

THE GARDEN PATCH



December 2002

Salt Lake Master Gardener Association

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The Christmas Box House Lightens Children's Lives

By Jan Hemming



Inside the Christmas Box House in Salt Lake, black paper bats dangle from the ceiling. Near the west windows, miniature pumpkins decorated in funny faces along with just-made Halloween masks reveal a festive holiday mood. It is in this environment, on a Wednesday evening, that Salt Lake Master Gardeners Kathy Anderson and Peggy Call prepare for another weekly session on growing and

raising plants to the abused and neglected youth who reside at the House.

This particular night, five children, aged six to 11 years old, are housed at the shelter and seem like typical kids *eager to participate in another *green thumb* experience and demonstrate their knowledge of plants. All correctly identified last week*s lesson on cotyledons *the name given to the first leaves that sprout from seed -- and gleefully select prizes Call has brought as a reward.

One asked Call if they could grow fruit, but she patiently explains that it would be difficult to place a tree sapling under their light box. Since July, Master Gardeners have brought the joy of gardening to the Christmas Box House through a PlantLab, or indoor lighted garden, raising

petunias, basil and nasturtiums.

It*s time for transplanting and the kids start to buzz. Young, tender plants in small containers are moved from the light box to the worktable and busy hands start pouring the potting soil into bigger pots. After repositioning the plant, they pat down the soil in its new receptacle and reach for another. Anderson gently coaxes one child not to *push down too hard on the soil* and advises another to add more potting mix. Suddenly a new transplant tips over spilling the contents on the table but the accident is greeted with lightheartedness and a "that's okay. The plants are pretty tough."

The children are absorbed by the work, which seems more like fun and the dirty hands are a badge of honor. Forty plants get a fresh pot and then a plastic soda container punched with holes is used as a water bottle to refresh the young starts. Everyone pitches in to clean up the potting soil from the table and floor and then eagerly don their jackets to step outside and check how the bigger plants are doing in the outside garden. Some have done extremely well and others are struggling, but the children seem to enjoy the process of helping plants grow. Call closes the evening by reading a book called "Tops and Bottoms" while the children enjoy chips and salsa -- some

Continued on page 2

Notes From the President



By David E.G. Kempf

The other night I was putting meeting stuff in my looseleaf notebook and realized that over the last two years the Executive Board has done a lot of things. This would not have been possible if it were not for the board members and their hard work. They each would take an idea and add something to it and then work really hard on that idea. I would like to thank them each very much and say how much I will miss meeting with them each month. Please, when you see them shake their hands and tell them how much you appreciate their work, okay?

PLEASE renew your membership in the Association and plan on coming to the party on Thursday, Dec. 12th. You need to call Leslie and get your food assignment. Plan on a good time that night.

I would like to thank each of you as members for giving me such fond memories over the last two years. I thank you and wish the best for each member. So long for now and best of HOLIDAYS to each of you. Thanks for your support in the last two years. Please give the incoming board that same support. HAPPY HOLIDAYS !

--DAVID



Christmas Box House... Contd. from page 1
with freshly cut basil from the PlantLab plants.

The swing shift supervisor at the Christmas Box House said she sees the value of the Master Gardener program because it introduces new ideas about "how they can spend their leisure time. Today, most kids come home from school and watch TV and never learn about hobbies that can be satisfying. They especially like activities they get to participate in. It's rewarding and they love to play in the dirt. It's especially important for them to interact with other adults outside of the center."

Another Master Gardener volunteer, Erma Myers, who was unable to attend on this evening, said later that the Christmas Box project "helps the children learn the basics of life while they're little. It taps into their natural curiosity and they get excited."

Maggie Wolf, Utah State University Extension Horticulturist, who initiated the program, said "These Master Gardener volunteers are sharing their joy of gardening, while also teaching critical thinking skills, hand-eye coordination, and reverence towards nature. Meanwhile, the kids are having a great time."

JANUARY WORKSHOPS

Indoor Light Garden

Thursday, January 16, 2003. 6:30 - 8:30PM. USU Extension training room, S-1007-1008. \$125. All materials and most tools provided to construct your own indoor light garden. Made of PVC with sheetmetal pan at base. Register by calling (801) 468-3179. Taught by Maggie Wolf.

Starting Seeds Indoors

Thursday, January 23, 2003. Noon - 1:30. USU Extension training room, S-1007-1008. \$5.00. Learn the 'secrets' to starting your spring seedlings indoors. Every participant will take home containers, seed, and media to practice with. Taught by Maggie Wolf.

THE SECRET OF FORCING BULBS

By Eva Jensen

Everyone wants to give the best present ever. Coming up with a truly unique idea isn't easy and following through is generally even harder. But undaunted, JoDeane Condrat undertook the project of coaxing spring bulbs into bloom for Christmas giving. She had long been intrigued with the process and had her studies on the subject published in *The Garden Patch*. JoDeane might've experimented with the easier bulbs at first, maybe sticking some paperwhites in a windowsill - until she inherited the old refrigerator.

Interfering with nature is a complicated process. The odds were against JoDeane, even with the fridge to simulate nature. A novice might have stuck with one particular cultivar - the exotic amaryllis, perhaps, that comes in perfect colors for the holidays. Not JoDeane. Excited about filling up the hand-me-down fridge, she splurged on all kinds of bulbs. Tulips, hyacinths, daffodils and other bulbs weren't randomly purchased. JoDeane handpicked each species and color. This to coordinate with a daughter's bedroom. That for a friend's living room. Another to brighten the home of a shut-in neighbor. The list went on, a couple of hundred bulbs in all. JoDeane counted back the bloom time and began chilling some of the bulbs as early as September. She tenderly planted, three to a pot, adding different species throughout the weeks to the shelves of the refrigerator in the garage. She periodically peeked at the terra cotta pots, watch-



ing and waiting - hoping shoots wouldn't pop through too soon.

She finally began to relax when the plants reached the crucial stage right on schedule, December 1st. Two weeks before Christmas the long-awaited day arrived. JoDeane made her final inspection first thing in the morning. To her amazement, every single pot burst with life, ready to be introduced into a medium coolness and acclimatized for the warm environment of a new home.

Other errands required JoDeane's attention before she could attend to the plants. She thought nothing of it when she noticed her husband had taken her car. She often drove his pickup. In a hurry, she climbed in and turned on the ignition. Her foot slipped off the clutch, the truck lurched, hitting the fridge and it pitched forward.

"No-o-o. I can't believe I did that," JoDeane said. *Helpless, she watched an array of colors as the flowers flew out, in slow motion. Somehow she gathered the strength to lift the fridge and check the damage. "It must have been adrenalin," JoDeane says. "I've tried sliding it just a little ways since then and I can't do it."

Lesser souls would have given up at that point and chucked the whole mess in the garbage. No JoDeane. Seeing no more than a few broken shoots, she mustered the fortitude for the tedious work ahead. "Why did I do a stupid thing like that?" she kept repeating to herself, repotting the precious living gifts.

"Miraculously, they all survived," JoDeane said. In true Master Gardener fashion, she's way too modest. Miracles take effort on someone's part and they don't come to those who give up.

That year's mishap didn't discourage JoDeane. She's become an old hand at forcing bulbs. "But I've never had such success again," she admits. "I guess the secret is to run into them with a truck."

More Fair Awards

Last month we failed to recognize Kay Packard who entered both the county and state fairs. She received a First place and Judge's Choice ribbons at the county fair. At the State Fair she received a First place for Hens and Chicks and an Honorable Mention for Shamrocks.



Nature's Quieter Gifts

By Kathy Lillywhite

Appreciating the winter garden takes certain training. You must be willing to take the time to observe the subtle beauties, shape, texture and form of the garden as a whole as well as the plants that make up the garden. The subtle beauty of a garden may be found in a single red or black berry, a seed pod encased in ice or the fringe of shaggy bark.

Winter is a time for reflection and planning as this is when the bones of the garden are most apparent. If your winter garden seems bleak this may be the time to plan for some additional plants that can give more satisfying beauty in this austere season. Growing plants with winter interest can not only increase your ability to enjoy the garden-view outside your bedroom window but enable you to find beautiful cuttings for holiday arrangements.

Some of my favorite plants that get heavy pruning just in time for the holidays include: Japanese White Pine (*Pinus parviflora* 'Adcock's Dwarf', z6) is a dense slow growing shrub with soft short gray and green leaves. The deer love this as well but with some protection my shrub keeps ahead of the nibbling. The fragrance adds to its holiday charm.

Corkscrew hazel, (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' z3) these strongly twisted shoots finish the season with winter visibility and make the most unusual and useful elements for flower arrangements.

Holly, (*Ilex aquifolium* z5) there are tropical, sub-tropical, deciduous and evergreen varieties of holly. A nice hardy variety with spiny leaves is 'Blue Maid', a slow growing compact female shrub that produces an abundant supply of



berries. (need both sexes to produce fruit). Once the holly gets established it can be pruned severely.

Southern Magnolia (*M. grandiflora*, 'Edith Bogue' z6 or 7) is a large evergreen tree with broad leathery dark green leaves that make the nicest winter decor. I have not cut from my tree yet. It grew happily and rapidly, close to the south side of the house for two years before I moved it to a more hostile site with more spreading room. Last winter it survived the frost, winter winds and the northern exposure. I'm looking forward to one day soon using its wonderful leaves.

Mahonia japonica or aquifolium (also known as Oregon grapeholly z5) native to our woodlands, mahonia has a nice spiny leaflet that turns orange and red as well as berry clusters that add to its holiday appearance. Cutting from this plant year-round will not deter this evergreen once it is established.

Recently garden centers have increased the availability of winter interest plants; those that are grown for the beauty of their berries, shaggy or multihued barks instead of summer flowers. The successful garden will have its share of plants that contribute to the winter garden and are admired as nature's quieter gifts.

The orange bags are appearing on the streets of Salt Lake City - free compost for those of us who look for more material to put into the garden. I have filled the walkways again this year with leaves and with the knowledge of what happened other years, I am stacking bags of leaves on top of the walkways.

Other years the wind would blow my walkways filled leaves, and I would end up cleaning them out of the rest of the yard. I don't mind cleaning up my own leaves once, but those I bring in from Salt Lake City - once is enough. So far I have hauled home 250 bags. Last year's leaves packed in the walkways yielded a good amount of compost. I have tilled it in to the tops of the beds ready for spring planting.

I took my tomato hedge down and hot composted all the material. I saved a lot of the green tomatoes and as they have turned red, we are still eating them.



When I uncovered the plants, I found the mice were enjoying them. After I destroyed their home, they moved into my house. They can really make a big mess in a short time. As soon as I found evidence of them in the house, I put them on a diet of mice and rat poison.

My next project is to put a layer of compost over the flower beds. The worms will till it into the soil for me. I have one compost bin that I can clean out. That should be enough to finish the job. This will give me room to put the pile that has been cooking to finish its process.

With the amount of sunlight during the day diminishing, this has triggered my Christmas cactus to set blossoms and begin blooming. The cutting I started last spring is also setting blossoms.

I am take care of a poinsettia plant at work. This is its third year and

Continued on page 6

THANK YOU, GILGAL GARDEN VOLUNTEERS!

It has been just over a year since the Master Gardener Association of Salt Lake voted to accept Gilgal Garden as a community service project. Gilgal Garden is a stone sculpture garden located at 749 East 500 South in Salt Lake City. This unique outdoor art museum was purchased by the Friends of Gilgal Garden with funds raised in the community and then donated to Salt Lake City as a public park in June of 2000. The Friends of Gilgal Garden, a volunteer board comprised of concerned citizens, now serves as curator of the park and has many plans for restoration and renovation of the garden.

Although its previous private owners had preserved the property for many years, the herbaceous aspect of the garden had fallen on hard times, in serious need of a major overhaul. This is where the Master Gardener Association stepped in and stepped up to the challenge. After approval by the membership in October, 2001 a group of volunteers organized and led by Beth Price immediately took action at the garden, applying a pre-emergent and a layer of compost in order to be ready for the major spring assault. Your chapter president, Dave Kempff, used his own equipment and considerable expertise to assist in this effort.

This spring, an amazing number of Master Gardeners signed up for the project and showed up week after week to hack at pyracantha, rip out vinca and ivy, dig out stumps, trim branches, clean out borders around the stones on the ground, weed, weed, weed, and then plant old-fashioned zinnias and alyssum to emulate plantings of the original garden. The Master Gardener volunteers performed these activities enthusiastically, cheerfully, generously, and professionally.

The Friends of Gilgal Garden want to thank each and every one of you for your enormously appreciated efforts. The results of your labors are stupendous, the garden is being tamed and beautified at the same time. We are so pleased to be in partnership with an organization that considers community service an important part of its operations and we are so thankful to be a beneficiary of that service. We look forward to a happy future collaboration with the Master Gardener Association of Salt Lake and are filled with anticipation for a beautiful Gilgal Garden.

Many thanks and good wishes for a happy holiday season,

Cathy King, Secretary

Friends of Gilgal Garden

IDEAS FROM SUCCESSES AND FAILURES MEETING

Our Successes and Failures meeting in October yielded some interesting information. For those of you who were not able to attend, here are some of the highlights of the discussion.

Several Master Gardeners changed an area of their yard from lawn to Xeric landscape this year. They were very pleased with the results, both in water savings and appearance of the yard. A Master Gardener who put in Buffalo grass reported that although it was slow going to get it established, it is living up to its reputation of being a good alternative to blue grass, with very little watering and very infrequent mowing.

Some of the favorite annuals this year were winged-leaf begonias and Dahlberg daisy.

Our favorite suggestion was to plant a pumpkin patch and as soon as the fruits appear have all the grandchildren pick out and mark their own pumpkin. They are fascinated to watch them grow through the season. Some one suggested having them scratch their name in the skin with a nail to mark them.

Golden's Garden... Continued from page 5

the leaves are starting to turn color. Originally a 4" potted plant, I have had to repot it twice. It sits on the front counter, and we get a lot of comments on it.

With most of the fall clean up finished, I am debating on weather to trim the rose hedge this fall or wait until spring. In the spring (Cont. on Page 6))

Golden's Garden, cont. from Page 5

I want to cut it down to about 20" high. The weather will determine what I decide on doing.

I have been trying to round up my 2002 seed catalogs. I normally order from them in November for the next year. I need more row cover (like Remy) for next spring. The price will be up in the 2003 catalogs, so a late fall order beats the price hike. One one problem - no free gifts with early orders.

Do you have trouble starting your power equipment in the spring? I had this problem a few years ago. I used Sta-Bil Gas treatment in the fall(end of winter for the snow blower) and my gas-run power equipment has started right up. It has been well worth the price not to have to take equipment in for repairs in the spring.

This is the time of year, after the garden is put to bed for the winter, to sit back and wait for those seed catalogs to arrive.

DON'T FORGET!

We would like to complete our membership drive before turning the books over to our new treasurer. If you have not yet renewed, please get yours in the mail today. A membership, either single or a couple living at the same address, is \$20 and goes from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003

Those who started Master Gardener training this past September are paid up for the coming year. All others need to renew their membership before the end of December.



To renew your SLMGA membership for 2003, send this form and a check for \$20 made out to SLMGA to:

Barbara Watkins, Treasurer

Name(s)

Address

City State Zip Code

Phone Number

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Calendar

Our annual Holiday Party/Class Graduation and Awards Dinner will be at the Wheeler Farm Activity Barn on Thursday, Dec. 12. Socializing at 6:00 p.m. Dinner starts at 7:00 p.m. Please contact Leslie Hughes - to RSVP and to get a food assignment.

Our January meeting will be a getting organized meeting, highlighting the various projects. Please come and get involved. Thursday, January 16, 2003 7:00 p.m. in the classroom

Bulletin Board



USU Extension Salt Lake County
Website:
www.usuextslco.org

Also check out the new Master
Gardeners site:
www.ext.usu.edu/umg

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**If you haven't RSVP'd to Leslie
Hughes for the December Graduation
dinner, please call her at
Last year's students, you will be
graduating!
New students, you will need to be
there to pick up your test!**

DUES ARE DUE

**If you haven't yet renewed
your membership, send it in
today!**

\$20 single or couple to:

Richard Johnson, Treasurer

West Valley City, UT 84119

**Make check payable to
SLMGA**