is to plant a tree. On the first Arbor Day, April 10, 1872, an estimated one million trees were planted.

**Submitted by Kay Studer**