



Quail's Tales

www.HillandDalegc.org

Hill and Dale is a member of Michigan Garden Clubs and National Garden Clubs

August 2009

President's preface

Before I do my Sally Says thing I want to thank those people that worked on our Installation and anniversary party. Gretchen and Lisa have to be commended for their speeches (touching yet concise). Carol, Flo, Katie and Nancy worked hard to make sure we recognized what was important. Dave put together a wonderful show. It was so good to see the past presidents. All in all it was the best.

Now here is the lecture: Sally says rededicating ourselves to reducing and recycling by using the energy saving fluorescent light bulbs is good but how many are aware that they contain mercury and should be handled carefully and not simply thrown in the trash when they do burn out. I would suggest that LED lights are better.

In the near future we will be discussing some of our club concerns (membership and fundraising) so if you have some input we are ready to listen. —Sally Ouellette

August 13 meeting

Our regular potluck garden tour meeting will be at Lisa's house and perhaps we will tour her neighbors yard (Kathy belongs to Livonia GC). Traditionally this is a salad or dessert potluck but if you want to make points with Lisa bring an hors d'oeuvres (she doesn't like salad) Sally doesn't have a problem with dessert But remember to bring your own service too. Gretchen will have something to show us too.

Note: Meeting's at Lisa's home. (Five and Farmington ish)



Minutes: No June minutes installation done by Lisa was the only business
Sally and Peggy exchanging Pins Gretchen greeting Nancy



Jean presenting Designer of the Year certificate

Mark your calendars

Board meetings: Aug. 31, Sept. 28, Nov. 2, Nov. 30, Feb. 1, March 1, March 29, May 3, May 27.

General meetings: Aug. 13, Sept. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12, Dec. 10, Feb. 11, March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10.

District 1 fall meeting in Taylor: Oct. 6.

State convention in Battle Creek: May 25.

Remembrance

*Betty Gurtowsky is in rehab at Fox Run Renaissance Gardens
(send cards to home address)*

*Barb Glaser is in rehab/assisted living at Livonia Woods
33600 Luther lane
Livonia, MI 48154 (cards welcome)*

Marje Gordon is having surgery on the 11th and could use support

Coming up

- August 24—Barbecue Straight from the Garden, an Evening in the Garden presentation, 6:30 to 8:30 at MSU Tollgate Education Center in Novi. Instructor Peter Veach will emphasize preserving the natural look, feel and taste of the herbs and vegetables in his creations. Everyone will be given the opportunity to taste and take home recipes. There is a charge; contact Linda Smith at 248.858.0887 for more information.
- September 1—Master Gardeners Society meeting: “Native Plants for Your Yard and Water Quality,” presented by Michele Arquette-Palermo of the Clinton River Water Authority. Meeting begins at 6:30 at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, 5631 North Adams Road, Bloomfield Hills, located on the west side of Adams Road between Square Lake Road and Long Lake Road. Fee is \$3 for nonmembers. For more information see <http://mgsoc.org/events.php>
- September 15—Evening in the Garden presents Winter Interest in the Garden with garden designer Janet Macunovich offering tips to make the most of every color, texture and form you already have in your landscape and to help you add or rearrange to make it sparkle right through winter, from November to April.



Horticulture—Getting to know Plantago Major

During a recent visit to Dr. Howard's historic office and garden in Greenfield Village, I was surprised to discover the broadleaf plantain (*Plantago major*) listed in his inventory of botanic medicines and as a cultivated plant in his medicinal garden. The Greenfield Village info sheet indicates that in the 1860s the broadleaf plantain was used as a remedy to cure internal and external wounds and sores, to stop bleeding, and to alleviate the discomfort of insect bites.

Today we know the broadleaf plantain as a bothersome weed that invades our manicured landscapes. After the dandelion, it is probably the most common broadleaf weed around. It grows well in compacted soils and grows abundantly alongside paths, roadsides, and other areas with compacted soil. Plants will remain green during drought and through the winter. They're difficult to manage and control.

Despite the fact that the *Plantago major* is most often painted as an odious weed, it is edible and medicinal. The young leaves are edible raw or cooked. They're rich in vitamin B1 and riboflavin. The plantain has a long history of use as an alternative medicine that dates back to ancient times. Many Native Americans carried powdered plantain roots as a protection against snakebites or to ward off snakes. One American Indian name for the plantain translates to "life medicine" and recent research into the scientific properties of this plant indicates that may be an appropriate name for it. (Other names for the *Plantago major* are White Man's Foot, Dooryard Plantain, Roadweed, Hen Plant, and Greater Plantain.)

Traditionally, the plant was used to prevent uterine bleeding after childbirth and a variety of other ailments. It's a potent coagulant. Because of this quality, plantain was used as a wound dressing on the battlefield, which is why it was also called the Soldier's Herb. Other reputed uses for the plantain would be to calm insect bites (flea, mosquito, wasp). Both the leaves and the seeds are medicinal used as an antibacterial, astringent, and a laxative among others. One website (www.altnature.com) states that medical evidence exists to confirm uses of the plantain as an alternative medicine for asthma, bronchitis, fever, and bladder problems.

The Altnature website provides some recipes. Here's one for medicinal herb (plantain) tea that can be used for colds or flu.

1 tablespoon dry or fresh whole Plantain (seed, root, and leaves) to 1 cup boiling water. Steep 10 minutes. Strain, sweeten, and drink throughout the day.

With all the excellent properties abundant in the humble and much maligned broadleaf plantain, it would seem that its historical uses as an alternative medicine or herb may not be all hogwash. Makes me think I should be out in the fields or by the side of the road digging up these plants and using them myself. An activity like that would not only control the broadleaf plantain population in our manicured landscapes but could also be a means of saving some money on manufactured medicines.

If you want to learn more about this rather miraculous plant and how to use it, check out some of the websites: www.altnature.com, Wikipedia, and www.herbs2000.com.

Where's my trowel? I'm going digging for broadleaf plantains!

—Winnie Chrzanowski

The Leaf

(Katie Wemyss wrote this poem for our 50th anniversary; Ann McMinn promoted it.)

There once was a leaf
That lived in a tree
And he was as green as green could be.

He lived and laughed and had
Such fun
As he played with the others
In the summer sun.

Then soon things changed
And the days were cool
The leaves changed colors
Because that's the rule.

One by one they fell to the ground
Not one of them even making a sound
Then they were raked and put in a sack
The tree waved good-bye knowing they
would not be back.

They were used as mulch
And put on the garden
To await the snow cover
And the ground to harden.

They lay there all winter
And did their thing
Until a few months
And it was finally Spring.

Then into their next phase
When dug into the ground
And the gardens were plowed
And new plants grew and did abound.

Finally came Spring
And what did we see
But new green leaves
On every tree.

Party Pics



Critter spotting

We seemed to be doing so well. After our excellent critter removers removed about 18 groundhogs from our yard last year, we started out this year with a total dearth of critters. No groundhogs meant the cow parsnips in the garden reached their full height, somewhere around seven feet. The swan family moved off the canal and into the lake after the folks on the corner called the cops to report Bruno, the dad swan, was assaulting their jetski and rider. Next door neighbor Ron confirmed that Bruno had nipped his calf as he headed out the canal on his personal watercraft, and Ron had grabbed Bruno's wing to keep him from chomping down again on his leg.

We don't know if the cops talked to Bruno or what, but the family moved away. We can still spot them out on the lake sometimes, Bruno in the lead, followed by three remaining kids, two grey and one white, none of them bumping into his tush as they bumped into their mom's as babies. (When they were tiny, one of them regularly hopped onto his mom's back, under her wings, and rested quite contentedly, little yellow legs hanging out to the side.)

Canada geese have been in short supply, which is fine for everyone except maybe the geese. From the agitated honking that we hear in the dead of night and the frequent spottings of a coyote and a red fox in the area, we're thinking that nature's own form of population control is at work on the waterfowl.

The deer, however, are doing OK. (I know Sally, fond photographer of deer in her own backyard, will be pleased to know that deer are flourishing elsewhere as well.) Not only flourishing, but growing increasingly blasé when encountering a small dog and her owner out for a pre-breakfast constitutional at 5:30 a.m. I, walking a familiar course without my glasses, generally see nothing that Tootsie takes exception to on these walks. But even without glasses, I couldn't miss a white tail doe standing in the next yard when Toots announced she was ready for a fight. (Toots is always announcing she's ready for a fight with almost anyone on the bike path in front of the house, any dog on a leash, any four legged critter that's bigger than she is—and that's a lot of critters.) So, though Toots was no real threat to the deer, I fully expected the doe to take off when Toots got up her full repertoire of woofs and barks. But no, the deer stood there. We approached, Toots in full cry. The deer stood there.

What now? This was a pretty good size deer. I've seen what they can do to a vehicle if they run into one (or vice versa). Would this deer come AT us? Only one thing to do. I added my barking to Tootsie's and together we chased off the deer.

You did note that "seemed to be doing so well" at the beginning of this column? We were doing well until 1) we found a giant groundhog in one of our empty-almost-all-spring-and-summer traps; 2) removal of said defunct critter provided the occasion for a smarter groundhog to dig around the trap and return to that choice den location under the shed; 3) a flotilla of geese headed up the canal for an early start on their pre-migration orgy of apple eating in Jerry's yard; and 4) the lawn service reported two groundhog youths cavorting in the garden. Nature wins—again. --Mar Sclawy © 2009





Garden Design 1-2-3

MSU extension is offering a four-Saturday program in garden design. It runs each Saturday from 9 till 1 from October 17 to November 7. \$160 fee includes morning refreshments, drafting kit and instructional handouts. For more information, contact Linda Smith at 248.858.0887, smithlin@oakgov.com.

Children's garden opens—adults welcome

Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro, Ann Arbor, presents its Gaffield Children's Garden with a grand opening celebration from 1 to 4 on September 13. The garden features more than 15 special areas, which are designed to inspire creative gardening and foster outdoor play. Among the areas are:

- Sensational Garden for kids to touch, smell and observe;
- Natural Builders Garden where kids can build structures of branches, rocks, bark and other natural materials;
- Wayfinder's Maze;
- Animal Habitats Hiking Trail;
- Birds Nest—a giant nest where kids can imagine what it's like to be baby birds, waiting for the folks to bring home some tasty baby bird snacks;
- Fairy and Troll Garden where kids can build homes for the tiny denizens;
- Recycled Elements abound in creative designs; and
- Several different kinds of gardens and pathways.

