



# Quail's Tales

[www.HillandDaleGC.org](http://www.HillandDaleGC.org)

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

September 2009

## President's preface

Sally says...thanks to Gretchen for providing ivies and frames and information for us to try our green thumbs to study ivy topiaries. I would like to encourage others to bring horticulture to our meetings. If you think it is interesting others may too. I am bringing ivies to flower show school for the students to study ivy *collections and displays* and next month I will share them with you if I haven't had plant disasters by then. Lisa has come up with a new gimmick for our plant sale in the spring, a "tag" sale. She wants us to "rescue and refurbish" so others can "reclaim" tag sale items to sell along with our proven survivors. Other ideas to support our club are still welcome!

Sally Ouellette



## September 10 meeting

Cheryl English, plant and tree maven and owner of Black Cat Pottery, has lots to say about Hydrangeas. With possible pruning season upon us, it's time to bone up on which hydrangeas should be pruned—and when—and which ones do much better being left alone. Cheryl speaks on a wide range of topics, and all of them are fun to hear. So bring your notebook and prepare to be educated about hydrangeas and entertained by this witty and knowledgeable speaker.



## *August 13 meeting minutes*

Meeting opened at the home of Lisa Steinkopf, and minutes were disregarded because the June meeting was done in conjunction with the anniversary party.

**Heritage Park Gardens:** Katie Wemyss reported that the gardens are doing well, despite the nightly deer invaders. Thanks went out to the Wednesday evening (6:00 pm) and Thursday morning (9:00 am) workers. Katie requested any perennials that members can share, especially colorful ones, to fill in some of the empty spots.

**Yearbook:** Angela Paul sent around a list of members, and member information, for any needed corrections.

### **Correspondence:**

An invitation to the Tuesday, October 6, 2009 District I Meeting was received from the Taylor Garden Club.

Gretchen Pugsley received a letter from Nancy Goulette thanking her and Carol Smith for the invitation to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party, and commending them for a wonderful evening.

Flo Holzknacht read a thank you from the FGCM awards chairman congratulating Hill and Dale for receiving Club of Distinction and photography awards.

Correspondence was received from Amy Langdon thanking the club for awarding her with the "Award of Honor."

**Awards:** Flo Holzknacht announced a list of awards she hopes Hill and Dale will apply for this year.

**New Business:** Sally mentioned the possibility of a Holly Berry Brunch type fundraiser and showed off a basket similar to the ones successfully raffled. She then passed out Installation "Thank You" gifts to those members making that extra effort to make the evening such a success.

The November meeting will be held at the Costick Activities Center (now moved to St. John's Lutheran Church), instead of the Heritage Park meeting room, because of a conflict with Farmington Garden Club's Holiday Table Displays.

Gretchen showed her home ivy topiary and explained how to make one. She generously offered 4 different varieties of ivy and 4 armatures (diamond, heart, etc.) to be raffled off at the end of the meeting. Katie had some heart shaped leaves to share as well.

Sally adjourned the meeting at 8:14 pm. A tour of Lisa's and neighbor Kathy's beautiful gardens followed.

--Respectfully submitted, Ann McMinn, secretary

## *Taylor Garden Club hosts District 1 fall meeting*

A Victorian Journey begins at the Lakes of Taylor Golf Club, 25505 Northline Road, Taylor, on October 6. Registration is \$22 per person. All registrations must be received by **September 21** so bring your checkbook or cash to the September 10 meeting and pay Angela as we must pay with a single club check for all members planning to attend.

## Agenda:

9:15 a.m. Register, coffee and Danish, shop vendors

10:00 a.m. Business meeting

11:00 a.m. Program: "Victorian Houseplants," an historical journey exploring the delights of parlor gardening during the 1800s, presented by Julia Hofley, freelance garden writer and lecturer

12:15 p.m. – Luncheon (*Michigan chicken croissant sandwich, fresh fruit garnish, cup of soup, cheesecake*)

1:15 p.m. Program: Floral design presentation by Greater Detroit Flower Arrangers' Guild

2:30 p.m. Adjourn

## *Garden therapy*

Be sure to save the following items for future projects: Tide scoops, juice lids, pine cones (all sizes), dried flowers, and cardboard cores from toilet tissue rolls.

## *Coming up*

- September 13--Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro, Ann Arbor, grand opening celebration of its Gaffield Children's Garden from 1 to 4. See August newsletter for details.
- 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. MSU Tollgate education center in Novi. Contact MSU extension for time and cost.
- September 15—"Step Into the Gardens," a benefit for the Belle Isle Conservatory runs from 5:30 to 7:30 pm under the tent at the Conservatory. For tickets (\$40) and more information contact Jan D. Starr, 29 Dyar Lane, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236.
- September 26—Fall perennial exchange, 9 am till noon, Novi Civic Center, 45175 Ten Mile Road, between Novi and Taft roads. For more information call 248.735.5640.
- October 6—District 1 fall meeting. See details elsewhere in the newsletter.
- May 15—Start marking those perennials now for our spring Proven Survivors plant sale and tag sale. Tag sale? Sure. Identify all those darling things you really don't want to dust come spring and we'll sell them at the same time. More later, but start thinking spring sales.
- May 25, 2010—MGC's one-day convention "Seeds of Tomorrow" in Battle Creek.



### *Did you hear?*

Sally Ouellette received the Helen S. Hall Calendar Award as flower arranger of the year. As such her design graces the front page of Visions of Beauty calendar for 2010. Another of her designs appeared in the December 2009 calendar.

Katie thanks Sandy, Ann, Shirley, Elie, Peggy and Jeannine for their hard work all summer on the Heritage Park gardens. "Many of the plants have fed the deer, but thank goodness there are lots of plants left," says Katie. If you have plants you are willing to donate to fill in those deer raddled spaces, please tell Sandy or Katie or bring those plants to the garden and leave them next to the walk.

### *Just what IS a Blue Star Memorial?*

The Blue Star Memorial Program honors service men and women. It began with the planting of 8,000 dogwood trees by the New Jersey Council of Garden Clubs in 1944 as a living memorial to veterans of World War II. The Blue Star became an icon in World War II and was seen on flags and banners in homes for sons and daughters away at war, as well as in churches and businesses.

In 1945, the National Council of State Garden Clubs adopted the program and began a Blue Star Highway system, which covers thousands of miles across the continental United States, Alaska and Hawaii. Large metal Blue Star Memorial Highway Markers are placed at appropriate locations along the way.

The program was expanded to include all men and women who had served, were serving or would serve in the armed services of the United States. Memorial markers and by-way markers were added to the highway markers, to be used at locations such as national cemeteries, parks, veterans' facilities and gardens.

The program has been active through all the years to the present, a fitting tribute always and especially now. MGC's 2010 convention will include a ceremony marking the placing of a National Blue Star Memorial Marker at Fort Custer National Cemetery. All seven MGC districts in the state contributed to the marker.

**We discussed this as one possible donation the club could make.**



## Horticulture: Red hot CROCOSMIA (common name: montbretia)



Although I don't have many *Crocosmia* (common name: montbretia) plants in my garden, I enjoy the few that add their bold color to my flower garden each summer. It's not a flower I see in many gardens, which is too bad because it's showy and somewhat exotic looking – even after the flowers have all disappeared.

*Crocosmia* is a genus of the iris family and is native to particular grasslands in South Africa. The name is derived from the Greek *krokos* (saffron) and *osme* (smell) which refers to the saffron-like scent the dried flowers emit when they're dipped in water. A French hybridizer named Lemoine first bred this plant in 1880 and now most modern cultivars are of English origin (according to *Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Perennials*, p. 342).

These attractive, easy-to-grow plants produce vivid flowers in dense, branching spikes in midsummer – usually July and August. The small (about 1"), funnel-shaped flowers come in red, orange, yellow, and yellow-orange, depending on the cultivar being grown. The ones in my garden are bright red. The inflorescences grow subopposite and there can be as many as 20 on a widely branched and arching stem. The bright green, sword-shaped leaves (they look very similar to my bellamcandas) set off the beauty of montbretia's delicate, funnel-shaped flowers. They'll get to be two to four feet all in a season. They're pollinated by insects, hummingbirds, or the wind. I keep hoping for the hummingbirds, but so far all I've seen are bees near the plant.

Montbretia sprouts from a corm that, according to all the literature I've read, should be lifted in late fall and stored for the winter just like glads, dahlias, etc. Our zone 4-5 temps dictate that this corm is not hardy. Nevertheless, I've never lifted mine, and they've come back for the past two or three years. However, for best results, they should be planted in the spring, in full sun (mine are in part shade and they do pretty well), and in a moist, humus-rich soil. Montbretia is pretty much disease free, but if they are attacked, it'll be by thrips or spider mites.

These plants are eye catching especially when planted with other hot colors or deep purples for contrast. Juxtaposing extreme colors and textures can create a spectacular display. For example, erect, spiky verbascum in the background, montbretia with its sword-shaped leaves and hot red inflorescences in the middle, and yellow, feathery dill in the foreground would create a layered effect and the two yellows would form a link between the background and foreground.

So, if you don't have any of these magnificent plants in your garden, now's the time to start thinking about them and finding a spot to put them next spring.

--Winnie Chrzanowski © 2009

Picture courtesy of <http://www.gardenersnet.com/bulbs/crocosmia.htm>.--

## Critter spotting



Redwing blackbirds left the marsh for points north while we were on vacation. We returned home to a swamp deficient in bird song but alive with peepers and crickets gearing up for August heat, alas, in vain. We all know there's a formula for calculating outdoor temperature by the number of cricket chirps. How that works was a mystery to me till I checked out the Old Farmers' Almanac. Count the number of chirps in 14 seconds (I didn't say this was easy) and add 40 to estimate current temps in Fahrenheit. (Different formula for Celsius, but then who cares?)

Since our vacation was on the Dalmatian coast (yes, Dalmatian dogs do come from there—but where exactly is it?), we were working with Celsius, a real plus when the temps in Fahrenheit were topping off in the high 90s or so, but sounded actually chilly at 36 Celsius.



Oh yes, the dogs. There were precious few Dalmatians in sight while we were there, but dogs, lots of dogs, mostly on the medium large side and most of them looking like the offspring of midnight ramblers. Many seemed to have no owners; they lay about on the streets, spreading out as much skin and fur along the relatively cool pavement as they could stretch, seeking whatever shade they could find. Folks called them “feral” dogs, which to me smacked of slavering hounds hunting in packs and picking off short folks in dark alleys. What actually appeared were laid back pooches that were quietly dependent on pals in the neighborhood to treat them to a little water or snack. And they had those pals. No dog begged from us or even suggested it was hungry enough to stir from its place on the pavement to inquire.

Those with formal owners accompanied them to all sorts of retail establishments, including restaurants. Often the only hint that a pooch was on the premises was a bolting dog heading for the door on a mission of utmost importance with an owner trailing behind on the other end of a taut leash. Otherwise, the dogs were silent and still.

We encountered two Spanish women at a national park in Croatia who were vacationing with two Newfoundlands in a caravan, an unseen van of unknown size, but certainly crowded with two people and two huge dogs. While we waited for a shuttle bus to take us back to the entrance to the park, the dogs lay placidly on the pavement, letting all manner of vacationing kids and adults pet them and scratch them and ask embarrassing questions, which they didn't have to answer. It was only inside the crowded bus that the pungent smell of big hairy dogs gave the rest of us a hint of life in a caravan traveling across the continent with a full complement of riders. It was enough.

--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.