

The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

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Inside this issue:

President's Message	1-2
Perennial Blessings	2-3
Community Project 2010	4-5
2010 Fall Workshop – Stone Carving	6-7

Message from the President - Carol Goodwin

What a summer! Enough rain to keep everything growing and green, and lots of sunshine to bring the garden into glory. Fellow Master Gardener, Beth Patillo, told me it was the first year in many that the Noggins Corners farm team hadn't put irrigation systems in place in the farm fields. I didn't do much watering either, except for containers. This fall I gathered up all my leaves on the lawn and put them in the garden as mulch. Now I do have to admit that after the windy autumn we've just had, there weren't as many left in my yard as usual...I'm trying to tame my Japanese anemones a bit. Maybe they won't pop up through the leaves as easily as they do otherwise.

I noticed a few weeks ago that my lovely Japanese maple has nectria canker in all but one of its main branches. I expect to find them dead on the tree come spring. I just can't bring myself to prune it out of the tree in the meantime!!

The crows in the neighbourhood seem to have set up a daytime deer alert. Every time the deer come out of the trees and into the open, we hear about it. Maybe they're just letting one another know there may be a meal in the offing! The does are looking exceptionally fat this year - lots of good quality browsing nearby, I guess. **(Cont'd Page2)**

Message from the President

(Cont'd from page 1)

From all reports the Master Gardener community had a really excellent year. Our membership has grown and our ability to be recognized in the community has improved with the purchase of three banner stands – one for each Maritime province. Cyndy McCormack has the Prince Edward Island one, Heather Connors-Dunphy has the New Brunswick one, and Emily Miller is the keeper of the Nova Scotia one. These are available for all members to use when they are conducting Master Gardener activities. In addition we have table mats available with the logo on them – they can be part of a display if you are making one for an event. Just email the appropriate person and ask for them to get whatever it is you need to you.

As I write this, I wonder what you would like to see happen in the New Year as far as AMGA is concerned? I'm looking for suggestions for next year's fall workshop, as well as for the NSAC Summer School. Any other suggestions for how to keep us all in

touch are welcomed. I know what I'd like to see in the new year – letters from members in the newsletter, describing what you've been doing as a Master Gardener, and what has worked and what hasn't. We need to exchange ideas more and support one another as we feel our way through the Master Gardener experience. I have heard some really exciting things about some member activities, and will make sure we all benefit. But I'd much rather you shared your experiences rather than hearing them second hand from me!

I hope the Christmas season is a peaceful one for all of you, and you have the opportunity to share time with those you love. I think that's what it's really all about, isn't it?

Seasons Greetings
and Best Wishes
for 2011

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Perennial Blessings

- By Sandy Whiting (Park City, Kansas)
- Article from Johanne Robertson

Giving gardener understood the power of flowers.

Grandma loved earthy things with roots-like the fragrant geraniums she lovingly grew and found homes for.

I walked by her house every day on my way home from school. She always had a wave and smile ready for me. This particular afternoon, however, she frowned. I backed up a few steps and asked, "What's the matter? Did the bugs eat your flowers?"

Grandma stared at her geraniums and sighed. "That new family on the other side of the square...the Dunkles. They just lost their twin baby boys."

Being 10 and knowing little about life and less about death, I shrugged. "So? We don't know them."

"We're neighbours...and neighbours are family," she said firmly. Perking up, she brushed the dirt from her hands. "Go call your mother and ask if you can run an errand with me, then meet me in the shed."

"There you are," Grandma said. "Help me find two pots - pretty clay ones."

Second only to her love of family and plants, Grandma adored decorating flowers pots. She'd sometimes buy a dozen at a yard sale and tote them home in a grocery cart.

As if on a mission, she'd scrub off years of dirt and trim each pot with whatever color paint she chose as the "flavour of the day". Once they were dry, she'd stroke flowers, boats or ladybugs across their curved surface.

I help up a pair of 8-inch black pots she'd decorated with red flower buds. "How about these?" Grandma rubbed her chin, squinted and decreed, "Too dark. We need something lighter...something more alive."

She picked two mint green pots from a top shelf. "I think these will do nicely." Handing me a trowel, Grandma led me to the garden. "Dig up that pink geranium and plant it in the pot," she said. "Don't forget to put a few rocks in the bottom for drainage."

In minutes, I had a pink flower safely tucked into its new home. Grandma quickly finished potting hers. "Come on," she said. "Let's get these to the Dunkles." Not bothering to knock, she placed the plants on the porch, slid a blue scrap of paper under one pot and turned to go.



Perennial Blessings

(Cont'd from page 2)

After an errand, I begin noticing something unusual about Grandma's geraniums. I'd count them when I passed by in the morning. And by my return trip, there'd be two or three less. On shopping trips with Grandma, I'd hear folks speak of flowers appearing around town and speculate on who the "Geranium Lady" might be. When asked if we had any clues, I'd shrug and Grandma would just smile.

The years turned their pages, and I, too, ended up on the receiving end of the mystery flowers when my dog, "Biscuit", died. Not long after, as grown children do, I married and moved away. Well before I was ready, a call came with painful news that Grandma had passed. The trip back home was difficult as I wrestled with my grief, three restless children and one husband in the driver's seat negotiating country roads. Finally, we pulled into a familiar dirt lane and rounded the curve to Grandma's house.

I couldn't believe my eyes! Pots spilling over with red, pink, salmon and white geraniums covered the porch.

Mother met me. "I don't know who's bringing them," she said. "But every time I come out, there's a dozen more."

Gently, I lifted a pot from the bottom step. Slipped beneath the sunset-orange blooms was a faded blue note, written in Grandma's own hand. "Only the body goes back to the earth. The soul blooms in greener pasture."

It wasn't just the Dunkles who had figured out Grandma's secret. The entire town knew. And now I did too. Single acts of kindness are returned a thousand times over-perpetually blooming.



*Pots spilling over with red,
pink, salmon and white
geraniums covered the porch.*

COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT 2010

- BY LIS JACKSON



On a warm sunny night in April, I met with a few people from my church at the site for our proposed community garden. This site was located on new property purchased to build a church in Lancaster Ridge, Dartmouth. At that time, the area was overgrown with grass and weeds and looked nothing at all like a garden, but we had a vision for what it could be and within a month had a section of the land cleared and a garden frame built.

Then the topsoil and compost went in, was spread and the garden was ready for planting. We planned a work day at the garden on May 29th and together, with people who were interested from the area, the garden plots were established and the first plantings took place.

A gardener from the area loaned us a rain

barrel as we had no water source there. We set it up under a nearby tree with a tarp attached to branches and the other end funneling into the barrel. Within two weeks, it was always full whenever we went to water our plants. One evening, I went to check the garden and spotted deer watching from a ridge and their tracks in our garden! Needless to say, fencing was soon put up.

Although we didn't have a large number of gardeners this year, we felt the project was a success. We tried to meet bi-weekly as a group to get to know one another as we gardened. On those nights we did our weeding and watering and later, our harvesting! Many times when we were at the garden, we would see people from the area out for a stroll and they seemed interested in what we were doing. Hopefully they will join us next year!

From the gardeners' perspective, it was well worth the time and effort it took. To plant seeds and see them grow is quite an experience for both young and old. And then you get to harvest the fruit of your labors!

We grew cucumbers, zucchinis, tomatoes, yellow and green beans, peas, squash, pumpkins, celery, brussels sprouts, carrots, beet

COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT 2010

- BY LIS JACKSON

(Cont'd from page 4)

greens, leeks and more. One of the kids even planted peanuts!! Not so successful this year but he may try again next spring.

We were happy to supply the Food Bank this year and hope to have a bigger garden next year with a larger plot dedicated to them. We're also very excited that we have recently received a small grant for 2011. This grant comes from the Ecology Action Center and includes a plastic rain barrel;

compost; small **amount of funding** (approximately \$35) to purchase local, heritage seeds and up to \$50 for a building project such as expanding the garden.



2010 Fall Workshop

Stone Carving with Heather Lawson

- By Carol Goodwin

The workshop took place the third weekend in November after delays caused by the slow shipment of the tools needed for a large group. Even though they were ordered from a Canadian company, they had to make a tedious journey from England! It was a cold but clear weekend. Working in a greenhouse has its benefits – between the sun and the heaters we had a great experience! We completed three pieces each by the time the two days were over, and some managed an additional one. We went away with a stone bowl, a wall plaque, and a small standing stone.

Heather is an exceptional instructor, as evidenced by the success we all shared when we reviewed our work at the end of the day. We were instructed in



safe work practices, and learned how to protect ourselves from the possible effects of working with stone. She provided us with a range of freshly sharpened chisels and stone carver's mallets of various weights. It was a unique experience that we will all experience again – every time we look at our own work in the garden. The 'tap tap' of chisel on stone created its own kind of music especially when there were thirteen players in the group!

Do I need to say that carving a bowl out of solid stone is no easy task? It took the better part of a day to achieve it. The results were worth the effort! Heather coached us as to which tool would be most effective for each stage of the process, and how to use the specialized tools to create a finish on your work.



2010 Fall Workshop

(Cont'd from Page 6)

We learned how to communicate with the stone' to achieve the best results. As a gardener, it was a fascinating look at the world of stone, and we all went away with a real appreciation for the geological processes that create it and how it responds to the forces of the climate after that. We worked with local sandstone, but had an opportunity to try limestone and other types as well.



The results at the end of Day One – we were amazed! Every one of us found something different in the stone, and we were thrilled at what emerged!

Some of the participants took the idea of stone carving literally and worked to create a true three dimensional sculpture!



When it came time to clean up and go home, we each took one or two pieces of stone with us for the next project. With the winter to think about it and study our pieces of stone, who knows what will be created come spring? One thing we do know is what we want for Christmas – stone carving chisels and a mallet!

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