Coordinators’ Comments

Will spring ever come? Will the snow ever disappear? Will we see just one spot of color in our yards anytime soon? This seems to be an interminably long winter but I hope that eventually we can stop dreaming about doing garden projects and really get outside and do them.

During this long winter season, I have had the pleasure of attending a number of the garden days sponsored by local Master Gardener groups. Top-notch speakers, super hospitality, great organization and large crowds have been the norm. March promises to be another month full of educational opportunities so check the “Important Dates” section in this newsletter. Support other Master Gardener groups in the state by attending their workshops. If we can’t be out in the garden at least we can learn new gardening ideas and techniques.

If you need a quick gardening fix, head to Navy Pier in Chicago to view the Chicago Flower Show on March 8-16. The show is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays.

The University of Illinois Extension’s exhibit, “Extreme Gardening” features information on gardening in just such conditions. "All gardeners are faced with the decision of 'what to plant where' based upon a few basic criteria: is the site moist, cool and shady or is the site sunny, hot and dry. Sometimes these conditions are not only in the same garden but close together. This exhibit will help people determine what they can plant in the extreme conditions of shade and sun," explained Greg Stack, U of I Extension horticulture educator based in Matteson and coordinator of the exhibit. "The garden space has been designed as a walk through, allowing visitors to go from areas depicting sun to shade conditions."

"We'll also have a publication available, 'Beyond Impatiens and Petunias,' that explains the types of things gardeners need to consider when trying to match plants to their particular garden site. The publication covers things like temperatures, soil conditions and water requirements for a host of plants. We name 33 different plants that are suitable for extreme conditions."

"The garden design is the work of Patty Kirkpatrick, Will County Master Gardener, and construction was done with the help of 20 Master Gardeners," said Stack. "A number of nurseries and seed companies provided plugs for the plant materials and all the material used in the display was grown in a U of I greenhouse in Downers Grove."

Think spring!

Monica David

It’s time to order Master Gardener Apparel!

Be the most stylish Master Gardener in your unit! Many of your favorite items from last year will be available again. New items for 2003 include the Master Gardener pin, apron, short-sleeved denim shirts and a new attractive tote bag. All items are embroidered with the Master Gardener logo.

An order form is on the back of the color sheet included with this newsletter. Please complete the order form and return it along with your check (payable to the University of Illinois) to your local extension office. Please check with your Master Gardener coordinator for his/her deadline for submitting orders.

Your total price includes shipping to the local Extension office. Select carefully as all sales are final. Please pick up your merchandise promptly after you are notified that the merchandise has been delivered to your office. We will not be responsible for replacing damaged or missing apparel after July 15, 2003.
Important Dates

March 8-16: Chicago Flower & Garden Show, Navy Pier, Chicago, IL. Check the website at www.chicagoflower.com or call 312-321-5086.

March 14-16: “Weekend Gardener Expo”, Gateway Convention Center, Collinsville, IL. Noted speakers include Mary Ann Fink, “Seasonal Tips for Gardeners”, Angie Eckert, Diane O’Connell, Mike Miller (KMOX radio) and Jim McMillan (KTRS) Cost is $5.50 per day. 618-692-7700.


March 22: “Midwest Gardening: Challenge and Opportunities”- St. Louis Garden Symposium, St. Louis Community College-Meramec Campus. This one day symposium will highlight speakers Roger Swain, Horticulture Magazine and retired host of the PBS Victory Garden; John Elsey, Song Sparrow Farm; Tracy DiSabato-Aust, garden designer and author; Neil DiBoll, Prairie Nursery; and Chris Woods, Director of Chanticleer. Registration after Feb 1 is $79. Sponsored by the Horticulture Coop of Metro St. Louis and the Junior League of St. Louis. Contacts: Paul Roberts 314-984-7714 and Elizabeth Southern 314-983-0515.

March 22: “Gardener’s Big Day”, Spoon River College, Canton, IL. Lois White will be back by popular demand to talk on Hummingbirds. Breakout sessions available on Berries & Brambles, Critter Control, Roses, Granny’s Tips, Bird Watching, Butterflies, Landscape Design, Herbs, Butterflies and Perennials. Pre-registration is required and the cost is $18.00. Sponsored by the Fulton Co. Extension, Spoon River College and the Spoon River Garden Club. For more information contact the Fulton Extension office- 309-547-3711.

March 29: Tri-County Gardening Day, Peoria Civic Center, Peoria, IL. Six seminars, workshops and demonstrations will be offered in each of three sessions. The seminar topics include: Urban Backyard Gardening, Organic Gardening, Soil-less Mixes, Flowering Shrubs, Diseases of Annuals & Perennials, Lawn Care, Gardening in Blues, Daylilies & Peonies and more. Keynote speaker is Jim Wilson, noted garden author and Victory Garden Host. Cost is $30. Registration ends March 12. Sponsored by the Master Gardeners of Woodford, Tazewell and Peoria counties. 309-685-3140.

April 5: “Gardenfest”, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, IL. Gardenfest will feature over 30 sessions as well as hands-on workshops. A few of the featured topics are Willow Structures, Weed Id., Japanese Flower Arranging, Cooking with the Seasons and English Garden Design. Classes are coded for beginners, intermediate and advanced gardeners. Contact Molly Walsh for more information, 815-455-3700.

June 18-21: International Master Gardener Conference, Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area. Keynote speakers will be Holly Shimizu, Director of the United States Botanical Garden and Tracy DiSabato-Aust, well-known author and garden lecturer. An impressive line-up of class choices and workshops will be offered as well as time to relax and meet other gardeners. Five pre-conference tours and 21 conference tours are also available. Registration is $345 until March 31, 2003. For more information or to register online visit this website: http://www.hcs.osu.edu/mg/img/conference.html.


Deadline for submission of articles for the next issue is April 15th.

Visit the IL. Master Gardener website: http://www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg
The month of March signals the coming of changes. The weather is becoming warmer, more birds are returning to the area, and buds are seen on trees and bushes. Soon spring will be here. This year, March 18 is the night of the full moon and on March 19 spring begins (Spring Equinox, or Vernal Equinox). The Spring Equinox is the time when night and day are nearly the same length and the sun crosses the celestial equator moving northward. The vernal equinox marks the first day of the season of spring. During ancient times holidays and feasts celebrated the beginnings of new growth and time for planting. The people celebrated their survival of old man Winter and welcomed Spring into their lives. Religious groups associate three themes with the vernal equinox: conception and pregnancy leading to birth on the winter solstice; victory of a god of light (or life, rebirth, resurrection) over the powers of darkness (death); and the descent of the goddess or god into the underworld for a period of three days.

St. Patrick’s Day, Spring Equinox and Easter are the three most popular celebrations in March and April of this year. The name ‘Easter’ was taken from the name of a Teutonic lunar Goddess, Eostre. Her chief symbols were the bunny (fertility) and the egg (symbolic of the cosmic egg of creation). The holiday, the Eostara, was held on the Vernal Equinox Full Moon. The Christian church doesn’t celebrate full moons but put Easter a month later. Easter is always the first Sunday, after the first full moon in April, after the vernal equinox.

As gardeners, what does the month of March mean to us? If you check with the seasonal tips in the 2003 Master Gardener calendar we would read the following:

- Even if your garden soil is not dry enough for planting, peas are an exception. Just poke the peas in the ground. It’s properly called “mudding in.”
- Prune your bramble fruits and grapes now. Be sure to remove all dead and diseased wood.
- Start more seeds indoors. After seeds have sprouted, remove any covers to allow better ventilation and avoid damping-off.
- Plow and till the vegetable garden as soon as the soil is dry enough. Never work wet ground. You turn the soil into brick.
- Cut perennial ornamental grasses that have stood all winter to four to six inches before the new shoots emerge.
- Sharpen mower blades, hoes and spades. Sharp tools do a better job and do it easier. Coat the sharpened metal with a thin film of vegetable oil.
- Put wire mesh covers around the flowers and leaves of your emerging spring bulbs. This will protect against rabbits and if fastened down well, against deer.
- Clean up debris from your asparagus and rhubarb beds, before the plants emerge. Apply a light dressing of balanced fertilizer and compost around the plants.
- As soon as they begin to show new growth, put a top dressing of compost and balanced fertilizer on your perennial flowers.

Have fun on these special days in March. On St. Patrick’s Day, the 17th, wear green and eat cabbage and corn beef. On March 18, take a walk during the full moon, or if you have a labyrinth, take a moonlight walk to celebrate Spring, the vernal equinox. Enjoy being outdoors and observe the beginnings of life.
Spotlight on….

Madison-St. Clair Master Gardeners

The Madison-St. Clair Master Gardeners are presently very busy getting ready for the Weekend Gardener Expo. This is an annual event held at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville on the third weekend of March. Master Gardeners are responsible for creating a program of classes that include 31 speakers on various horticultural topics. They contact exhibitors and prepare hands-on horticultural activities for the children who attend the event, giving parents an opportunity to sit in on the classes. We have a very talented Master Gardener who provides beautiful artwork for the brochures. Master Gardeners creatively design and build live garden displays to greet visitors when they enter the convention center and then lead them “down the garden path” to the exhibits and classes.

At other times of the year Master Gardeners answer the call of Garden Clubs, Rotary and Optimist Clubs, and others to speak on a wide variety of horticultural subjects including composting, container gardening, insects, organic gardening, hostas, perennials, and vegetable gardening to name a few.

Madison-St. Clair Master Gardeners are responsible for two demonstration gardens. One is in Maryville and the other is near Millstadt. The Maryville garden is located in a park and is primarily ornamental. The Millstadt garden is located on a research farm and contains vegetables, berries, and ornamentals. Master Gardeners work on these throughout the whole year – planning in the winter, starting plants from seeds, and “digging in the dirt” all spring, summer, and fall.

This fall school children from the Godfrey area met at a community garden. Master Gardeners taught them about composting, cover crops, and helped them plant bulbs. Now this group of Master Gardeners is working with these children in their classrooms as horticulture mentors. They have provided the teachers with horticultural information and are going to visit the classrooms to do activities with the children. In the spring, the children will return to the gardens where the Master Gardeners will help them to plant their raised bed gardens and assist them in caring for these gardens throughout the summer.

Another area that keeps many of our Master Gardeners busy is our horticulture help line. From May through October we have Master Gardeners available every morning of the workweek in both of our offices. Due to the increased calls, we have now extended our help line to include one day a week in the winter months also.

A group of Master Gardeners has planned two garden tours – one in O’Fallon on May 31st and one in Edwardsville on June 14th. The Edwardsville Garden Tour also has a plant sale, which gives Master Gardeners an opportunity to divide some of their plants and share them with the public.

During the year the Master Gardeners work with 4-H’ers and other youth organizations presenting workshops on insects, container gardening, vermicology, herbs, topiary and soil. This past summer a group of Master Gardeners worked with a local Day Care on a weekly basis presenting a different horticultural program each week using activities from the Jr. Master Gardener manual.

We have a class of 22 Master Gardener trainees and one on-line trainee who have started their learning process. They are eager students and are anxious to start volunteering and putting their knowledge to work. They are also eager to join the Certified Master Gardeners and interns as well as alumni who work diligently to carry out all of these activities.

Master Gardeners of the Madison-St. Clair Unit have an opportunity to work in varied areas utilizing their many talents. Everyone can find at least one activity if not several that they really enjoy. They take pride in their communities and are always willing to help wherever needed.

Clara Joseph, MG Coordinator

Join us for Conference 2003

Don’t miss out—mark your calendar for Sept. 18-20 and attend this super event at the Lisle/Naperville Hilton. This year’s conference will feature trips to the Morton Arboretum and Cantigny Gardens. The keynote speaker will be Allan Armitage, Professor of Horticulture at the University of Georgia and author of Armitage’s Garden Perennials: A Color Encyclopedia and Armitage’s Manual of Annuals, Biennials, and Half-Hardy Perennials. Workshops on tree identification, plant pathology and grassy weed ID are also planned along with loads of class choices.
Junior Master Gardener℠ Program Update

To date, the Junior Master Gardener℠ program in Illinois has about 40 registered groups, involving almost 900 children. Every state in the country has at least one group participating in the program and the curriculum is being used in 10 foreign countries.

The national JMG office has established several new partnerships to help promote and finance the program. Here’s an update on some of the new developments:

**National Wildlife Federation** - The NWF and JMG formed a partnership about one year ago. *Wildlife Gardeners*, the newest JMG curriculum is scheduled for release late this year. In regards to the partnership, JMG is currently working with NWF on jointly approaching several national corporate sponsors to be involved in the launch and production of this new Golden Ray Series.

**Children’s Better Health Institute** - Through an established relationship with Dr. Kathryn Orvis, JMG – Indiana and the Children’s Better Health Institute (CBHI), the JMG program has been able to form a national alliance with CBHI. CBHI publishes 7 children's magazines, 8 times per year. Dr. Orvis has been featured as the gardening expert and through her support, JMG has been provided with a national media exposure opportunity reaching nearly 2 million children 8 times a year. Moreover, CBHI's parent company, also owns The Saturday Evening Post. As such, JMG has received additional coverage in this national magazine, reaching a target audience of parents and grandparents who have shown a high interest in the JMG program.

**Other Partnerships** - JMG has good standing relationships and partnerships with, of course, National 4-H, as well as the National Gardening Association. Specifically, with 4-H, the national leadership team is working to get all JMG curricula accredited under the 4-H After School Program. This certification will provide a great opportunity to help expand JMG through 4-H programs across the country.

**Minute Maid- “Growing Healthy Minds & Bodies”**

Last month, the national JMG office reached an agreement with the Minute Maid Corporation to provide the first national initiative. In this first initiative, the JMG Program is going to give away 5,000 Kids Garden Tool Sets along with a four-seed pack selection. The garden tools will consist of a shovel, hoe, and spade. High quality with wood handles, and metal implements, these tools will be branded with Minute Maid and Junior Master Gardener logos. The seeds, provided by the new association with the National Gardening Bureau, will consist of lettuce and bean seeds (did you know it was "the year of the bean!") and flower seeds, cosmos and sunflower. The seed packs will be custom designed with JMG artwork and branding. These kits will be free. The kids only have to send a hand drawn picture of a garden they would like to grow and $2.95 for S&H.

This giveaway will be promoted through CBHI magazines and a national television commercial. The national tool give away begins Feb 21 and ends May 15, or until supplies run out. These pictures also are automatically entered into the Minute Maid/JMG Child Garden Giveaway Contest, where one grand-prize winner will be selected by a celebrity gardener to win gardening supplies (approximate retail value $500), which can be used to grow their favorite garden. A new website, www.jmgkids.org/minutemaid provides contest details and also gives children an opportunity to take a gardening quiz.

The second component of the Minute Maid Sponsorship is a national grant program. 40 national JMG grants will be awarded to groups across the country to create outdoor gardening projects at school or community centers. These grants will include a complete set of JMG curriculum, plus a cash component as well as some additional materials. The grant program will begin with entries starting in July, with selection and awards to be made in September or October of this year.
European Trip 2003

Join fellow Master Gardeners and University of Illinois Horticulture students on this fun filled excursion to the Netherlands, Germany and France. The trip will tentatively depart on May 20 and last for about 11-12 days. Featured stops include Kuekenhauf, Aalsmeer Flower Auction, Bos Koop Nursery Crop Research Station and Museum, Het Loo Palace, the Gardens of Adpeltem and the Cologne Cathedral and Botanic Garden. The trip will conclude with a stop in the Champagne production region of France and then several days in Paris to view Versailles, Giverney and the Bagatelle Rose Garden. Contact Dave Williams, trip host, at 217-333-2126 for more information and trip costs.

Visit the Illinois Master Gardener website: http://www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg