



*Volume 3, August 2003*

# Over The Fence ... and Crossing County Lines

## Inside this Issue:

- Board News, pg. 1
- “Growing From Seeds In Pots”-Cathy Damron, Ohio County, ppgs. 2 & 3
- “Natural Repellents”- Ted Boggess, Putnam County, pg. 3
- Meet Hancock/Brooke Master Gardener Association, pg. 4
- “Community Involvement”-Myra L.

## Board News:

The West Virginia Master Gardener Association Board met July 12, 2003 in Clarksburg. Some highlights were:

- The 501(c)(3) Application has been submitted. Each Association is encouraged to contact their Board Representative for information on how to apply for their individual non-profit status.
- A donation of \$1,000.00 is made to WVU Extension to offset travel expenses and enhance resource development.
- Plans are being made for the 2004 State Conference, hosted by Wood County
- Plans are being made for the 2005 State Conference, hosted by Morgan County.
- The Volunteer Activities Committee will begin work on a Statewide Speakers Bureau--each Association is encouraged to contribute names of speakers from their areas.

*The things I sow somehow don't grow... I'm sorely disenchanted;  
But, Oh, what luck I have with stuff ... I've never even planted.*

*Anonymous*

## GROWING FROM SEEDS IN POTS

I love to grow plants from seed. It started with the early years of my first marriage, when we had no money. I'm not counting the first real experience at twelve, when I said to my mother, "I want to plant some flower seeds." "Go ahead dear." I purchased seeds of the flower I thought prettiest, sweet peas, and sowed them in June at the base of a trellis shaded by a giant oak tree--in compacted soil in Minnesota, where the annual rainfall is about ten inches. No, I'm talking about my twenties, when I planted foxglove and hollyhock seeds. Connecticut is a good place to grow both. The foxgloves were show stoppers, causing cars to slow down as they passed. I had the hollyhocks for only a year because I dug them up the next spring, thinking they were dead. (That's when I learned what "herbaceous" means). I went on to grow calendulas, delphiniums, and pinks. My neighbor's horse got into the garden once and my toddler pulled up all my gazania seedlings in an attempt to "help weed", but I felt a measure of success. When we moved to Syracuse, I continued to grow flowers from seeds--like pansies, Campanulas, blue flax, nasturtiums, Arabis and Cerastium. I don't think I started seeds in the house because in Syracuse it rains whenever it's not snowing.

Here in West Virginia it seems as though the last killing frost date arrives in mid May, and then it stops raining for the rest of the summer (present summer excepted). Thus, seeds need to be started indoors. For those of you who have had abysmal failure starting plants from seed, try again. Try now, because it's warm enough that seeds will pop right up in a couple of days, humid enough that they won't dry out (indoors) and nothing will eat them if you keep them inside, especially at night, until they are big enough to fend for themselves. Start zinnias now, you'll get some nice blooms before the frost hits. Or try a shade loving flower you can bring inside in the fall, like pansies or Johnny-jump-ups. One year I started seed at the beginning of August for feverfew, Armeria (thrift) and Aubrieta. The plants survived the winter outside, and I realized there was no reason I couldn't have seedling growing on window sills year round.

Some plants germinate easily in summer and also need to winter over in the house, so why not try them? Angel's trumpet and passion flower (*Passiflora caerulea*) come up very easily from seed when started in hot weather. The same must be true for many other tender perennials. By the way, a definite exception is Lapageria or Chilean Bell flower. It can not tolerate lime, likes cool temperatures year round, and my seeds arrived in late spring or early summer. I was not sure I was ready to air condition in the house just for a plant, but since they wouldn't germinate I did not have the luxury of making that decision.

A couple different Januaries I couldn't wait for spring and sowed ageratum and petunia seeds. February would have been better, but I kept the seedlings in a cold room so they didn't grow too fast. I remember the petunia seed packet held 200 seeds, and I am sure that I had 200 plants. That was good, because that was the year I sowed a lot of different seeds on the top of the soil and they came up and died. Pay attention to the seed depth suggested on the packet. I did, however, have a back yard full of petunias--petunias sprawling on the backs of other petunias, covering their bare stems.

Here is what I did: I sowed most of the seeds in one pot, a six inch pot. I covered the pot loosely with plastic wrap and put it by a register every night. When the seeds germinated I put the pot on a windowsill. You have to monitor the plastic wrap so no mold grows on the soil (not such a problem in winter as know; you won't need plastic wrap now anyway). Tiny seeds usually grow slowly. The advantage of one pot versus a

(GROWING FROM SEEDS IN POTS, continued)

flat is that it is hard to over water them, and the soil in a large pot retains moisture so it takes longer to get too dry. By the time I separated the seedlings (meticulously) to put in flats and harden them off, it was almost time to plant them outside. I used to use what I had--solid leaf mold compost for seedling soil and baked it in a slow oven. In case you have forgotten, the potting mix for seeds is (can be) 2 parts loam, 1 part leaf mold or peat, and 1 part sand, all sterilized.

The advantages of growing flowers from seed are many. (Vegetable growers already know this.) It's cheaper, you really learn the names of the plants you have got, you get more plants of the same variety so your garden achieves that desirable trait of unity, with repetition of the same plant material. You can really grow some unusual things, you can experiment more without worrying about money wasted. You might feel a little more pride in watching your green babies. And you could splurge on a seed packet of something that loves moisture (like Trollius or some exotic primrose I usually talk myself out of), in case we get another wet summer like this one.

Cathy Damron, Ohio County Master Gardener

Animal Cliches--*Eats Like A Bird*: If someone says you eat like a bird, you might consider going on a diet. Most birds eat 25 to 50 percent of their body weight daily. Birds have high metabolism, burning up calories faster than a long-distance runner. Hummingbirds are probably the metabolic champs, putting away a meal of flower nectar and insects every 10 minutes! They eat twice their body weight daily, the equivalent of a 150-pound man eating about 1,000 hamburgers a day!

## NATURAL REPELLENTS

Have you noticed that most conversations about gardening now include some mention of the over abundance of deer and how we can protect our plants from being damaged or destroyed by them and other critters?

We have been doing some research on the subject of natural repellents and would like to share the information we have found.

Researchers at Michigan State University recently discovered that certain plant extracts were more effective at repelling deer, rabbits, and squirrels than commercial chemical controls. The study reports that the most effective extracts came from common garden plants: daffodils, hot peppers, bearded irises, catnip, and peppermint. Until researchers find some way to convert these compounds into products, just growing these plants in your garden should give some natural protection against critters.

The Dutch Gardens Company has an excellent reference to deer resistant plants on their website. ([www.dutchgardens.com](http://www.dutchgardens.com)) In the product guide there is an article called "Got Deer? Get Daffodils". This article is very informative and lists deer resistant bulbs and deer resistant bulb companions that you can grow to make your garden less attractive to these critters.

Ted Boggess, Putnam County Master Gardener

**MEET THE HANCOCK/BROOKE MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION:**

Hancock and Brooke Counties are the two northernmost counties in West Virginia and is the home to Mountaineer Racetrack in Chester, West Virginia.

In addition to West Virginians, they host Master Gardeners from Ohio and Pennsylvania. Having a Master Gardener program since 1993 Hancock/Brooke now has approximately 83 members with 55 current, active Master Gardeners.

Hancock/Brooke Master Gardeners have been very busy helping the Hancock Extension Office rejuvenate the Hancock County Oldtime Fair and start the Weirton Farmers Market, which is held every Monday from 8:30 to 1:00 p.m. on the Wal-Mart parking lot. Not only does the market benefit the approximate 19 vendors participating, but senior citizens receive WVDA Farm Market coupons.

Hancock/Brooke Master Gardeners work with 4-H groups, Girl Scouts and the Young Marines, as well as going to the schools with the "Meet the Plants" program. Mini classes have been taught by Master Gardeners at the library on topics such as bees, pruning and topiaries.

Hancock/Brooke Master Gardeners and the Hancock Extension Office were recently honored at the International Master Gardener Conference for their Garden Calendar. It contains local gardening information and articles written by Master Gardeners. The calendar won the Community Service category at the Covington, Kentucky conference and a \$100.00 check from Johnny's Select Seeds.

Hancock/Brooke Master Gardeners are able to make contributions to things like 4-H, the Hancock County Oldtime Fair and the WVMG Scholarship Fund by monies made in their annual Plant Share where their members divide their plants and sell them for a nominal fee. Last year the fund raiser profited \$1,000.00!

Hancock/Brooke proudly announces that one of its Master Gardeners, Les Shroads of Chester has won an award from the Daylily Society for one of his hybrids.

*A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing,  
and the lawnmower is broken.*  
*-James Dent*

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Becoming a Master Gardener and belonging to your County Association allows opportunity for educational learning--not just for the individual, but also for the community. The Putnam County Master Gardeners hosted their second year of "Connecting with Herbs" on April 26, 2003 at Valley Park, Hurricane, West Virginia. The program was presented by the West Virginia Herb Association, Region IV, and Keynote Speaker, David Hawkins, President of the West Virginia Herb Association discussed the Herb of the Year "Basil". Putnam County Parks and Recreation Commissions and West Virginia University Extension Services sponsored the program.

During the State Master Gardener Conference at Canaan Valley in 1999 Bill Byus, former Putnam County Master Gardener President, and Sue Cosgrove, herbalist program presenter at the conference, met and began comparing notes. Sue, a Herbalist and a Master Gardener, serves as the West Virginia Herb Association Regional Coordinator. She operates the Lee Jun Farm at Chole, West Virginia. She informed Bill that the West Virginia Herb Association will bring their program to any local community. All they require is a local sponsor and a host.

In 2002 Putnam County hosted the first "Connecting With Herbs" workshop with approximately 38 attending. This year 56 attended the all-day seminar. Snacks and lunch were provided by one of the county's 4-H Clubs. Program topics included: many ways to benefit from the use of herbs: medicinal; culinary (cooking with herbs), weight loss management, and growing herbs for resale. Added this year was a "hands-on" raised herb bed planting. A plant sale and auction concluded the day.

In 2004, the last Saturday in April, another all-day event is being planned. The morning session will cover the use of culinary herbs in cooking and the afternoon session will be a "hands on" planting and "taste taster" demonstration. The day will conclude with a plant, garden tool sale, and auction. A \$15.00 pre-registration fee covers the all day event including snacks and lunch.

Does this sound like an event that would interest your community and Master Gardener Association? Contact the West Virginia Herb Association Regional Coordinator for your area! It will result in a fun way to educate people in your community, while adding a few bucks to your treasury.

Putnam County Master Gardeners  
Myra L. Simmons and Bill Byus

Why is it....

- weeds grow faster than you can pull them?
- it doesn't rain 'till AFTER you water the garden?
- you can't get grass to grow in the bare spots of the yard--only in the cracks in the walk?
- the tool you need in the garden is in the one you left in the shed?

Make Your Own Moss Sticks:

1. Roll a 10-inch strip of hardware cloth (either 30 or 36 inches wide) into a cylinder. Overlap edges about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch. Fasten at 6 inch intervals with strands of wire.
2. Put an inch or two of gravel in tub for drainage. Push two small sticks through bottom of cylinder (crisscrossing each other) to help brace it.
3. Fill cylinder with mixture of half peat moss, half vermiculite or perlite. (To get mixture properly damp, soak peat moss overnight beforehand. A paper funnel can be used for filling, stopping at intervals as you fill and tamping mixture down with broom handle.) Place cylinder in tub and fill about  $\frac{1}{2}$  full with soil.
4. Space vines around cylinder in tub--3 to 5 for a large tub. Fill around roots with soil to within an inch of rim to allow room for watering. Use any favorite vine.

**Are you an obsessed gardener? Take the test....**

Normal Gardener

You know the Latin names of your plants

You know the pH of your soil

You are proud of your baby carrots

You love to grow and cook your own  
vegetables

You have dirt under your fingernails

Obsessed Gardener

You use them in conversations...with the plants!

ALL your friends know the pH of your soil!

You carry pictures of them in your wallet!

Cook? Who has time to cook?

What fingernails?

*Robert's Rules of Order* Tip:

-No action is taken on the Treasurer's report. (Only Auditor's Report). When in a meeting, and after the Treasurer's Report has been handed out or read, the President can say, "This Treasurer's Report has been made for your information. Are there any corrections? ... This Report (with corrections, if necessary) will be placed on file."