

Quail's Tales

Hill and Dale Newsletter

March 2006

Presidential Preface

With the Home and Garden Show at Ford Field just days away, **Peggy, Sandy** and I are looking forward to being there and helping hostess the *Come Fly with Me* standard flower show. Hope there will be a lot of entries from Hill and Dale Garden Club members.

The District Spring Meeting is April 18 at Crystal Gardens in Southgate. Please sign up at the March 9 meeting so that **Carol Smith** can send our reservations as a group. I may have a firm price by the meeting. The fee in the past has been \$20.

Still looking for someone to help set up our display for the Festival of the Arts in April. If you can help out, let me know at the March meeting or call me.

Be sure to check out the Ways and Means table. **Nancy** and **Marge** have some spring and Easter items, and the prices are great!

Our members sure love to travel. **Jean Moran** was in India and shared photos of her trip at the February meeting, along with her presentation on design. **Flo Holzknecht** was in Australia in January. **Mar Sclawy** is going to Peru in May. Happy traveling, but please be back for our Spring Plant Sale on May 20.

March 9 meeting

Beth Liskiewicz, one of the owners of Steinkopf Nursery, knows more about *Shrubs* than anyone else we could think of. With members asking those difficult landscaping questions, we have the right person to answer them—and provide us with tons of information on what shrubs work well in various situations. Presentation starts at 7. Bring your questions and thoughts.

Hostesses

Ruth Trombley, Shirley Perkins and **Lu Eaton** are on tap to cater to March meeting.

Garden Therapy

- March project: From the Sea has already been bagged because classroom visits are set for the week of March 6-10
- April project: Birds in the Spring will be bagged at Mar Sclawy's house the week of April 3-7. Committee includes Linda Talacki, Kathleen Postema, David and Jan Henry. Mar will be checking with committee members for a convenient evening at the March meeting. Classroom visits will be the week of April 10-14.

Spring sale on deck (almost)

The club is thinking spring already!! Our Perennial and Flower Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 20, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please tell your family and friends about the sale. Start thinking about your perennials you would like to divide and donate. Order forms for the annuals will be included in the April and May newsletters and also available on line. Deadline for orders is Friday, May 12.

Sign up sheet for helpers will be circulating at the April and May meetings. Help is needed to work the perennial table on Saturday. There will

--Angela Paul

be two shifts: 8-11:30 and 11:30 to 2:30.
Happy Spring.

--Stacy Buatti
248.426.9037



Junior Gardeners

Get ready for Easter. Junior Gardeners will be creating bag bunnies at the Farmington Hills Library on April 8 at 10 am.

Coming up

March 10-12—District 1's Flower Show, *Come Fly with Me*, reigns at Ford Field.

March through August—SOCWA and SOCRRA have scheduled a Master Composter Training Program. It's already underway, but there's still time to complete the six classes required. In addition to classes, students must build a working compost pile, complete written assignments and a take-home exam and complete 10 hours of community service. Registration is \$30. Classes meet from 6:45 to 8:30 pm at the Birmingham Department of Public Service, 851 Eton (east of Adams, south

of Maple) in Birmingham. Call Karen Bever at 248.288.5150 or email Lillian Dean at LFDean@aol.com.

March 20—The Village Gardeners of Lathrup Village host **Janet Macunovich**, founder of the Michigan School of Gardening and Practical Gardening Institute. Well known and well regarded for her knowledge and enthusiasm for practical gardening, Janet will discuss how to achieve "8 Months of Color" in your garden. Meeting starts at 6:30 in the community room of the Lathrup Village Municipal Building, 27400 Southfield Road (three blocks north of I-696). A very reasonable \$3 contribution is expected. Call Susan Arneson, 248.443.1703 evenings/w eekends, 313.442.8460 days, for more information

March 31—Goldner Walsh Nursery concludes its Cabin Fever Lecture Series with An Evening with Tony Avent. He'll tell you "The Top 100 Perennials I Wouldn't Garden Without," starting at 7 pm at the nursery, 559 Orchard Lake Road, Pontiac. His choices will be geared toward Zone 5 gardens and plants that flourish in shade. Charge is \$29.50 per person, but there is a package discount. Call 248.332.6430 for details and to register for the event.

April 29—Telly's has a workshop on container gardening, starting at 1 pm. It's a Trowel and Error event as well.

Anytime you're in the mood—The Horticulture Gardening Institute at Michigan State is offering an intriguing choice of online gardening courses, each priced at \$70. While waiting for spring to prove it's here, check out the MSU website at <http://shop.msu.edu>, and then look for the Gardening Online Courses.

Trowel and error

We're open to suggestions for a field trip in March. We have two planned for April: See Coming Up for Telly's date. The trip to Wild Type Nursery in Mason is still in the planning stage.



Horticulture

BEGONIAS

This wonderful plant is found through the tropics and subtropics. It is a group of around 900 species of perennials, shrubs and climbers. Leaves vary in color, texture, and shape but are often lobed and finely hairy. They flower also, but some are much larger and showier than others.

Most people probably do not realize how many different kinds there are. They fall into 8 different groups.

1. Cane-like group--This group has tall upright stems, with leaves that are usually wing-like. They have small red, pink, or salmon flowers.
2. Rex group-- This group has large, exquisitely colored and marked leaves, with clusters of small pink flowers.
3. Rhizomatous group--This group grows from spreading or upright rhizomes. They have mostly pink flowers.
4. Semperflorens group-- These are the bedding flowers we all use so abundantly.
5. Shrub-like group--Bushy plants with pink or cream flowers.
6. Thick-stemmed group--Strong fleshy-stemmed plants, often quite tall. Their leaves are usually more than 6" long with flowers that are usually white or pink.
- 7.-- Trailing or scandent group--These are low, spreading plants, usually grown in hanging baskets, but sometimes climbing. Sprays of small flowers are white, pink, or red and often scented.
- 8.--Tuberous group-- These plants grow from large, flat tubers, having succulent stems with large, hairy leaves. They have rose-like, beautiful flowers.

As you can see, this is a large, varied, group of plants. Begonias are relatively easy to grow inside. I treat mine as I do African Violets. They love an east window and like to be moist, but never wet or standing in water. They also do not like to be chilled. They can rot easily, as violets. I do grow a lot of them in my greenhouse, but they are set in the shadiest areas. They would certainly burn if placed in hot, direct sunlight.

The varieties I do have include *Begonia ricinifolia*, a very large begonia with leaves 6"-8" across; *Begonia erythrophylla*, the "Beefsteak begonia"; *Begonia 'Surfing'*, *Begonia 'Bunchii'*,

Begonia 'Metallica'; Begonia 'Chocolate Chip', Begonia 'Ina May', and Begonia 'Tiger'.

I bought these plants at Goldner Walsh Nursery, Telly's, Graye's Greenhouse, and Bogie Lake Greenhouse. All of these places have a large selection. Begonias are also very easy to propagate using leaf cuttings or entire leaves. Martha Stewart Living Magazine has a great article this month about begonias. Also check out the American Begonia Society website for more in-depth articles about begonias and wonderful pictures also.

Don't be afraid to try these beautiful plants in your home. They really are a rewarding plant.

Lisa

For more pictures and info try:
<http://www.kartuz.com>



Critter spotting

The garden is a mess. This silly winter with its freezing and thawing, followed by more freezing without any snow cover has made a hellacious ruin of all those charming plumes and seed pods that were supposed to be "winter

interest" and keep us hopeful until spring.

They don't interest me any more. They certainly don't interest the very critters that were supposed to feast on them through the dreary winter months. The bellamcandas look as if a herd of buffalo strayed through the front yard, choosing to smash every flower stalk in sight. All those lovely blackberry-lily seed pods lie in the mud. I can't even find the black-eyed susans, whose thistle-like seeds drew finches by the bushel last year.

It's that ugly part of winter—when I'm thinking that the hellebores will not bloom and the acanthus will prove that they're truly not hardy in zone 5. Still....

Something out there in the trees has returned from elsewhere. There was a fine warble in the air this week. Not a sparrow chitter or the chickadee chuckle. A lovely warble that comes from the throat of a bird that I know. Only it's been so long since I've heard it that I don't recognize it yet.

At least it's audible. Can someone really identify a bird by its song reproduced in the bird books as a series of one syllable non-words? I would suggest that a musical scale would prove more useful. Except for the one bird song that was identified as "the sound of two pebbles clicked together." I've heard it, but now I can't recall what bird makes it.

The new singer in the neighborhood hasn't been compelled to attend the bird feeder while I'm around though I have loaded it up with Elite bird food. The local garden store sells several levels of seed, and this time I went for the best. Well, at least the most expensive. There is not a single seed identified on the bag. What makes bird seed "Elite"?

The bag won't divulge any secrets. The seeds themselves are a more diverse crowd than the cheap millet-rich bags that I buy when I'm

feeling particularly frugal. I'm tired of seeing mainly sparrows chow ing dow n even though their frantic chirps do liven up the grey days.

Elite seeds are a mystery blend. Despite my hopes to attract a classier bird clientele w ith this upscale offering, as spring approaches the same horde of sparrows and occasional others keep show ing up.

Well, then there's the chipmunk. It appeared Saturday. From w here, I'm not sure. I'm hoping not from the former dow nspout drain that w e have plugged with everything we can think of. Dryer lint laced w ith ammonia (there has GOT to be some use for that stuff) was totally ineffective. So w as the rock that didn't fit as snugly as a bank safe door. But here's that little chipper, looking perky and dashing back and forth w ith the sparrows as if their only difference is wings.

But, no seasonal birds or unusual ones to justify the big investment in Elite seed. Still, there is that w arble. Something's out there. And it's bound to get hungry. The freshly stocked feeder awaits. --
Mar Sclaw y

This 'n' That

Not only w as **Flo Holzkecht** in Australia (see Angela's Preface) but she turned right around and headed for a ski trip to Utah, follow ed by some time in the sun--in Florida. Nonetheless she kept up w ith club activities because she gets *Quail's Tails* by email. If you're traveling, or just w ant to get the new sletter as soon as possible, sign up for **email delivery** with **Sally Ouellette**. She's tired of licking stamps.

Another reason to tie into the internet. Kathy O'Brien, a master gardener in Northville, is building a website: GardensGalore.org. She plans to have a gardening events page, a

page each for shade and sun perennials, a "how -to-class" page, a page of tips and a bulletin board to exchange ideas and solutions for garden problems. You can contact her at Kathy@GardensGalore.org.

We're looking at updating the club by-laws. If you have suggestions, contact **Katie Wemyss, Gretchen Pugsley, Angela Paul** or **Mar Sclaw y**.

