

Illinois Master Gardener  
**IMAGINE**

INFORMATION ♦ NEWS ♦ EDUCATION



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## COORDINATORS COMMENTS

### **SEED OR PLANT SWAPS-THE NEWEST RAGE IN GARDENING- BUT ARE THEY ALWAYS SAFE?**

Seed swaps are one of the hottest things in gardening! These are events where gardeners meet to exchange seeds, cuttings, bulbs or even plants. They can be arranged online or by mail, especially when participants are spread out across the country. Swap meet events, where growers meet and exchange their excess seeds in person, are also growing in popularity. In part this is due to increased interest in vegetable gardening and heirloom plant varieties. Swapping seeds also helps preserve cultural significance for groups like Hispanic Americans and assists those who wish to cut costs and grow their own food. Some events are organized as part of an educational effort, where visitors are taught gardening and growing skills. Seed libraries run by University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners are found in Perry and Champaign Counties. Seed and plant swapping overall is an opportunity for preserving heirloom varieties, increasing biodiversity, promoting education and bringing gardeners together.

If you search the web you will find many organizations- from Yahoo, to Midwest Living to Martha Stewart to the Farmer's Almanac – all advocating seed exchanges and giving information on how to set one up. In the U.S., the last Saturday of January is “National Seed Swap Day.” Most Master Gardeners are aware of the work done by organizations such as Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa which promotes organically grown heirloom varieties and preservation of biodiversity.

However seed or plant swapping over the Internet has met with a few interesting challenges. As Master Gardeners it is important to understand where our plants and seeds are coming from and who is producing them. Plant and seed swaps can spread invasive pests or diseased plants. The Plant Clinic had two samples last year (one of Hosta and one of dahlia) where infected plants (carrying soilborne nematodes) were acquired either through a plant swap or were going to be distributed to a plant society.

Another problem comes when seeds or plant parts are marked as “craft supplies” and shipped from around the world, effectively bypassing plant inspections upon arrival to the U.S. I know at O’Hare airport for example the **AG inspectors confiscate and incinerate up to 8 tons of illegal entry goods a day.....** and that is only what they catch.

I recently became aware of an online community called SeedSwap on the Reddit community ([www.reddit.com/r/seed-swap](http://www.reddit.com/r/seed-swap)). On this forum Mulberry trees are a big favorite to send from the Midwest to Colorado and the west coast, and Autumn Olives from the east coast are being sent across the country to unsuspecting buyers. This may just be the “tip of the iceberg” as there may be other similar plant swaps spreading invasives that I am not aware of. As Master Gardeners, we need to be proactive in preventing the spread of invasives and we need to educate our clients, friends and neighbors as well. Please refer clients and others to the **National Plant Board** website at <http://nationalplantboard.org> before purchasing plants/seed from an internet swap. This website has links to every state and U.S. territory and would be a great resource for everyone to check before importing plant material from other states and foreign countries.

Monica David, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Coordinator

## FROM SEED TO SOUP

by Holly A. Chaille, WOW Garden Project Fort Wayne, Indiana

Between 2004 and 2010, the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana, became home to thousands of refugees from Burma. Many of the arrivals had spent more than 15 years in refugee camps prior to relocation in America. They had little experience to prepare them for the living skills needed in America's Midwest. It was in 2010 that I became the director of the Fresh Food Initiative, established to provide cultural and educational assistance to help these refugees become comfortable in their new Fort Wayne community.

The Burmese are an agrarian people, whose approach to growing food seems less worrisome and fussy than American gardeners. One priority was to empower participants to grow culturally appropriate, fresh produce for themselves, so we set about recruiting gardeners for this Fresh Food Initiative. They had brought seeds with them from Burma and didn't need much instruction beyond understanding local frost dates. Participants were eager to put down roots and share their cultural traditions with us. During the first two seasons, because the neighborhood in which we were working had strict rules that essentially prohibited growing food on the property, we employed a variety of approaches, from baby pool gardens to leased land.

By the third year, gardeners put more than three acres into production, and an additional 78 home gardens were installed, providing more than 400 clients and their families with access to fresh food. Though these were some of the worst agricultural years on the books, the gardeners' resourcefulness and patience fueled the project. Soon the gardens and gardeners were attracting attention from community members asking to volunteer, and from the media. The initiative literally created pathways for the community to connect and to engage in positive and meaningful experiences.

Federal funding was limited to three years. This motivated us to create The World on Wheels (WOW) Garden Project, not only as a fundraiser, but also as a vehicle for increasing community engagement. The WOW public art initiative consisted of 23 wheelbarrow gardens representing the many cultures of Fort Wayne. The wheelbarrows were planted with traditional food gardens, reflecting each culture. Over one summer more than 23,000 people enjoyed seeing them. The WOW Project raised \$40,000 while simultaneously educating viewers about the importance of culturally appropriate food access.

In the spring of 2013, I met a farmer who had purchased some land in an area of the city where poverty and crime were common and grocery stores were not. He fenced in the property, added a water line and began planting beans and watermelon. Soon the neighborhood kids became curious and wandered over to observe. The farm enjoyed several years of teaching youth how to grow food and sell it at a local farmers market. When I met this farmer, he was moving toward retirement and much of the farm sat idle. With funds we had raised we added 36 raised beds, a new storage shed, and made other improvements to the farm, now known as Slataper Street Farm. That year we worked with 12 Burmese families -- all living in the public housing complex directly across the street from the farm -- to set up a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business and held three events to recruit volunteers and customers. By season's end more than 200 people had come to the farm to grow or purchase produce.

We've since added bees, pollination gardens, and a children's educational garden called the Little Sprouts Garden. The Little Sprouts are pre-K kids who walk two blocks from their school with their teacher to our farm, where they plant seeds, pick apples, taste honey, and experience gardening from seed to soup. These school kids are all eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and most of them have never seen food grow in the ground or apples grow on trees. Many of these children have parents who grow food on our farm, and they delight in pointing out bulletin board pictures showing their folks at work in the garden.



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## THE GARDENS OF ENGLAND WITH THE HAMPTON COURT FLOWER SHOW

Join Illinois Master Gardener Coordinator Monica David on June 27 to July 8th, 2016 to explore some of England's most highly regarded gardens. We will visit public and private gardens as well as the world's largest flower show at Hampton Court. The non-garden activities include time to explore Stratford on Avon, birthplace of Shakespeare; the charming town of Oxford, home of Oxford University; the White Cliffs of Dover and Dover Castle; Windsor Castle and the town of Canterbury with its stunning cathedral.

The trip features world famous gardens, beginning with **Highgrove House**- the inspiring and innovative garden of Phillip Prince of Wales. **Barnsley House**, home of famed



English gardener Rosemary Verey is the next stop. In the Cotswolds region of England, we will spend a day visiting several unique private gardens. The group will also visit **Sudeley Castle and Gardens**, home of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn as well as **Hidcote Manor Garden**, an Arts and Crafts masterpiece by plantsman Major Lawrence Johnston. Next up in the Cotswolds is a visit to **Blenheim Palace**, a garden designed by Capability Brown for the Duke of Marlborough.

The group will continue on through the countryside with a stop at **Cliveden**, a garden for rose lovers designed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe. Later is a visit to **Hever Castle**, childhood home of Anne Boleyn and restored by William Waldorf Astor. In Kent and Sussex we will visit several outstanding gardens including **Great Dixter Gardens** which is a gorgeous garden by Christopher Lloyd. The second garden is the epitome of an English garden- **Sissinghurst**, and it contains almost every style of gardening that has interested British gardeners in the 20th century.

There are currently four spaces left on this trip. Trip cost is \$4299 and includes all hotels, private coach transportation, entrance to all gardens and activities on the tour; all breakfasts and some lunches and dinners. Airfare is additional. For a complete itinerary and to book your spot contact Robyn Gulstrom at 269-629-9248 or [rgulstrom@comcast.net](mailto:rgulstrom@comcast.net)

## NEW STEPS TO PROMOTE POLLINATOR HEALTH

In June of 2014, President Obama issued a presidential memorandum directing an interagency task force to create a *Strategy to Promote the Health of Honeybees and other Pollinators*. On May 19, 2015 the U.S. EPA and the USDA released its strategy.

The strategy has three overarching goals:

1. Reduce honey bee colony losses during winter (overwintering mortality) to no more than 15% within 10 years. Based on data from a national survey of beekeepers, the Task Force will develop baseline data and goal metrics for winter, summer and total annual colony loss.
2. Increase the Eastern population of monarch butterflies to 225 million butterflies occupying an area of approximately 15 acres in the overwintering grounds in Mexico, through domestic/international actions and public-private partnerships, by 2020.
3. Restore or enhance 7 million acres of land for pollinators over the next 45 year through Federal actions and public-private partnerships.

These actions will be supported by coordination of existing Federal research efforts and by a request to Congress for additional resources to respond to pollinator losses. Increasing the quantity and quality of habitat for pollinators is a major part of this effort - with actions ranging from building pollinator gardens at Federal buildings to the restoration of millions of acres of Federally managed lands, as well as private lands.

The President has asked for "all hands on deck" including engaging citizens and communities to form public-private partnerships. Increasing national awareness of the importance of pollinator conservation is addressed in agency plans for public outreach and education.

The Pollinator Health Task Force developed a *Partnership Research Action Plan* that guides state, local, industry and citizens groups to help tackle the problems facing pollinators. Also developed was a pollinator *Best Management Practices for Federal Lands*.

For more information go to: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/Pollinator%20Health%20Strategy%202015.pdf>



## PESTICIDE DRIFT AND MASTER GARDENERS

Last month's IMAGINE newsletter dealt with "passing the buck" and listed as the first one was "Possible Spray Drift." Definitely! Even pesticide specialists hate drift complaints, especially when we get out-of-focus images and/or frantic telephone calls. We'll try to garner all the facts, pose some questions and try to determine just what happened. But it's like asking a doctor to try to diagnose an illness over the telephone. The MDs inevitably say "Come into the office so we can make an accurate diagnosis."

And how many times have the doctors told you "Well, we're not sure, but take a couple of these pills and wait it out for a day or two, letting us know if it gets worse."? If you saw Applicator Patrick spray your neighbor's area and then watched it drift to your property, capturing everything on the cellphones video, grabbing some of the spray material on the plants and placing it in a plastic bag, recording the time and temperature and wind speed, you would have an almost air-tight case. Almost.

However, most drift complaints pop up several days later when the plant suddenly starts twisting into contorted forms or just dies. We may remember seeing or hearing Applicator Patrick sprayed. Or not.

Herbicide injury, technically called "Growth Regulator Injury", may seem easy to tell, but not always. It does vary from species to species, though curling and distortion of leaves, petioles and stems are the most common symptoms. Some foliage will turn brown to black along the edges, while others may turn brown to black between the veins. Leafhoppers can mimic herbicide injury on many plants including *Acer rubrum* (red maple) and *Cercis canadensis* (redbud). Fungal diseases can yield the same symptoms.

To compound the issue, some herbicide injury can occur miles from the original source through vapor drift, which can occur up to 48 hours after application. Applicator Patrick, next door, might get the blame, when it's actually Applicator Chris three miles away. And due to topography and wind, nothing between the injury and Applicator Chris' farm may appear injured. It should be noted that particle drift usually occurs at the time of application and is due to small spray droplets, a high boom height, and winds usually more than 10 miles per hours. All drift is the responsibility of the applicator.

Now, back to the initial paragraph. The minute a client suggests "I think it's chemical injury", "spray drift", "farmer or lawn care applicator misapplication" the alarm bells should go off. This is a potential legal issue! And that spells trouble. You are not classified as an expert, and making an opinion opens up you, the Master Gardener program, and the University of Illinois to litigation. And since this is beyond your training, the University won't protect you.

Even the UI Plant Clinic hedges bets, saying "well, it appears it could be..." There are several labs in the Midwest that will test for chemical residue, but in many cases this amounts to hundreds of dollars, and they need to know what to test for.

So, what do Master Gardeners do? Take a deep breath, pause, and...

1. Be sympathetic but distance yourself. You don't want to get involved in the middle of a legal action.
2. If you have a horticulture or local farms educator, or a Master Gardener coordinator in your office, refer the call to them. You can say "I'm sorry, this is out of my league. Let me get you someone more knowledgeable." You can send them to the UI Plant Clinic.
3. Encourage the client write down all the facts as they know them, including plants injured, suspected products, when the damage was noticed, etc. They will need it for the next step.
4. Have the client contact the IL Department of Agriculture at 217-785-2427 immediately. They are the official state agency for drift complaints. This is their domain per the IL Pesticide Act.

It is tough. We are trained to help people with their gardening problems. But sometimes, we need to remember we can't. Pesticide drift is one those areas we shouldn't touch with a 10-foot bean pole.

by David Robson, Extension Specialist, Pesticide Safety-Horticulture

## MT CUBA CENTER

Mt Cuba is an estate built by the Du Pont family and includes extensive grounds, a manor house and one of America's finest wildflower gardens. Today it is an internationally recognized garden as well as a leader in education, research and plant introduction. Any visit to the Piedmont region of Pennsylvania (and near Wilmington, Delaware) is incomplete without a visit to the Mt. Cuba Center. This is one of my favorite gardens in the eastern U.S.!

**HISTORY:** In the 1930s this property was a barren cornfield. In 1935 Lamot Du Pont Copeland and his bride Pamela Cunningham Copeland bought the property and built a stately colonial revival manor house. Both Mr. and Mrs. Copeland were knowledgeable gardeners. First they engaged Thomas W. Sears, a well-known Philadelphia landscape architect to plan formal gardens around the house and later in the 1950s they relied upon noted designer Marian C Coffin to expand their efforts. In the 1960s, Seth Kelsey, a Harvard trained landscape architect focused the gardens on Delaware's flora. Dr. Richard W. Lighty was hired as the first director of Horticulture in 1983 and he expanded the collections to include native plants of the entire Piedmont region. After Mr. Copeland's death in 1983, Mrs. Copeland continued to improve Mt. Cuba with the help of Rick Lewandowski, former director of the Morris Arboretum. Today this lovely estate and science center is a private charitable foundation.

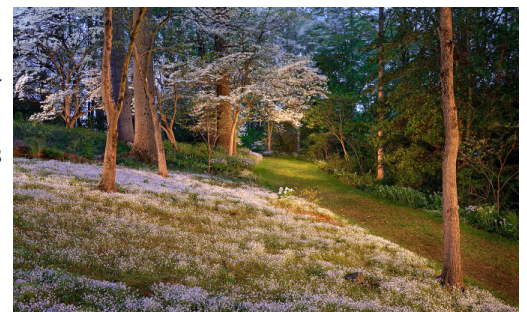


**GARDENS:** This estate features numerous lovely garden spaces. Designed in 1936 by Thomas Sears of Philadelphia, the **Lilac Garden** features twenty-five cultivars of French hybrid lilacs, at their colorful and fragrant peak in early May. The spring **Trillium Garden** is amazing with thousands of rare and common spring flowering native trilliums, most raised from seed in the research greenhouses. A profusion of companion wildflowers intermingle with the trilliums to enhance the setting and inspire gardeners to appreciate their diversity, beauty, and value as garden plants. The **Dogwood Path** and woods path feature dogwoods and tulip poplars with carpets of wildflowers below. More formal gardens include the **Trial Garden**, the **Round Garden** with its pool and seasonal floral display as well as the **South Terrace Gardens** near the mansion.

**RESEARCH:** Mt Cuba conducts research in four main areas: Native Plant Evaluations and Introductions through the Trial Garden; Propagation of Native Plant Species; Stewardship of Natural Lands and Ecological Research. The Center has a rich horticultural tradition of finding, selecting, and evaluating the finest Piedmont native plants based on their environmental adaptability and ornamental attributes. Recent evaluations of *Baptisia*, *Monarda*, *Coreopsis* and *Heuchera* may be found on the Mt. Cuba website.

The well-known Purple Dome New England aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'Purple Dome') and Golden Fleece autumn goldenrod (*Solidago spachelata* 'Golden Fleece') are but two of the many cultivars of native plant species introduced by Mt. Cuba Center.

In 1996, Mt. Cuba Center became one of the first public gardens in America to be recognized by the North American Plant Collections Consortium (NAPCC) for excellence in collections management with the approval of eastern North American wild gingers (*Hexastylis*). In 2001, Mt. Cuba Center was again recognized for significant plant expertise by receiving NAPCC member status as an official holder for the genus Trillium. For more than two decades, the Mt. Cuba Center staff has propagated, developed and cultivated trilliums, becoming the foremost institutional authority in North America on this group of plants. At present, the collection includes 74 taxa represented by more than 571 accessions.



## EDUCATION:

Mt. Cuba offers educational classes, certificate programs and internships. It has also hosted the 2011 Native Orchid Conference and the 2008 Trillium Symposium. For more information visit the website at <http://www.mtcubacenter.org>

## GROWING FOOD IN ALASKA-RAIS GARDEN

by Corey Allen-Young, Catholic Social Services

There's no garden like an Alaskan garden – at least, according to the farmers of the Fresh International Gardens Project, who know a thing or two about producing crops. For many of the refugees who participate, the project has allowed them to re-connect with their agricultural roots. Since 2007, the garden project has included varied refugee groups, including Hmong, Tongan, Somali, Congolese, and Bhutanese refugees, many of whom come from agricultural societies. However, even with their wealth of experience, growing produce in what is arguably the northernmost international community garden in the world has some challenges.

Imagine yourself with your hands in the dirt in a plot within the 8000 square feet of the Fresh International Gardens on a sunny may day in Alaska. Blue skies and warm temperatures (HOW WARM?) surround six Bhutanese refugees who are all smiles, while prepping for the season's first crop. Working Anchorage's biggest farm isn't easy for the gardeners, who have to adjust old habits and techniques in order to succeed in their new home. Bhutanese refugee Phul Niroula learned that quickly. Niroula, who resettled to Alaska with her family as part of Catholic Social Services' Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services program (RAIS), says these new garden plots are a lot smaller than the ones her family farmed. She also notes that traditionally, back in their home country, animals like oxen are used to plow the fields; here they often use a mechanized plow. According to Niroula, in Alaska, there are difficulties in growing certain vegetables, just like the size of the state of Alaska, others — like cabbage, spinach, and carrots — grow really, really big.

Created through a USDA risk management grant to give refugees an opportunity to learn how to grow produce in Alaska, the Fresh International Gardens Project also gives gardeners a chance to practice speaking English and to connect with the larger Anchorage community. Julie Riley, with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, runs the project and says that many of the gardeners are elderly and face isolation in their new country. Getting them out of the house to work in the garden and to sell produce twice a week at the local farmers markets has proven to have a positive impact. The impact is also felt on the environment. Since all of the produce grown in the Fresh International Gardens is sold and consumed in Anchorage and Alaska, Riley says that fewer products have to be shipped, trucked, or flown in from other places in the U.S. or around the world. In fact, the Fresh International Gardens is the largest source of local produce in the city.

The gardeners of the Fresh International Gardens are working towards their own piece of the American Dream by learning small business skills. Through classroom instruction (on issues of marketing, pricing, packaging) and hands-on learning in the garden, the group is able to harvest and sell more crops each year, for a total of 31 different vegetables, four flowers, and three herbs. In the summer of 2014, 4,230 pounds of potatoes, radishes, beets, and the Fresh International Gardens Salad Mix (lettuces, mizuna, arugula, spinach, dill, nasturtium lowers, and chickweed) were grown and sold for \$10,270.

Currently the group's main gardeners are Bhutanese and Congolese. Despite language barriers and some difficulties with crops, there is no denying their enthusiasm. With the successful introduction of so many new crops, the gardeners have also incorporated new food into their diets.





## NEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS NEEDED FROM NW AND SOUTHERN REGIONS

The State Master Gardener advisory committee is looking for a Master Gardener volunteer from the NW part of the state (Units 1, 2, 4, 7, 8 only) and another from the Southern part of the state (Units 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 only) to serve on the committee. The term on the committee is for three years and the committee meets 4 times per year. The term of office begins in January 2016 and runs through December 2018. Meetings are usually held in February, May, September (at the state conference) and November. Committee members may attend the meetings in person or by telenet. Mileage to the meetings is reimbursed by the state Master Gardener office.

The state committee is made up of staff and Master Gardeners from across the state. The committee serves as advisory counsel to the Master Gardener State Coordinator. They encourage equitable distribution of state Master Gardener resources; recommend standards for core course training; increase awareness of University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener programs; support the annual conference and recommend policies and procedures for the program.

If you would be interested in applying for this opening (you must live in Units 1, 2, 4, 7, 8 or 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 only), talk to your local coordinator. There is an application form on the website at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mg/> (on the MG Resources page). Please fill out your application and take it to your local coordinator for their approval. A supporting letter from your County Director, Master Gardener Coordinator or Educator must accompany your application.

**Applications are due to the State Office by  
November 6.**

## INTERNATIONAL MG CONFERENCES ~ PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE

The 2017 International Master Gardener Conference, with the theme 'Follow the Oregon Trail to Great Gardening', will mark the 30th year and the 15th biennial gathering of this remarkable event. This event will be held in Portland, Oregon which is a true garden mecca in the U.S. and a great place to visit! Mark your calendars!

For you history buffs here is information about the current and past IMG conferences:

- 2015:** *Horticultural Horizons in the Heartland*,  
September 22-25 in Council Bluffs, Iowa
- 2013:** *Flowers, Fjords & Friends*,  
September, an Alaskan cruise from Seattle
- 2011:** *Color it Green in a Wild and Wonderful Way*,  
October, in Charleston, West Virginia
- 2009:** *New Frontiers in Horticulture and Gardening*,  
March, in Las Vegas, Nevada
- 2007:** *Celebrate Gardening in the Natural State*,  
May 2-5, in Little Rock, Arkansas
- 2005:** *100 Years of Gardening on the Canadian Prairies*,  
June 24-27 in Saskatoon, Canada.
- 2003:** *Celebrate Gardening in the Ohio River Valley*,  
June 18-21 in Cincinnati, OH/N. Kentucky
- 2001:** *The Magic of Gardening*,  
May 29-June 1 at Walt Disney World® Resort  
in Orlando, Florida
- 1999:** *World of Gardening*,  
August 19-22 in San Antonio, Texas
- 1997:** July 15-19 in Sacramento, California
- 1995:** *Gardening Under the Northern Lights*,  
July 22-26 in Saskatoon, Canada
- 1993:** *Gardening for a Better World*,  
August 12-15 in San Antonio, Texas
- 1991:** *Gardening Tools of Another Kind*,  
September 24-27 in Detroit, Michigan
- 1989:** *An On-Growing Experience*,  
October 11-14 in Portland, Oregon
- 1987:** *Capitol Gardening*,  
October 7-10 in Washington DC



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