FEATURE ARTICLE

AMARYLLIS SPORTING NEW COLORS AND VARIETIES TODAY

After the glitz and glitter of the holidays are past, folks are usually in need of a pick-me-up, and gorgeous blooming amaryllis bulbs fill the bill perfectly. If you have passed on them because red is not your color, you’re in for a great surprise. The newer varieties come in a host of colors including white, pink, green and green with burgundy accenting. “Sweet Nymph”, a luscious pink double flower with fine white striping that measures 7 inches across and “Evergreen,” which produces long narrow long green petals that evoke a tropical feel with each stem and makes a bouquet of six or more flowers, are favorites of mine.

Amaryllis is easy to grow. All you need is a pot with a drainage hole that is slightly larger than the diameter of the bulb. And enough soil to the pot so that when the bulb is added, the shoulder of the bulb is level with the rim. Fill in around the bulb with potting soil and tamp it down lightly. The soil level should be an inch lower than the tip of the pot and the shoulders of the bulb should be exposed. Place it in a south-facing window.

The Amaryllis bulb contains all the nutrients needed, so no fertilizer is required to get it to flower. Water when the top inch of soil is dry to the touch.

Flowering varies from two to eight weeks depending on the variety and amount of sun it gets.

If you want to save the bulb and have it re-bloom next year, remove the faded flower stalks by cutting them 3 inches above the...
bark. Leave the foliage intact so it can re-nourish the bulb, and place the pot in a sunny location. Fertilize monthly with an all purpose water-soluble fertilizer, such as Jack’s Classic. When all threat of frost has passed, move the potted bulb outdoors to a sunny spot in the garden, it may be planted in the ground. In fall, just after frost has blackened, cut the leaves off at the base and store the dry bulb in a cool basement for eight to 10 weeks, Then pot it in moist soil and water and follow the growing directions above. Folks have been known to grow flowers from these bulbs for decades.

The best place to find good quality and unusual amaryllis bulbs is a garden center or specialty mail-order house such as Longfield Gardens – longfield-gardens.com (855-534-2733) or White Flower Farm – whiteflowerfarm.com (800-503-9624).

Nancy Zerlag—Detroit News

---

Do This Where You Planted Flower Bulbs

Warm spells in winter can cause the soil to briefly thaw and send a signal to flower bulbs that it’s time to wake up and grow. When the weather inevitably turns wintery again, the cold air and re-freezing soil can damage the bulbs’ growth, making them unlikely or unable to bloom once spring truly arrives.

To prevent winter warm spells from waking your flower bulbs early, cover their planting sites with a loose mulch once the ground has frozen solid. This will insulate the earth, keeping it a more uniform temperature throughout winter, regardless of what the weather is doing. In spring, you can either pull the mulch back or let the bulbs growth up through it, which they will do at the appropriate time.

Meghan Shinn
Is it true that if I put oak leaves around my plants that the leaves are acid and will damage the plants? I was told this but I don’t understand why there are healthy plants growing under oak trees that have plenty of leaves falling under them. So what do I mulch my plants with this winter?

Common sense is becoming a rare commodity. Luckily, you have it. When we talk about acid or alkaline, we are talking about the soil pH. This is a scale of zero to fourteen, with seven being neutral. All the numbers above seven are alkaline. The farther the number is from neutral, the more alkaline it is. All the numbers below seven are acidic and the lower the number the more acidic the soil is. For example, battery acid is zero and lye is fourteen on the pH scale. Virtually all plants grow well at somewhat below neutral. A vegetable or flower garden will do well at 6.5 and trees prefer 7.0. But plants like rhododendrons and blueberries require a very acidic soil at 4.5 to 5.0. Trees like evergreens or oaks cannot turn a soil more acidic; they just prefer living in a somewhat acidic soil. Research has been done on composting leaves and needles from trees and plants and when they are composted and broken down, the pH of the compost is always just about neutral. Since much of Southeast Lower Michigan has alkaline soils and plants prefer somewhat acidic soils, a little drop in soil pH is not a bad thing. This is one reason people get soil tests. They want to know if they need to correct the soil pH for the plants growing there. The flowers on pink hydrangeas can become blue or lavender when the soil pH is reduced to below 6.5. This only works on pink hydrangeas. The white hydrangeas will remain white as long as they are alive. Nothing changes the flower color except spray paint.

I bought several small trees and shrubs this summer and I have such a busy life that I did not get them planted. The pots are still sitting behind my house. What do I do with them? I want to just leave them until next spring and try to find some time.

If you leave them in their pots on top of the ground, they will die. The containers will freeze and thaw multiple times and the plants will attempt to come out of dormancy. This does not need to happen more than once but in Michigan, it will. A plant pushing out buds in January or February is now a dead plant. The best choice is to get the trees and shrubs planted now before the ground freezes, even if you are busy. Water them well and mulch the soil surface with lots of straw or leaves to at least three or four inches deep. Your other choices include planting the trees or shrubs in their containers so that just the rim of the pot is visible. Then mulch heavily with straw or leaves so freezing and thawing is gradual. Then, plant them in the spring. Or if you want to take a bigger risk, you can put them in the garage and make sure the soil does not dry out. This may or may not work, depending on the severity of the winter. Your worst choice is to leave them where they are and cover the pots with lots of straw. This makes a great hangout for voles and other hungry rodents that can eat the roots at their leisure this winter. If your purchases have been parked behind your house for months, their chances of survival are limited. They eventually fill the container with their roots and growth slows. They are not as healthy as they once were. The longer you keep them in the container, the less chance of having a good outcome. Whatever you decide, do it right now. The longer you are busy with other matters, the closer the trees and shrubs are to the compost pile.
CAPITAL AREA MASTER GARDENERS

WINTER SYMPOSIUM

The four topics with the speakers are:

Conifers for Michigan Landscapes – Dr. Bert Cregg, Associate Professor of Horticulture and Forestry, Extension Specialist, and a founding member of The Garden Professors blog.

Edible Spots & Pots – Stacey Hirvela, horticulturalist and author now working for Spring Meadow Nursery/Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs

Gourmet Shrubs for Discerning Gardeners – Stacey Hirvela, horticulturalist and author now working for Spring Meadow Nursery/Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs

What Is All the Buzz about Neonicotinoids and Pollinators? – Dr. David Smitley, Professor of Entomology at MSU

Who: Capital Area Master Gardeners

What: It’s All About…Mixing It Up – Winter Symposium

Where: Plant and Soil Sciences Building on MSU’s Campus in East Lansing in MPS 1200 which is the new auditorium/tiered classroom

When: Saturday, January 31, 2015

Earn: 5 Master Gardener education hours

Cost: $35.00 for CAMG members / $45.00 for non-member Active, Certified MGVs / $55.00 all others

A link to the association web site can be found at:

http://mgacac.wordpress.com

There you can find a link to the brochure, information about hotel rooms, vendors who will be at the conference (as they become available), a link to directions, etc.

If you have questions, you can email: mga.cac@gmail.com

Link to the actual Symposium brochure.

WINTERIZING THE ROSE GARDEN

As a gardener, I have always been interested in the weather. I decided it was time to cut my garden back earlier than normal this year because it turned cold and snow was expected.

Have you whacked back your roses yet? If not, now would be a good time to do so, especially if you live in colder climes. I generally cut mine back to around 18” (knee high).

Fall cutback is just gross pruning, there is nothing fancy about it. You can fine-prune in the spring! When I plant my roses, I always make sure the crown, or bud union, is buried at least 3-4” below soil level so that it is always protected.

All good things in the rose world come from that bud union, so if yours is at soil level or above, you will want to mound up your roses for winter protection. Some rosarians bring in soil to mound their roses, but for me that is too much work as it needs to be removed in the spring.

I like to mound my roses with shredded pine bark mulch that I can spread when my roses break dormancy. If you live in a really cold, windswept area, you may want to cover the roses with Rose Kones (they look like a giant Styrofoam cup, inverted).

Rose Kones (with snow!) are what you see in the photo above. If you decide to use this method, make sure you poke some holes up near the top so there is some air circulation. If there is a warm spell Rose Kones can get hot inside and cook your roses.

Regardless of what method of winter protection you choose to use, don't apply it until it is cold and there is frost in the ground. Remember: winter protection's purpose is to take the cold, dormant roses, and keep them cold and dormant! We don't want them to actually warm-up because it might stimulate growth that will be lost to the big freezes throughout the winter.

And so, our roses go gently into this chilly season, and now it is time for our well-deserved rest. I will be thankfully counting my blessings every day, and I wish a wonderful holiday season to all of us. In this season of love and light, blessings to you.

Marci Martin
EDITORIAL

HE End of the year thoughts and ramblings. Welcome to the new members of the Board of Directors. The foundation has been laid and there will be new and complex issues to deal with for the new board as the evolution of the Master Gardeners evolves.

My wife a couple of weeks ago planted Narcissus which have grown quite well and marks a little spot of summer in an otherwise dreary month of December. When I saw Nancy’s article it was a no brainer for the feature.

The catalogs have began to arrive so let the dreams began. I regret my inability to plant a garlic crop this year. Some how it is comforting to just to know there is something in the garden even if nothing is visible from the house.

I again resolve that I will do better planting seeds indoors this year. For the past several years I have had little or no success. Room has been made in the greenhouse to plant cold weather crops possibly in February, weather permitting. More compost has been added to the soil.

I am anxious to see how my stone border fairs over the winter and am looking for some planting ideas. A couple of years of Garden Gate has come into my possession so consideration is being given to the backyard.

Lots to plan and think about for the upcoming year.

SHE It seems that the new year always bring new year resolutions. I have done that in the past and some I follow thru with and others fall by the way side. So this year I am planning on making resolutions that I really want to do and hopefully the plan will become a reality. I have some landscaping projects that need to be done and I have been putting them off for one reason or another. I have a major project that I started working on last year with taking everything out and starting over. I even have 30 bags of mulch just waiting to be laid down after the weeds are pulled, AGAIN, and planting a few more perennials. So this is my New Year’s resolution for 2015. My landscaping project will be completed this summer and I will enjoy the rewards of hard work, beautiful flowers and they don’t know it yet, but the help of my two grandsons who always have more energy than they know what to do with. Isn’t that what a Gram is for? Happy New Year and I hope you enjoy your resolutions.

A TRICK FOR REMOVING WATER FROM HEAVY POTS

I planted a shrub into a pot on top of a saucer and now I’ve found it’s too heavy for me to lift up to drain the water from the saucer. Is it okay to just leave the water there to evaporate?

Answer: Growing plants in containers is a great way to maintain a larger variety of plants regardless of available in-ground growing space. When planting in pots, it is very important to select containers that have drainage holes. Allowing the water to seep through the holes, instead of resting within the soil, is vital for healthy, thriving plants. Sitting water can waterlog the roots, ultimately causing the plants to rot. Many gardeners will rest their containers on saucers to help catch the draining water. However, if you allow the water to sit in the saucer, rather than emptying it, you still can risk causing potential damage to your plants due to the soil retaining too much moisture. If your containers become too heavy to lift up in order to drain the saucer, try using a turkey baster to suck up the excess water. This will keep your plants happy and healthy, and do the same for you—by avoiding potential injury as a result of lifting that hefty container!

Maria Woodie
**Cooks' Corner**

**Roast Pork Loin with Rosemary and Garlic**

*Bon Appétit | June 2013 by Federica Cucinelli*

**Ingredients**
- 8 garlic cloves
- 1/4 cup fresh rosemary leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt plus more
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 1/2-pound boneless pork loin
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups dry white wine

**Preparation**

Preheat oven to 400°. Finely chop garlic and rosemary with 1/2 teaspoon salt on a cutting board. Holding knife at an angle, drag blade over mixture until a coarse paste forms. Transfer paste to a small bowl and mix in oil.

Butter flying the pork loin isn't difficult, but many butchers will do it for you.

Place pork, fat side down, on another cutting board with a short end toward you. Holding a sharp knife parallel to board and about 1/2" up side of loin, make an incision along entire length of one side. Continue cutting, lifting meat with your free hand as you go, until loin is open and flat. Spread garlic mixture over inside of loin and season with salt and pepper. Roll pork tightly; using kitchen twine, tie at 1" intervals.

Season pork with salt and pepper; place, fat side up, in a large shallow baking dish. Add wine; roast pork until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of loin registers 145°, 1 1/2-2 hours. (A couple of reviewers thought 400 degrees was too hot. Ed) Transfer to a carving board; let rest at least 10 minutes.

Spoon fat from surface of pan juices; discard. Slice pork; serve with pan juices.

---

**Nonna's Biscotti**

*Gourmet | January 2009 by Toni Oltranti*

**Ingredients**
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 stick unsalted butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons brandy
- 2 teaspoons pure almond extract
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup whole almonds with skin, lightly toasted, cooled, and coarsely chopped
- 3 large eggs
- 2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

**Preparation**

Stir together sugar, butter, brandy, and extracts in a large bowl, then stir in almonds and eggs. Stir in flour, baking powder, and salt until just combined.

Chill dough, covered, 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

Using moistened hands, halve dough and form 2 (16-by 2-inch) loaves on an ungreased large baking sheet.

Bake until pale golden, about 30 minutes. Carefully transfer loaves to a rack and cool 15 minutes.

Cut loaves into 3/4-inch slices with a serrated knife. Arrange biscotti, with a cut side down, on a clean baking sheet and bake until golden, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to rack to cool completely.

Cooks' note: Biscotti improve in flavor if made 1 to 2 days ahead. Keep in an airtight container at room temperature.
2015 RECERTIFICATION CHANGES AND GUIDELINES

IMPORTANT CHANGE FOR 2015: Our Membership approved at our monthly Master Gardener meeting in September 2014, that our Chapter will pay the $5.00 per person MMGA dues out of our Chapter funds for everyone who recertifies for 2015. In order to be a chapter member, you must be certified on VMS and also pay $5.00 annual MMGA dues (which will be paid by our Chapter for 2015).

YOU MUST SAVE YOUR PROOF OF CERTIFICATION IN JANUARY AND BRING TO JANUARY MEETING OR MAIL TO: MGAGCM, PO BOX 34, FLUSHING, MI 48433 IN JANUARY. THE TREASURER WILL KEEP A LIST OF EVERYONE WHO RECERTIFIES. THE LIST WILL BE SENT TO MMGA WITH ONE CHECK TO COVER THE MMGA DUES. If you do not have a printer, please contact Michelle Chockley at chockleym@gmail.com or 810-659-8014 after you have certified in January. IF YOU HAVE A PAYPAL PAYMENT SET UP FOR MMGA FOR THE $5.00 ANNUAL DUES, PLEASE CANCEL. MMGA CANNOT REFUND DUPLICATE PAYMENTS.

Step by Step:
Hours must be logged on to VMS by December 31, 2014. The VMS system then shuts down until 1/7/15. If you need any assistance with entering hours or passwords, contact Ruth Simon 810-639-7565, simonru@anr.msu.edu or Jim Harrow 810-233-6214, joker108@sbcglobal.net.

VMS system will reopen on 1/7/15 through 1/31/15. You can then log in to recertify and pay MSUE $20. There are 3 steps to this process:
- Selecting your recertification status;
- Accepting Code of Conduct & Volunteer Agreements;
- Registering and paying fee to MSUE.

There will be a late recertification period from 2/1/15 to 2/15/15, but the MSUE fee increases to $30.00.

Your links to VMS: http://michigan.volunteersystem.org or https://michigan.volunteersystem.org/universallogin.cfm

Master Gardeners who have Emeritus status go through the steps, but do not pay the $20.00. Candidates for Emeritus status must meet all of the following criteria:
- Minimum of 500 hours of volunteer service
- 10 continuous years of volunteer service
- Exemplary service to the MSU Extension MGP
- Have limited ability to remain active

Contact Ruth Simon if you wish pursue.
Tips for Getting a Start on Next Year’s Garden

Weed in the fall.

It can help to weed your garden now, even though there are likely to be weeds that grow between now and next spring. With the ground still soft from the warm summer months, you will have a much easier time weeding now than after the ground has been frozen for a whole season.

Tillage.

As you may know, it can help to turn over soil on which you plan to plant—also known as tilling the soil. This process helps to aerate the soil and facilitate more easeful planting of the crops. But tilling in the fall can be of particular help as well, including leaving a smooth surface for planting in the spring.

Add organic matter months before gardening season.

By adding organic matter to the soil, such as dried tree leaves or manure, you can loosen up the soil and improve drainage. Work this matter into the top six or so inches of the soil.

Lay mulch or a bed of leaves over to protect the soil through the winter.

With winter comes the potential for quite a lot of precipitation and other seasonal activity. To protect all of your hard work from too much damage, lay mulch or a bed of leaves over your garden area. This will provide you with less work to do in re-cultivating the soil when it’s time to plant in the spring.

A couple of days of focused work on your garden now could lead to saving a week or more at the start of the next planting season. Try one or more of these tips out and watch how much easier it is to return to the garden next year.
COMPOST TEA

Compost tea is an effective, low-strength, natural fertilizer for seedlings and garden plants, and it can suppress fungal plant diseases. The tea-brewing process extracts, and in some cases grows and multiplies, nutrients and beneficial bacteria and fungi from compost and suspends them in water in a form that makes them quickly available to plants.

Making compost tea doesn't require any special equipment. Here's how to do it:

1. Place compost and water (10 pounds mature compost for each 10 gallons of water) in a 40-gallon barrel. Protect the barrel from cold and heat.

2. Stir with a stick daily for a minimum of 5 days.

3. Strain the liquid from the compost after 5 days, using cheesecloth or burlapping or off odors. Use the compost tea immediately, without further dilution.

When you brew compost sweet, earthy-smelling compost, few beneficial microbes survive in this environment. One way to achieve tea-worthy compost is to maintain pile temperatures at 135° to 155°F for a week or more by turning the pile often. Or, a well-built pile that has composted for at least a year will produce tea-ready compost even if it did not heat up to the ideal temperature range.

Keep in mind that E. coli can be present in the raw ingredients of a compost pile. Minimize the risk by maintaining a hot compost pile or allowing the compost to mature fully. And don't apply compost tea to any vegetable within 3 weeks of its planned harvest date.

JUDGING SOIL READINESS

Take a hands-on approach to judging whether garden soil is too wet, too dry, or just right for digging: Pick up a handful of soil and squeeze it gently into a ball. Then apply light pressure to the ball with a finger from your other hand. If the ball breaks apart easily into loose pieces, the soil is dry enough to dig. If pressing on it flattens the ball or breaks it into large chunks, the soil is too wet—wait a few days and test it again.

Soil that won’t hold together when you squeeze a handful is too dry. Working dry soil also damages the structure by reducing it to dust. If your soil is too dry to form even a loose ball, set a sprinkler to soak it deeply and thoroughly. Then wait a couple of days and test to see if it has dried enough to be safe to work.
DTE Yearly Subscription is due January 31, 2015. If you enjoy reading a hardcopy of the DTE you need to send a $10.00 check to Michelle Chockley by Jan. 31st PO Box 34, Flushing, Mi 48433, made out to MGAGCM.

Know & Grow Seminar at a Glance

Date: Saturday, February 21, 2015

Time: Registration will begin at 8:15 a.m. The program will begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:30 p.m. Lunch is included.

Location: Bullock Creek High School 1420 Badour Rd. Midland, MI 48640

Early registration fee is $60.00

Shop the Master Gardener Marketplace!

The Midland Master Gardeners will again host an array of vendors from across the state to create a one-of-a-kind gardening marketplace. There will be many items to tempt Gardeners! Get ready to shop!

Speakers include Nikki Jabbour author of The Year Round Vegetable Gardener. Roy Diblik author of Know Maintenance Perennials and Professor George Bird from M.S.U.

Online registration: http://dowgardens.org

January 15, 2015 meeting speaker will be Glen Pace of the Eastern Michigan Hosta Society. Glen’s subject is “Woodedland Wonders”

All meetings start at 6:00 pm (social time); 6:30 Business Meeting and 7:30 Program.

We need snack hosts for the January meeting! Please contact Cheryl Borkowski at 586-383-8695 if you can bring a snack.

IT’S ALL ABOUT...MIXING IT UP- WINTER SYMPOSIUM. Held at the Plant and Sciences Building on MSU’s Campus in East Lansing, Saturday, January 31, 2015. You will earn 5 education hours. Cost is $35.00 for CAMG, $45.00 for non-member Active, Certified MGV’S and $55.00 all others. For more information:

http://mgacac.wordpress.com
MGAGCM OFFICERS (2015)

President  Vicki Laurin  810-744-0725  rhjm90@yahoo.com
Vice President  Kay McCullough  810-635-9341  birdieball@aol.com
Secretary  Loretta Ellwood  810-444-4549  ldellwood@aol.com
Treasurer  Michelle Chockley  810-659-8014  chockleym@gmail.com

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITES

MMGA Inc Website at: www.michiganmastergardener.org
MMGA Inc Facebook Page at: www.facebook.com/MichiganMG
MGAGCM Website at: http://ge-mga.lweebly.lcom/
MGAGCM Facebook Page at: http://facebook.com/groups/2169046232310

THIS NEWSLETTER PREPARED BY:
Vicki Laurin, rhjm90@yahoo.com. George Rap- pold, grappocp@att.net, of counsel Ruth Si- mon .

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

Plant & Pest Hotline:
(810) 244-8548
Hours:
9:00 am-1:00 pm Fridays Only.
geneseepanpest@anr.msu.edu

Public Office Hours:
8 am - 1 pm Monday through Friday.

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status. Michigan State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties cooperating, Michigan State University is an affirmative-action equal opportunity employer. Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested. Requests received will be met when possible.
AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER