

The Garden Patch

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Salt Lake Master Gardener Association

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Learning Life Through the Garden



By Kathy Lillywhite

Yesterday, still in a daze and time warp, I returned from visiting the ancient gardens of Tuscany. Upon returning, my foremost duty was to attend to gardening. The flower beds that I am entrusted with on Temple Square were waiting for me to design with plants for summer blooms. The spring flush had hardly ebbed when bulbs were pulled to make room for summer color: petunias, pelargoniums, lobelia, ageratum, verbena and colibrachoa (Million Bells in yellow for a little sparkle). As I worked, I pondered. Gardens all over the world have their similarities: There must be a gardener to organize, to put in order the plants that satisfy.

The Tuscany region of Italy boasts an extraordinary number of villas and ancient gardens, preserving the combination of art and nature through the vast chronology span of Middle Ages to the present. I was intrigued with the merge of art and nature; the crumbling sculptures, urns and fountains, the element of water on which a garden lives and derives its splendor both then and now. Whether the garden is ancient or new, a garden calls for great care, attention, expense and maintenance.

Although the hardscape or design of the Tuscan gardens is inspiring and unique, the plants are familiar. Roses have been loved through the ages. Every garden has its sweet scented rose, growing against crumbling stone or trellised high into the air. Generally, clay or stone pots and urns hold the color, produced by sprawling geraniums or dwarfed citrus trees. Along with Lombardy Poplar, and tall columns of Cypress, an umbrella shaped pine (*P. pinea*, the natives call *Mare-nina* "of the sea") dot the Mediterranean horizons and reminded me of "Out of Africa."

The climate and elevation of Tuscany differ from ours, but the Tuscan gardener's challenges are similar: lack of water, poor soil and lack of space. Consequently very steep hillsides are planted and maintained. As in Tuscany, the life lessons are the same as we learn through gardening here: Good preparation is vital. When we plant, we learn to sow hope. We all need space to expand and grow. To grow the sweetest fruit we sometimes need to be cut back. As plants need water, sunshine and soil, we also need balance in our lives. The best garden lesson of all: everything in life is a blessing.

Enough of pondering! Back to work I must go. My head is filled with new Tuscan designs for frilly gates and arbors, another way to trellis a climber, Italian tile to work into table designs. . . Will I ever get to my own garden?

Did you know?

The sweet Spanish onion has been designated the "contemporary" state vegetable and the sugar beet the "historic" state vegetable of Utah.

Word of the Month

By Sherman Brough



Etiolate
(eet-ee-uh-layt)
From the Latin word *etiolate*,
to be made white; blanched

To bleach and alter the natural development of a seedling by one or more of three factors: 1. inadequate quality and quantity of light, 2. excessive heat, 3. overcrowding of plants

*When light is too dim, the temperature is too warm, seedlings are overcrowded, or a combinations of these three factors exists, seedlings become pale and elongated, ie. they are leggy. The seedling may become so elongated that the stem cannot hold the leaves erect. This condition can be easily overcome by increasing the light quantity (bringing plants closer to the lamps), reducing the temperature, and planting seeds or transplants further apart.

*Etiolated seedlings are not to be confused with the disease "Damping Off," which is the result of one or more species of common fungi (species of *Fusarium*, *Ptylophthora*, *Pythium*, and *Rhizoctonia*) which cause seedlings to rot at soil level, collapse, and die. Damping Off is the result of contaminated pots and soil and is exacerbated by high temperature and wet conditions. Damping Off can best be overcome by sterilization of soil, pots and equipment.

Old Man Winter did pay another visit to the garden, and he set some records. The first cold night in May was to be the worst. I covered most everything I had up, so by the next morning I had survived the frost. The second night was to be a lot warmer, but that was not the case in my garden. It froze the new shoots on my grapevines. The radish leaves were black, as well as leaves of some of the tomato plants that were in water walls. I used all the blankets to keep things covered and some froze to the plants.

With some tomato plants being frozen back a little, the garden seems to have survived the frost and now is growing good. I had planted my bush beans a few days before the frost and in the last few days they have jumped out of the ground showing no signs of set back.

The corn I started in the house is now planted in the garden along with the summer squash and cucumbers I planted a month ago. I will save about three to four weeks' wait at harvest time. I put them in water walls to get more root growth. With clear plastic over the ground and the water walls, the plants grow really fast.

I have had only one call for grafting this year. I did put on about 12 grafts on one tree for a friend I work with. I was able to find a couple of stems with dormant buds to bring home and graft onto one of my seedling trees. In three weeks the grafts have taken on my tree and have grown about an inch. I still have some apple scion wood in the refrigerator that I soon will get rid of.

Golden's Garden

By Wm. Golden Reeves

I pulled all my radishes from the carrot bed. I plant them together to give shade for the carrots to grow. I cleaned them and had them in the house. My wife found them and informed me that they were good. So much for the first crop of radishes.

This is the 3rd week in May and I'm ready to have my first cutting of spinach, kale, and mustard greens. I hope they're worth eating. The broccoli heads are forming and will be ready by the end of the month. That is just in time for the stores to cut their prices on them. The cauliflower heads are forming also, but they take a little longer.

I'm looking at my "To Do" list and find I'm behind. I need to finish planting my annuals, fertilize the rose hedge, and clean out all the old wood. I hate giving blood to the roses. They don't seem to bloom any brighter. I am going to use my heavy gloves with protection up the arms. That should help.

Late last summer the rhubarb leaves turned red, then the plant died. I thought it was a goner for sure. This spring, part of it has come back to life. I need to dig a trench around it and fill it with compost and road apples. It has been growing in the same place for fifteen years and needs some tender loving care plus fertilizer. (There may be some who don't know what road apples are. That's what you get when you run a bale of hay through a horse.)

It is nice to have the warmth of spring with all the new growth. Unfortunately, soon we'll be complaining about the heat of the summer!

Master Gardeners Grow Culture of Service

(This article originally appeared in USA TODAY on April 10, 2002)

By Alcestis "Cooky" Oberg

When a husband and wife bought land for their dream house near Crawford, Texas, they wanted to preserve its serene natural landscape. So before turning her husband loose with a chain saw, the wife called a friend, a master gardener, to identify the important native plants that should be saved, such as native pecan trees, and suggest what should be planted, such as a lawn of drought-resistant native buffalo grass.

This Texas couple - George W. and Laura Bush - are among the legions of American homeowners who call on Master Gardeners every year for their free assistance. Nationwide, more than 60,000 volunteer master gardeners answer millions of gardening questions annually. In Texas alone, more than 4,000 volunteers provided nearly 220,000 hours of community service in the year 2000. They answered phones, published more than 1,000 articles, aired hundreds of television and radio garden shows, worked on hundreds of community beautification projects and carried out education programs in 1,700 schools.

President Bush, like his predecessors, has exhorted Americans to give back to their communities by volunteering. His newest initiative, the USA Freedom Corps, urges Americans to contribute 4,000 hours to volunteer service during their lifetimes. He calls it a "new culture of responsibility."

Too many organizations, however, fail to recruit or retain volunteers because they don't have clear tasks for them, don't train them or give them needed resources, or don't treat them well. In this respect, the master gardener program can serve as a unique model - a formula for not only growing a volunteer population, but also for building and expanding on volunteers' talents.

Seeds in Seattle

The Master Gardener program started in 1972, when area agent David Gibby was assigned the job of answering homeowner gardening questions for two counties around Seattle. Gibby begged for an assistant to help him, but there was no budget for that. So Gibby recruited 300 experienced gardeners and brought in horticulture professors to teach their specialties. After graduation, the newly certified master gardeners answered 5,000 questions that season alone. When the

media spread word of the program, Gibby and his colleagues were flooded by calls from other counties in Washington, then Oregon and ultimately, all of the other states.

Grassroots Programs Flourish

The key to the program's success has to do with its sustained grassroots nature. It has always been neighbor helping neighbor. There is no federal mandate or budget and no national bureaucracy. Training is funded primarily through states or counties.

Instructors are horticulture professors at land-grant state universities. One state coordinator oversees the program, and county extension agents do all of the local recruiting, management and scheduling, sometimes with a master gardener's help. Volunteers pay for their own books.

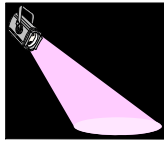
Recruitment is never a problem. Gardening is a top national pastime, and volunteers are eager to pass their knowledge on to others.

The key to the growth of the program is its flexibility. At first, master gardeners just answered questions on the phone or held clinics. But as the groups grew, some developed school programs and community beautification projects. Others set up gardens for nursing homes. As the Internet grew, the technically talented ones developed local gardening Web pages, giving homeowners instant, round-the-clock information. As horticultural science grew to understand [the] homeowners' role in larger environmental issues, professionally trained master gardeners helped their neighbors with water conservation, recycling and the cautious use of chemicals.

Master Gardeners are certified only after completing their volunteer hours and are forbidden to use the affiliation for commercial gain. To maintain certification, a volunteer must attend continuing education activities every year.

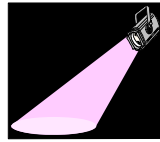
At a time when volunteerism, conservation and the environment are top priorities for so many Americans, the master gardener program is a perfect model for other organizations to follow.

Alcestis "Cooky" Oberg, a Houston freelance science and technology writer, is a member of USA TODAY'S board of contributors.



Spotlight

on Catherine New



Asparagus came up in the lawn, Mommy served it for dinner -- it was magic! We kids sheared bermuda grass around sprinkler holes and red stepping-stones -- that was maintenance. Five leaves marked growth buds for sharp diagonal cuts pruning driveway rose bushes, stem after stem repetition became meditative. Magic, maintenance, and meditation--reflecting, I can now name those three essences of gardening I absorbed during childhood in Modesto, California. Naming those essences now, they're recognizable in my adult gardening--the magic of self-sown 'Red Sails' lettuce springing up in cracks between patio bricks; the maintenance monotony of curtailing and controlling bindweed; and the clarifying meditation on scale, form, and vigor evoked by the heft of pruning shears in my leather-gloved hands.

When I first became aware of Master Gardener associations at a State Fair booth in Palmer, Alaska, I tucked that information away in the back of my mind. Summer 1997, we relocated to Salt Lake City, and that fall I enrolled in the Master Gardener course. On the first afternoon of class, Larry Sagers invited us to tell why we'd enrolled. If my four-year memory serves, I recall two reasons were in my mind: 1) It appealed to me to apply horticultural theory to my "absorbed" gardening knowledge and skills; and 2) I had a vague desire to link my career as an early childhood specialist with my interest in gardening.

*The linkage with children has come naturally as the tiny, mostly-cement backyard at our house on Kensington Corner sent me to garden in front--where young ones spontaneously come through the gate to chat, to taste herbs, to simply experience the garden environment. These young visitors refresh my perceptions---for example an eight-year-old exclaimed, "Catherine, you've got artichokes growing in your garden!" and then questioned herself, crouching down to look more closely, "Are these artichokes?" The plants were "hen and chickens" and while I chuckled to myself, I had to admire her eagerness of inquiry and her logical theory of plant identification.

*As to applying horticultural theory to my "absorbed" gardening knowledge and skills--my brain is currently challenged to understand seasonal microclimates around our house. Perhaps you read my "Color Carding the Garden" article a few months back. Well, once again I'm chuckling to myself. Last fall I daydreamed hummingbirds at heuchera, with a white and blue backdrop of violets and myosotis--but my color carding system hadn't reminded me that bloomtime differed around the yard! Now white violets are fading, while one patch of heuchera on the west

side of the house has vigorous buds on eight-inch stems, but the transplanted patch is just coming out of dormancy. Live and learn.

And the garden is a wonderful place to live and learn, about horticulture and about human beings. Late April, a mature neighbor paused over a swath of eye-catching delicate light-green leaves beside a tree in the park strip. "What is that? It almost looks like lettuce." It was two-inch self-sown buttercrunch lettuce, so he and I talked about salad and marveled at nature's spring magic. Later in the season, such sidewalk conversations often turn to maintenance methods--bindweed control ranking high on my interest list for venting frustration and soliciting success stories such as, "*so she put a prescription bottle over every emerging shoot, and they wrinkled up and died," or "*he just went out every evening after dinner on bindweed patrol, and after three or four years, it was almost gone*" These exchanges replay in my mind as I work in the garden, it's become kind of meditation on the human experience. Shortly after Beverly invited me to write a "Spotlight," I found myself pruning a purple sage, seeking a pleasing form stem-by-stem, while the question hovered in my brain, "But what would MGA members want to read about me?" And as I pruned, this spotlight essay took shape along with the sage.

Hooray For Gardening!

A recent Deseret News article by John Loftin, D.N. Staff Writer entitled "Green thumbs: Mentally disabled adults ready to blossom" tells about efforts being made locally to help the mentally disabled learn gardening skills. Their aim is to provide job opportunities and a social outlet for mentally disabled adults. The Murray Greenhouse Foundation wants to open a greenhouse that would be staffed primarily by mentally disabled adults. Job requirements would range from moving plants to raising their own herbs and flowers. Currently, the mentally disabled can attend high school until age 22. After that, Pierce said, the options for them become very limited, both for employment and friendships.

The greenhouse would be modeled after similar operations around the country, especially the Cheyenne, Wyo., Botanical Gardens. There, disabled volunteers have created a showcase operation that raises plants for the city gardens and parks.

As Master Gardeners, we know the therapeutic benefits of gardening. What a wonderful activity for people of all interests and ability levels! Hooray for Gardening!