FEATURE ARTICLE

FRESH HERB GARDENING IN WINTER

Fresh herbs are a great way to bring life to the doldrums of winter, use fresh flavors in cooking, and practice some Smart Gardening techniques.

If you missed the opportunity to bring your garden herbs indoors, plan to start some from seed to enjoy during the winter months. Depending upon the herbs you select, some can be transplanted into your garden next year or you can choose to container-garden with herbs year-round.

There are many different kinds of herbs to grow and enjoy. Each of them can be produced using different methods. Some are best propagated by division, which means separating a part of the entire plant either from the garden or a pot, and replanting it. Others can be grown by cutting a portion of the growing plant and replanting it. Seed production is a more common method that you can use to grow garden favorites like basil, parsley, cilantro, oregano and sage.

Select fresh seed and a well-drained soilless mix to sow them in. Be sure to plant the seeds at the proper depth; small seeds require a shallow planting depth.

You will want to maintain a constant humidity for seed germination, so apply a plastic cover to the pot or flat you have seeded. Remove this once your seedlings emerge and make sure there is adequate air movement while keeping the surface of the media moist. Follow the temperature requirement necessary for seed germination; for most, it will be 60 degrees.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)
High light is important for seedlings as well as more mature plants, but be careful they do not burn. Herbs will require six hours of direct light, so if you have a south window, you could place them there. You can also place seedlings under two 40-watt white fluorescent bulbs for 14-16 hours. Use a combination of cool and warm bulbs to get a broad light spectrum. Room temperature for herbs needs to be at least a 65– to 70- degree day and a 55– to 60- degree night temperature.

Be sure to monitor the temperature near windows as it may differ from the actual room temperature. Be sure that the soil remains well-drained and that your container has a hole for excess water to drain out. Allow adequate air flow between your herb plants by placing containers far enough apart; this helps to decrease the chance of fungal diseases.

Once your herbs reach 6 inches, you can begin to harvest some of the fresh leaves. Be sure some leaves remain if you want the plant to continue to live. If any stems start to lengthen or stretch, pinch them back just above a leaf. This encourages branching, so you will get a bushier plant with more leaves. Oregano and sage are hardy perennials, so you will be able to plant them out in the garden permanently next summer.

Enjoy the flavors of your fresh herbs and consider researching additional ways to preserve herbs. For more tips on using and harvesting fresh herbs, please see Michigan State University Extension’s Michigan Fresh website.

This article was posted on December 6, 2013 by Rebecca Krans, Michigan State University Extension

For more information on a wide variety of Smart Gardening topics, visit the Gardening in Michigan website at www.migarden.msu.edu or contact MSU’s toll-free garden hotline at 1-888-678-3464.

Photo credit: Rebecca Finneran, MSU Extension

This article was published by Michigan State University Extension. For more information, visit http://www.msue.msu.edu. To have a digest of information delivered straight to your email inbox, visit http://www.msue.msu.edu/newsletters. To contact an expert in your area, visit http://expert.msue.msu.edu, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).
I have these new flowers growing in my woods that have soft, lettuce-green leaves, kind of shaped like a scalloped heart and have little white flowers. Below the flowers, there are projections that look like skinny twigs or rods sticking off the flower stem. The plants grow really fast and tall and I don’t think I have seen them before. What are they?

Your description sounds just like garlic mustard, with a botanical name of *Alliaria petiolata*. This is an invasive alien from Europe, Asia and North Africa that grows very rapidly in the spring. It grows so fast that it shades out native plants and they die off from lack of sunlight. Each plant is capable of producing more than a hundred seeds and if you can duplicate yourself this rapidly, you are a big problem. Garlic mustard is called a biennial because it comes up one year as a rosette of leaves low to the ground. The next year, it grows a flower stalk and blooms. The flower stem continues to grow upward with the flowers at the top and the seed pods which look like thin pencils are below it. The seed pods are characteristic of those in the mustard family. There is no magic herbicide that will kill garlic mustard and leave other plants. You can spray it with a nonselective herbicide but if you hit surrounding plants, you will kill them, too. If there are seed pods, like right now, they will continue to ripen and drop off the dead plant. Herbicides do not kill seeds. If you want to get rid of it, pull the plants and cram them into a contractor’s bag which is a very large garbage bag so you can get more inside. When the bag is stuffed as tightly as you can get it, add some water and push the air out of the bag and tie it closed. Put it on a cement slab in the sun for months and let the contents rot. Then, dig a hole and pour the contents in. Make sure that it is deep enough so there is no chance if seeds are alive that they can germinate. Or pick plants and burn immediately. It would be better to look for leafy rosettes in the fall and pull them. You can drop them where they are because there are no seeds. They will have those next spring. Just make sure the tap root is not in a place where it could re-root. Or you could dehydrate and eat the leaves because they taste like mild garlic. Crumble them over food. But that may be a bit too much.

How big do tomato plants get? My friend had one that only got about three feet all last year and another friend had another kind that probably got five feet tall. I want one that I can put on my deck in a pot that is 12 inches wide and eight inches deep. What do I get?

The best answer is: a bigger pot. There are two big groups of tomatoes grown by gardeners. Determinate tomatoes grow to a certain size and pretty much produce all their fruit at one time. These are not huge plants or huge tomatoes. They are often sold with the name of “patio tomatoes.” The largest group of tomatoes sold is called indeterminate tomatoes. They grow and grow and could be six feet tall by the end of the season. They produce some tomatoes continuously from late July or August until it frosts or the temperatures get too cold and there is not enough sunlight. A plant four feet tall could have roots going out two feet on all sides of the plant. If the roots on a big plant are four feet across, there is no way it is going to be happy or productive in a 12 inch pot. One of the important functions of roots is called respiration. The roots closest to the top of the soil take in air, use the carbon dioxide and make oxygen. Essentially, it is like very slow-motion plant breathing. But in a tiny pot, the roots grow to the side of the pot and grow downwards, away from air. Many of the big tomato-small pot combos have many fruit with blossom end rot. This is caused by not enough water getting into the plant. It is the width of the pot you are concerned with. The roots go wider than deep. Get a bigger pot and buy a patio tomato unless you buy a giant pot.

Gretchen Voyle, Retired MSU Extension-Livingston County Horticulture Educator
Potato-Leek Soup with Fennel and Watercress (Vichyssoise)

Soup, Vegetarian

Makes Serves 6 to 8. • Source Williams-sonoma.com

Ingredients

- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 leeks, including tender green portion, rinsed well and coarsely chopped
- 2 fennel bulbs, about 1 lb. total, thinly sliced, leaves reserved for garnish
- 2 baking potatoes, about 1 lb. total, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 6 cups chicken or vegetable stock or prepared broth
- 1 bunch watercress, stems removed (substitute arugula or spinach if watercress is not available)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream (substitute milk for a lower calorie version)
  Salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste

Directions

In a soup pot over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the leeks and sauté, stirring occasionally, until soft, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the fennel and potatoes and sauté, stirring occasionally, until slightly softened, about 10 minutes.

Add the stock and bring to a simmer. Cover partially and cook until the vegetables are completely softened, about 20 minutes. Add the watercress and cook until it is wilted but is still bright green, about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat.

In a blender, food mill or food processor, puree the soup in batches until smooth and return the soup to the pot. Alternatively, process with a stick blender in the pot until smooth. Stir in the cream. Season with salt and white pepper.

Ladle the soup into chilled bowls and garnish with fennel leaves.
February Garden Tips
Bulbs, Corms, Rhizomes, and Tubers

Planning

One of these days, the sun will be out brightly, and suddenly, the snow will be melting with streams of water running down the driveway or along the curb. I remember Februarys when I was small. We floated little stick boats down the stream in the street. We noticed the different feel to the air. Spring was just around the corner.

The first crocus would bloom on the south side of the house. It was always a purple one, Grandma’s favorite color. Have you noticed how much longer the days are? Plants notice it, too! Where the snow has melted, crocuses and other small bulbs may bloom by the end of the month.

Make plans now for the summer bulbs snoozing in the basement. As usual there are more this year than there were last season. That means you will need to make more room, too.

Make a drawing of the garden, and locate spots where these lovely plants will go. The begonias are especially good in the shade—nothing gives color in the shade with so little work.

Schedule plantings of gladiolus every week in the cutting garden. Then you will have a continuous supply all summer.

Plan to try a new kind of summer-flowering bulb. There are many to choose from. Have you noticed the newer varieties of lilies? They come in fantastic colors that flower for many weeks in the midsummer.

Planting

Paperwhite narcissus can still be grown now.

1. Set them on a bed of pea gravel in a shallow dish.
2. Add water up at the bottom of the bulbs.
3. Set them in a cool place to make roots.
4. Once the tops start to sprout, move them to a bright, cool place until they flower. It takes only a few weeks. This is the good project for stay-at-home kids or those home for the semester break.
Amaryllis bulbs are available in hardware, discount, garden specialty, and even grocery stores. Sometimes they are potted and ready to grow. These easily grown bulbs provide spectacular blooms without any effort on your part. They will cure you of the winter blues.

Follow these steps to grow an amaryllis bulb.
1. If the bulb is not already potted, plant it in a pot slightly larger than the bulb.
2. Set the bulb so that it is halfway above the pot rim.
3. Use any commercial potting soil.
4. Moisten the soil in the pot, and put the plant in a cool, bright place. In a few days 1 or 2 shoots will begin to grow from the tip of the bulb. Eventually, it will grow 1 to 2 feet and separate into buds. The flowers will soon open, 6-8 inches in diameter in pastel or bright colors. Later the leaves will begin to grow.
5. Set the plant out after danger of frost has passed.
6. Bring it back in so that it can re-bloom year after year.

Care

The bulbs are snoozing in the cellar. Potted ones for forcing are stretching their necks, ready to burst forth as they are released from their chilly prisons.

Check the condition of the stored bulbs. They may sense the increasing day length and be starting to develop. Do not rush them. There are still months of cold weather before they can be put outside. They could be potted now, but they will be quite large and will take a lot of room before they can be moved out.

Bulbs being forced now should be showing buds. Do not push them. If it is too hot, the buds may blast. Keep the temperatures in the range of 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Some of these flowers should bloom for Valentine’s Day. What a nice gift.

Watering

While the bulbs are being forced, be careful in watering them. If they are too dry, they will not develop all the way. If they are too wet, the roots may drown, and the buds will blast.

Pests

Watch out for insects on the bulbs being forced. Control aphids with insecticidal soap. The cat may take a fancy to your potted bulbs or amaryllis. Other than that, there are no animals that may affect your plants.

Helpful Hints

Keep a record as you remove bulbs from cold storage for forcing. Include the date, the temperatures where they will be forced, how well the roots and tops have developed and varieties that have not done well. If you have not started a gardening journal, begin it now. Do not make it a chore.
Introducing Bobbie Parkhill  

MGAGCM Board Treasurer

“Relax, enjoy and get away from cares, troubles and stresses.” has been a centering mantra for Bobbie Parkhill, keeping her life in balance. With a decades long career as an Investment Consultant and Marketing Executive, it has been important for her to keep that balance. Exercise in her daily routine was central to that mission and she found fulfillment, in practicing Tae Kwon Do, leading her to achieve the level of 2nd Degree Black Belt. Unfortunately all that changed as she was preparing for the 3rd Degree Black Belt and her knee gave out. With direction from her doctors it was, sadly, time to step away from something that was such an important part of her life. With an inner strength Bobbie persevered. Reflecting on this time she shares, “As you get older you just have to accept that you have to scale back. If you are fortunate enough to find something to replace it with, you realize you can enjoy whatever you are doing.” It is this positive attitude that led her to the gardens and acquiring her Master Gardeners Certification.

While taking classes at the Morton Arboretum in the Chicago area, where she lived throughout her career, Bobbie, was introduced to the Master Gardeners program, quickly making friends with many of the Master Gardeners. Bobbie found great joy working in the gardens and knew this was her peaceful place. “It offered a little peace and quiet. Digging in the soil felt great. If a plant died, I would think ‘Oops!’, and just trash it. Its not like it was going to cost someone a million dollars like a wrong decision would in my career!” Escaping to her vacation home in Southwest Michigan she would tend to her flower gardens; but, it was growing vegetables that was most rewarding. In a small raised bed garden, she applied her newly learned techniques on maximizing space and successfully grew parsnips, potatoes, tomatoes, squash, peppers, carrots, lettuce, kale, spinach, swiss chard, beans, and zucchini along with an assortment of herbs.

Then, in the Spring of 2015, Bobbie had a decision to make when her company decided to relocate its headquarters to the East Coast. Reflecting again on her life, Bobbie thought, “Even when you love your job, the stress is still there. I don’t want to do this to myself anymore. I have so many other things I would like to get involved in and want to spend more time with my family.” And a decision was made. Retiring from her career, she moved to Grand Blanc in 2016 and now, living close to her sister and brother-in-law, nieces and nephews and their families, shares digging in the soil with them all.

Bobbie joined the MGAGCM shortly after her move to Michigan and has worked the Humane Society and Flushing River Trail project sites for the past two years. This fall she was elected to the Board in the position as Treasurer. With her professional background in finance she brings much to the table and considers this an opportunity to take the accounting process to the “next level”.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)
Commenting that the contributions of Michelle Chockley and her predecessors through the years have been great, she sees herself as continuing with their lead. With experience managing businesses and her skills in developing budgets she shares the next steps as “Streamlining the accounting process and structuring reports. Adding that these steps “Will be beneficial to the organization’s ability to raise additional funds and manage expenses for many years to come.”

We are happy to welcome Bobbie to the Master Gardener’s Board as Treasurer and wish her continued joy in the garden and spending with her family.

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<td>Mon, Feb. 5</td>
<td>Board meeting</td>
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<td>GCCARD Bldg.</td>
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<td>Mon., Mar. 5</td>
<td>Board meeting</td>
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<td>Sat. March 3</td>
<td>Smart Gardening Conference- Contact: Diane Brady <a href="mailto:bradydi1@anr.msu.edu">bradydi1@anr.msu.edu</a>, 616-632-7865 ext 1</td>
<td>8:45 am-4 pm</td>
<td>Multiple DeVos Place, 303 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids</td>
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MGAGCM
HOTLINE BUZZZZ

In this space, we will be keeping interested gardeners up to date on the types of calls our Genesee County volunteers and staff are fielding on the statewide hotline. We cover hotline duties on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during growing/harvesting season and only on Fridays in the winter. Calls come from all over the state (and occasionally other states!) and the Hotline office is full of resources so that our workers can respond to caller’s inquiries. In this installment of Hotline Buzz, we will give you some idea of the most common calls (and the solutions given), as well as some of the most intriguing and interesting calls that came in over the winter. After this, new information each month.

In general, winter calls revolve around indoor pests (brown marmorated stink bugs, anyone?), house plants and garden planning for spring. If you haven’t heard yet, the brown marmorated stink bugs are officially in Michigan. First reports began in 2012 but in the fall of 2016 they had reached our apple orchards. The small bruises these critters leave on apples (they pierce and suck the juices) do not make apples harmful to eat, but retailers who buy apples from the orchards will not buy them with that appearance. So in addition to being a potential economic issue in Michigan, stink bugs can invade our warm homes and many callers want advice on how to get rid of them. Homeowners are advised to remove them without squashing them (hence the word “stink”). But the best action is to use various ways to prevent them from entering the house in the first place! Other indoor pest calls include fungus gnats in houseplants (you’re probably watering plants too much), pantry pests such as meal moths (clear and clean the pantry- including throwing out all infested foods, washing down shelves with soapy water followed by vinegar/water solution) box elders and bedbugs (DIY takes a lot of diligence). Many callers are asked to e-mail a picture or bring in the pest so it can be properly identified before they are given advice on a remedy. Staff members Jim and Abi are experts in entomology and they actually love all the little critters!

Winter calls related to garden planning include how to get a soil test (you can pick up a sample envelope with instructions and MSU will give you a report for a small fee), when to trim trees (most varieties are best trimmed during cold months) and garden mediums (one caller asked if a garden can be grown in a bale of hay. The answer is yes! It’s called straw bale gardening).

More Hotline Buzzzzz next month!

The Hotline Buzzzzz is written by LaDonna Gamble and Glenn Perry, with counsel of Abi Saeed.
MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION OF GENESEE COUNTY MICHIGAN

Membership Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2018

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by President Vicki Laurin at 7:14 pm.

Review of Minutes: Motion and 2nd by Mel Kennedy & Loretta Elwood to accept the November 16, 2017 meeting minutes as presented. Passed.

Treasurer's Report: The beginning balance on 01DE17 was $19,752.86. December income totaled $795.00 and expenses were $596.67. The ending balance on 31DE17 was $19,951.23, including the Square account of $300.14.

Audit Report: The beginning balance was $29,312.76 and the ending balance was $19,651.09. No concerns or issues were found. Audit Committee (Sue Crisp, Patricia Witte and Sue Byron)

Projects Chairperson
Desert Oasis Alicia Ellis / Kay McCullough- Work starts 06MR18.
Park Place Community Garden Susan Biron- (50) wheelbarrows of veggies (not including corn) were harvested for the residents of Park Place in 2017. Starting the green house in Feb. 2018. Please save VG’s and Spartan Stores receipts for Sue, they are worth points toward a $1000 cash award.

Mel Kennedy - Projects Reports:

Al Alan Grove - Standing Committee Reports:

Banquet (Spring/Awards) Loretta Ellwood- April 19, 2018 at Crossroads. More to come!
Bulb Sale Randy Tatro – Amaryllis sales netted $331 for MGAGCM. Thank
Bus Trip (Educational) Sabrina VanDyke/Joanne Gensel- Buses are reserved. More
details at the Feb. meeting.
Clothing Vicki Laurin /Kay McCullough- The new expanded clothing line (on
VMS) was shown. Clothing pricing has changed. It will now be a fundraiser.
The next clothing order deadline is 23FE18.
DTE Vicki Laurin / Kit Puroll – A new and exciting DTE will debut in April
2018!
Fall Into Spring Loretta Ellwood- In 2017 there were 65 attendees and we
made a profit of $1000. The next 'Fall Into Spring’ will be October 6, 2018 at Mott.
Garden Tour (Educational) Kay McCullough- Event will be Sunday 24JN18 in the Grand Blanc ar-
ea. The first planning meeting will be Wed 06FE18 at Kay’s house.
Hospitality Gloria Roudebush – The following people received cards: Jim Harrow,
Gwen Barney, Karen Schilling & Arlene Walker-Hall. The following people received flowers/donations:
Julianna Gulish, Kristi Hunt & Chris Jensen.
Public Relations Mel Kennedy- Bee Symposium will be April 23, 2018 @ Mott
RTC at 4:30 pm.
VMS Ambassadors Abi Saeed / Michelle Chockley- approx. 60 MGs still need to re-certify.
Website Kay McCullough – Kay will be making a survey to determine the in-
terest in carpooling to symposiums.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)
Old Business:
Approve 2018 revised budget with bus trip included. Bobbie Parkhill explained the budget #s and the budget deficit was discussed. Moved and 2nd by Michelle Chockley and Alan Grove to accept the 2018 budget with the changes as presented. Passed.

New Business:
Our Master Gardener Volunteer Training class started last Monday. It was exciting to see so many new faces and how excited they were.
We are forming a fundraising committee to develop additional ideas on ways to reduce our deficit. If anyone wants to be on the committee contact Vicki Laurin.
We have a $4,000.00 deficit in our 2018 budget; besides the fundraising committee does anyone have any ideas to help reduce it? A discussion of past problems in ‘Ask a Master Gardener’ ensued (if we sign up we need to show up and put in the full time). Orientation for AaMG volunteers is being planned. Training was also requested for Farmers Market volunteers.
In 2018, the minimum annual re-certification hour requirement for MSU Extension Master Gardeners will become 10 educational and 20 volunteer hours.

Reminder of the Capitol Area Symposium, Saturday, January 27, 2018 at Plant and Soil Sciences Building on MSU’s Campus in East Lansing.

MGAGCM will be paying the $5.00 dues to MMGA and we are not requiring a new chapter application for 2018. Your prior application retains your membership with MGAGCM as long as you have recertified as an Extension Master Gardener.

Announcements:
MGAGCM has a NEW mailing Address:  P.O. Box 981, Grand Blanc, MI 48480
Close of Meeting: Moved and 2nd by Randy Tatro & Bobbie Parkhill to adjourn the meeting. Passed.
The meeting was adjourned by President Vicki Laurin at 8:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted: Dick Moldenhauer, MGAGCM secretary
**NEW, NEW, NEW**

**We Have a New Address**

Effective immediately we have a new PO Box. Please use PO Box 981, Grand Blanc, 48480 for all of MGAGCM correspondence.

**NEW ITEMS NOW HERE**

Are you ready for some new clothes? We have added several new items to our clothing order and we think you will like our new picks. We have new ladies tops in a variety of colors, a new 1/4 zip pull over, beach tote, drawstring bag, bucket hat and hand towel and much more. Check out our webpage and see what else is new: geneseecountymg.org/shirt-order.

Our next clothing order is due on Feb. 23, 2018. You will notice that the prices have increased slightly and that is due to the fact that we are making this a fund raiser. These prices are still very reasonable and now you will be helping your membership by buying that new hat or shirt.

After you submit your order please send your payment to PO Box 981, Grand Blanc, Mi. 48480 before the deadline on Feb. 23, 2018.

**Dates To Remember**

Join us on February 15, 2018 for our monthly MGAGCM meeting. Join us for social hour starting at 5:30. Share some snacks and visit with friends before our speaker, Gary Eichen, begins at 6:00. Gary’s topic of his presentation is “An Evening in the Gardens.” This presentation will include cultural practices like proper planting, proper pruning and proper watering. After a short break we will begin our business meeting.

Snack providers are: Sandy Johnson, Vicki Laurin-Maggie Gregg, Alan Grove.

**2018 Re-certification Timeline**

February 9, 2018 2018 Late Re-certification Period Closes

Special Note: MICHIGAN MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION (MMGA) membership will be a separate process from re-certification.

Once re-certified, you will receive an email with further details about becoming an MMGA member. All MMGA memberships must be completed by March 1, 2018.


If you have any questions regarding re-certification, call Abi at 810-244-8531, or Michelle Chockley at 810-695-8014

**AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2018 ONLY**

48 Days until Spring
MDA OFFICERS (2018)

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laurinvicki@gmail.com

1st Vice President
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Mel Kennedy
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2nd Vice President
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Secretary
810-695-2649
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Treasurer
630-408-1710
Bobbi Parkhill
bpark141@gmail.com

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITES
MMGA Inc Website at:
www.michiganmastergardener.org
MMGA Inc Facebook Page at:
www.facebook.comMichiganMG
MGAGCM Website at: Genesee
County MG.org
MGAGCM Facebook Page at:
http://facebook.com/groups/216904
6232310/

Link to VMS: https://michigan.volunteersystem.org

Abiya (Abi) Saeed
Consumer Horticulture Program In-
structor
Master Gardener Coordinator
810-244-8531-saeedabi@anr.msu.edu

Michelle Chockley, VMS Ambassa-
dor. 810-695-8014

MSU Extension-Genesee
605 N. Saginaw St. Suite 1A
Flint, MI 48502
(810) 244-8500

Plant & Pest Hotline:
(810) 244-8548
Hours: Friday’s only, from 8:30 am-
1:00pm

geneseepplantpest@anr.msu.edu

MGAGCM Mailing address:
PO Box 981, Grand Blanc, Mi.
48480
MGAGCM February SPEAKER

Gary L. Eichen has been a certified Arborist for numerous years. He is employed with Mike’s Tree Service out of Troy, Michigan as the Plant Health Care/Bio Turf Lawn Manager. In addition to his employment, he has for several years done presentations before groups on Plant and Tree Care.

Come out and join Gary on February 15, 2018