



The Garden Gate Newsletter

August – September, 2004

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Special Event for the Autumn Mark Your Calendar Now

Henrico Extension Extravaganza

Wednesday October 6, 11am-2pm

Thursday October 7, 4:30-7pm

Friday October 8, 11am-2pm

Master Gardeners are needed as volunteers for gardening questions as well as general help with this event which is designed to showcase many aspects of Extension. This event coincides with National 4H week and any proceeds will be donated to the Henrico Christmas Mother fund. Contact Stephanie Feaser or the Extension Office to volunteer.

HMGA Meeting News

Thank you to Pat Greene and Alice Preston for their Hypertufa presentation and demonstration at the July meeting. In August Greg Constantino from Wilson will speak about new products, changes in pesticides and insecticides and in September, Steve Kapowski will talk about Landscape Architecture.

A Special Welcome to Sandra Moe

Get to know the new member of the Extension office. (See next page for the article.)

Send in your dues now if you have not done so already.

Getting To Know... Mary Vetrovec



Mary became a master gardener in 2003. She is the new Vice-President of our association for 2004. She is a farm girl from Louisa County who was involved in 4-H programs before heading off to JMU (when it was Madison College.) She majored in Home Economics and taught high school, preschool and has worked as a caterer.

Mary says her favorite flower is the zinnia and her favorite shrub is the viburnum and she likes maple trees with fall color. She enjoys digging and says she likes WEEDING the most!! She has a shady yard but also drives nine miles into Chesterfield to grow flowers for cutting and sharing. Last year, Mary grew the flowers for her son's wedding.

She enjoys reading and all types of volunteer work. She teaches water aerobics at Riverside Fitness Center. Mary just returned from a mission trip to Guatemala. Mary's husband George is the Chairman of Cardiology at VCU Medical Center. They have a grown son and a daughter and two grandchildren. Their oldest granddaughter is passionate about flowers which really warms the heart of her "Meme."☀

...and Getting to Know Sandra Moe

Sandra Moe has lived in Richmond since 1983 and is the new face behind the front desk at the Extension office. Sandra has lived in many interesting places while her father was in the Army. She was born in Germany and learned to ski there while she was a child. She loves the symphony, musicals, movies, plays, Chicago!, family get-togethers, socializing with friends, reading, and of course, downhill skiing! Sandra has a nephew Joseph that is nearly one year old whom she sees every weekend.

Sandra previously worked for REACH Employee Assistance. REACH is a mental health counseling firm that contracts with companies to provide mental health counseling to their employees and/or family members. Her job there was to meet and greet, schedule 12 counselors in 6 offices with clients and basically run the office.

Sandra says she is already learning so much in the Extension office: "I'm picking up nice tidbits of information regarding insects & caterpillars, trees with fungus, dying plants, etc." Sandra also says she is looking forward to being here for a long time to come. ☀



Cucumber Salad

Pare and slice 4 or 5 cucumbers.
Sprinkle them with a little salt,
cover and chill.

Combine:

- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tsp prepared horseradish

- dash of paprika
- 2 tsp cider vinegar
- ½ tsp sugar
- dash of pepper
- garlic powder to taste

Add enough water (by the teaspoon)
to the consistency you like. Just
before serving, drain the cucumbers
and fold in the sauce.

By Peggy Lowry

A Little Bit about Dandelions

By Peggy Lowry

The dandelion is probably the world's most familiar weed and is also probably one of the most beneficial and healthful herbs. In fact, it is one of the most widely used herbal medicines world wide. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered." Although it is not native to the Western Hemisphere, the dandelion is now found around the world. It is thought that the plant originated in Asia Minor, and it now flourishes from sea level to up to 10,500 feet. It belongs to the same family as the daisy, sunflower, calendula, lettuce and endive.

In the ancient world, the Greeks and Romans used the dandelion in salads and stew pots, and the Chinese (who call it earth nail) have used it for food and medicine since antiquity. Most old world countries used the dandelion for almost anything that ailed you from abscesses to ulcers. The Normans called it "dent de lion" or tooth of the lion, referring to the serrated leaves. "Dandelion" is the Saxton corruption of the word. The Celts used young leaves in salads from plants not yet in bloom, and they fermented the flowers to make wine. Dandelion wine is still a popular country wine in Great Britain today.

It is thought that the Vikings brought the dandelion to North America, but European settlers brought dandelion seeds on purpose to be planted in family gardens in the new world. Dandelions were used as a dosing herb, a tonic, a vegetable and as wine. When forests were cleared for more settlements, the dandelion escaped the gardens and traveled west across the prairies where it preceded the pioneers on their westward travels. The Apaches welcomed this "gift from the sun" and henceforth used it in their spring feasts and celebrations.

During the War Between the States, both sides used the dandelion as a medicinal herb. The roots were also dried, roasted and ground to be used as coffee in the south, cut off by blockades. People were encouraged to consider the plant's high food value since it grew everywhere waiting to be harvested.

When the British were cut off from their European and far eastern herb sources during both world wars, the dandelion once again was used as a tonic, a laxative, in stews and salads and the roots as coffee. Throughout both wars starving Europeans depended on this plant for substance; and in Russia, the latex from the whole plant was converted into commercial rubber.

In today's world, the dandelion is considered by most people to be a weed that steals water and nutrients from the lawn. But an Ohio farmer once remarked that its long root helped to aerate the ground for shorter grass roots, and that putting dandelions in the compost adds beneficial elements brought up by those roots. Dandelions have also been accused of distracting bees. Actually, as an early bloomer, it offers pollen when other sources are scarce. Over 80 different insects are nourished by the dandelion including wasps, butterflies and bees, and the seeds are welcomed by birds. Plant scientists mass planted dandelions in several orchards and found that the ethylene gas coming from the blooms at sunset caused the fruit to ripen earlier than usual. Dandelions are grown on a commercial scale in Arizona, California, Florida, Texas and New Jersey, and the sale of fresh dandelion greens amounts to about three million dollars per year. Small wonder – these greens are rich in beta carotene, calcium, iron, vitamins A, C, B1 and B2. The value of dandelions is promoted in many herbal books that include recipes for dyes, tonics and teas as well as foods.☀

"Star-kissed Dandelion,
just as we see them,
Lying in the grass, like
Sparks that have leapt
From kindling suns of fire."
-- Oliver Wendell Holmes

Fragrance Detective

By Debbie Wilson

Since the middle of May, fragrance gardening has been running around my head. It began with a visit from my sister and her dachshund. They were spending the night with us and Lily, the dachshund, led my sister outside early in the morning. Around six in the morning, they found themselves on our patio for a brief stay and later asked about the fragrance in the air at that early morning hour. This particular scent could be described as a sweet, almost lily-like fragrance. I found myself wondering too. What was that delightful fragrance?

A more meaningful question might be what is scent and how is it produced? Flowering plants are wonderful chemical factories with great versatility. They not only synthesize food for themselves and the animal kingdom, they produce other compounds too. For example plants produce odors, some of which attract pollinators, some repel predators. An unpleasant tasting substance (bitter) can prevent overgrazing. Plants have evolved into co-relationships between the animal world and the plant world. “Interdependence” is the key to biologic success. (fragrant plant – visiting dachshund) To think I had a plant to thank for the visiting dog going outside that morning.

The odors of flowering plants are usually associated with sexual reproduction. Along with color and flower shape, the fragrances in our gardens are there to attract pollinators. Odor production is costly to plants. These chemical reactions require starch consumption and increase the respiration rate. Floral scents are volatile, organic compounds and most are “essential oils”. Chemically they are classed as terpenes. Economical and well-timed, scent production is keyed to the availability of their pollinators. Blooms catering to night-flying animals can be smelled only at night, etc. Early morning pollinators..., now this could a clue to my patio fragrance.

Fragrance is produced by special parts of the petal, which bear secreting glands. Generally, scent production ceases after pollination.

Fortunate for us, odors attractive to most pollinators are also attractive to us. Now to find what was blooming in my patio garden, attracting early morning pollinators in middle May.

Fragrance gardening success involves placement. Scented plants placed by doors or walkways ensure that one will enjoy the fragrances of their labor. One can take advantage of existing conditions or create favorable conditions. A windy site might blow away the fragrance before it can be enjoyed. Providing a sheltered site can help to resolve this problem. Scents are often enhanced by the warm, still air created in protected sites. At the same time, a gentle breeze can direct scent to you. A gentle slope with a gathering of trees that will move fragrance towards your garden can magnify the quality of those plants. So did my new retaining wall protect a fragrance producing plant and enhance the early morning air or did this flowering smell come from a neighbor’s yard in an early morning breeze

Searching on, two approaches to locating flowering plants can be described as fragrance mixing and separating. Mixing fragrance-bearing plants can be overwhelming and hard to distinguish. By setting the plants apart, the enjoyment of the scents can be isolated. The choice is personal. Everyone has their own preference. Smell and taste are closely related so it would be wise to be careful with odors in a setting used for dining.

Scattered throughout the plant kingdom, there are a wide range of perfumes and aromas. Flower fragrances have been classified into ten groups, three of which are animal scented and will not be mentioned. Note: Each has its own pollinator.

1. Rose group including the rose family, peonies, *Iris hoogiiana* (a gray-blue iris) which flowers in late spring.
2. Violet group, which owes its fragrance to a ketone called “ionon” in violet flowers and “irone” in violet-scented roots.
3. Aromatic group: This group contains many scented flowers whose perfume has a spicy tang, but not entirely sweet. Examples include

Mexican orange blossom, *Laburnum x wateriri* 'Vossii', and sweetpea.

4. Lemon group, a sharp, refreshing aroma of lemon is mostly found in leaves, but in some flowers; verbena, *Magnolia x soulangeana*, the evening primrose, and a climbing rose from China called *Rosa bracteata*.

5. Heavy group as the name implies contains flowers, which are exceptionally strongly scented like *Lilium candidum*, lilac, philadelphus, jonquils and *Hemerocallis lutea* (the golden daylily). Honeysuckle and lily-of-the-valley form part of this group.

6. Fruit-scented group: The fragrances in this group are considerably varied including pineapple (*Cytisus battandieri*), plums *Muscari racemosum*, grape hyacinth), apricot (*Iris graminea*), and many roses that include fruity overtones.

7. Honey Group: The scent of these flowers is light and delicate, definitely present, and with a sweeter overtone. Buddleia, also called butterfly bush, is a leading example of this group.

My research had brought me to the frustrating conclusion that I may never know what was blooming back in May, filling my side yard with such an interesting fragrance, one that I had not noticed before,...but one that I would no doubt enjoy again next year. Was it a single source or a combination? Did the source grow in my yard or in neighbor's yard? Maybe the mystery is not such a bad thing.

From my reading - some recommendations for favorite fragrant plants:

Old-fashioned Roses: Page Dickey, writing for the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Record, notes the albas are her favorites. "They make lovely graceful bushes (five or six feet in height, four or five feet wide) with arching branches of fresh blue-green foliage. Like most of the old roses, they have only one stretch of flowering, but with good shape and leave, they stay a pleasing background all summer." Blossoms are pink to white.

Mexican orange, *Choisya ternate*, is mentioned by Jerry Sedenko a horticulturist and garden designer from Seattle. A mid-spring

bloomer, Mexican orange offers bright glossy evergreen leaves composed of three leaflets, which look great all year long. The masses of white flowers make a very clean appearance and have a delicate citrus fragrance. *Syringa vulgaris*, the undisputed queen of spring-flowering shrubs, is commonly called lilac. The down side of this plant is that once the blooming is complete, there is little to recommend it.

Lorraine Kiefer, a garden writer from New Jersey, suggests *Daphne odora*, a shrub with fragrant pink flowers as an indoor plant for a cool window. Anyone, who has walked through a garden in late February or early March and enjoyed Daphne, would want to have one too. Daphne are temperamental and don't like to be moved once established. Because of these traits, they are considered a little difficult, but well worth the effort when blooms fill the whole garden (or house) with a heavenly scent.

In the forward of her book Fragrant Flowers, Georgeanne Brennan writes of "burying my face in sweet peas freshly cut...nostrils filling with flowers' clean spicy fragrance" bringing back memories of May time in her grandmother's backyard. The scents of our childhood can trigger emotion and memories.

Gardenias filled my childhood summers. Growing up in Virginia Beach, gardenias enjoyed a more suitable climate. Two varieties recommended for the Central Virginia area are Chuck Hayes and Kleim's Hardy. My Chuck Hayes survived the winter only to be attacked in March by our adorable yellow Lab. Two Kleim's Hardy gardenias are now protected from the dog and growing well.

Suggested reading:

Fragrant Flowers: simple secrets for glorious gardens- indoors and out by Georgeanne Brennan, 635.968 B

Brooklyn Botanic Garden Record, *Gardening for Fragrance*, Handbook #121, Fall, 1989, 635.968G

Gardening for Fragrance by Ann Bonar, available at the public library call no. 635.968 B

Henrico Master Gardeners Association

P.O. Box 27032

Richmond, VA 23273-7032

The Henrico Master Gardeners Association, and all VCE programs, services, activities, and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age national origin, handicap, or political affiliation. VCE is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Master Gardener Reminders

Board Meetings

August 4, 1:30 p.m.

September 1, 1:30 p.m.

Association Meetings

August 11, 1:30 p.m.

September 8, 1:30 p.m.

Please e-mail your contribution to the newsletter

By **September 20** to

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