

The Germinator



PUBLISHED BY THE MEN'S GARDEN CLUB OF YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO
89 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE MAHONING VALLEY AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

President's Message

It is with great sadness that we mourn the loss of fellow member Dr. Jack Walsh who passed away last month. He was a U.S. Navy veteran serving in the Pacific during WWII, and was a practicing optometrist for 45 years. He is survived by a son and daughter, 5 grandchildren and a greatgrandchild. His wife, Evelyn, passed away in 2013.



We should remember another of our members who is seriously ill. Past President Dave Causer is in Whispering Pines Village, Room 224, 937 E. Park St., Columbiana, OH., 330-482-9400. He might appreciate a call or visit from his friends and fellow club members.

Just a reminder that we will, this month, begin preparing for our annual Spring Plant Sale on May 9th thru 11th at the Mahoning County Career & Technical Center, 7300 Palmyra Rd., Canfield. Members interested in helping should call John Schinker at 330-799-6046.

I want to thank the members who took part in the recent Home and Garden Show at the MetroPlex in Liberty. We talked to many gardeners and tried to answer their questions. Many took complimentary seed packets and information brochures.

There was a discussion at the Board of Gardeners meeting about whether our newsletter should be mailed to all members. It was decided that we would continue sending the newsletter via email to those who have that service. Remember, present and past hard copy issues are available at membership meetings.

Sincerely; *Bruce Brungard*, President

Spring Breakfast

Saturday, March 16th, 9am – Fellows Riverside Gardens

Pancakes, eggs, sausage, coffee, juices – \$5

Members encouraged to participate in a "Show 'n Tell".

Take a few minutes to share a favorite tip, tool, or product.

Contact Bob McGowan, 330-518-6397, by March 13th

Kiss Me, I'm Irish

When we drink, we get drunk. When we get drunk, we fall asleep. When we fall asleep, we commit no sin.

When we commit no sin, we go to heaven.

It's the reason we drink on St. Patrick's Day.



Membership Meeting

7pm, Wed., March 6th

Fellows Riverside Gardens

Speaker: John Slanina

Mill Creek Maple Syrup Project

Harvesting Maple Syrup

Guests Welcome

Board Meeting

6:30pm, Wed., March 13th

Austintown Library.

All Members Welcome

MetroParks In March

Now accepting golf leagues, outings & tournaments for 2019.

Nature Photography Exhibit	1-31
Winter Jewels (Orchids)	1-31
Photo Clique-Maples	1,2
Chat w/ Naturalist	2,9,16,23,30
Landscaper's Trade Show	6
Birding the Sanctuary	16
Garden Design 101	16
Golf Sale	17-19
Botanical Mornings	22
Photo Clique: Small World	23
Naturalist Series	23
Green Gardening Course	26
Magnolias Around the World	28
Wetlands Hike	30
Landscape Painting	31

www.millcreekmetroparks.org

In This Issue

President's Message	1
Club News	2
Phil Steiner Presentation	3
Scarificating Seeds	2
Caring for Seedlings	3
Pruning Blueberry Bushes	3
Growing Dahlias	4
Sponsors	5
Club Events & Officers	6

Club News

WWW.MGCY.ORG

84 Members • 2 Associates

Phil Steiner Presentation

Phil Steiner has been hosting his AM-570 call-in radio show, *All That Grows*, for nearly 30 years. During that time, he was president of the now closed Mellenger Nursery in North Lima, and is finance manager of Humtown Products in Columbiana. His presentation at our February membership meeting covered a number of gardening topics followed by a question and answer session.



He began with problems encountered when airing his show. Many people only listen to AM radio when driving. Their attention is divided between absorbing the information and avoiding an accident. Adding calling in while driving compounds the problem. Also, many people tend to call in toward the end of the show resulting in their questions going unanswered.

Phil addressed the short growing problems faced by Northern gardeners. If you don't buy from a nursery, it is necessary to start many plants from seed indoors where damping off fungal diseases become an issue. One solution to this disease, in addition to not over or under watering, is to add cinnamon to the seeds.

Over-fertilizing is another problem when starting crops indoors. Seeds contain sufficient nutrients to sustain them in their initial growth periods and thus should be started in sterilized soil. By mixing unflavored gelatin in the soil, gardeners will provide slow release nitrogen when seedlings need it.

Most gardeners realize that pruning is a yearly chore necessary for most perennial shrubs and small trees. The general rule is to prune within 30 days of when blooms fade. Fruit trees can be pruned in late winter but when temperatures are above freezing. Prune rose bushes down to 18" in December leaving the youngest 5 canes. A final pruning occurs in mid-late March. Hard wood hydrangeas need some of last year's growth to bloom so prune them down to 4-5 ft.

Location is an important factor when installing annuals and new perennials and trees so carefully read the tag or consult the internet. Planting a 6 ft. sapling with the potential to reach 30 ft. plus within 5 ft. of one's home bodes any number of potential problems for the home and the tree itself. How tall and wide with the

Helping our Valley to Grow Since 1930

plant get? How much sun does it require? What type of soil and maintenance will be required? A little research will save you from any number of future problems including having to dig up a plant too large for its location. Some other tips Phil imparted were:

- Conduct soil tests even for containers.

- Run table scraps through a blender to jump-start composting.

- Use water insoluble, slow release fertilizers – Osmocote & Espoma are good examples.

- Apply rock phosphate every 5 years.

- Many commercial fertilizers are now phosphorous free because it naturally occurs in soil. However, it must be added to containers with neutral soil.

Many thanks to Phil, and we hope to have him back soon.

Fellows Naturalist Series

Mark your calendars for this year's Fellows Riverside Gardens' Naturalist Series:

March 23, 6-7pm, FRG - CARNIVOROUS DINOSAURS & WHY BIRDS ARE DINOSAURS

Dale Gnnidovec, OSU Oriton Geological Museum

May 7, 6:30-8pm, FRG - TREE COMMUNICATION & NATURAL DEFENCES.

Dr. Enrich Bonello, OSU

June, 20, 6:30-8pm, MetroPark Farm - COYOTES OF NORTHEAST OHIO

John Cepek, Cleveland MetroParks Ecologist

Sept.. 11, 6:30-7:30pm, FRG - GROWING CATERPILLARS: OF BIRDS, PLANTS & CONSERVATION

Jim McCormac

Nov. 8, 6:30-8pm, MetroParks Farm - RAPTORS
Hether Merritt, Birds In Flight Sanctuary

Coffee w/Master Gardeners - OSU Ext.

March 18, Ext. Office, 9:30am - Coffee & Donuts, 10am - Program: Renovating Old Flowerbeds - Techniques for Flowerbed Rejuvenation.
Lucia Haddad, Master Gardener Volunteer
\$15 PP, Register at 330-533-5538.

MGCY Home & Garden Show Booth

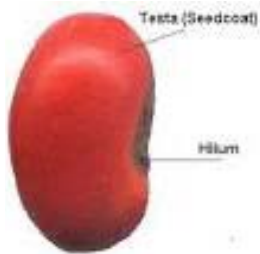


Nicking Seeds Before Planting

Depending on the species, seed scarification is either essential or at least helpful for seed germination. Making a shallow cut or abrading the seed with sand paper, then soaking several hours in water, will enable quicker hydration and germination.

Large and hard seeds such as okra, bean and nasturtium benefit most from nicking. Other plants with waterproof seeds like those in the tomato and morning glory families will also germinate faster. Seeds with a naturally low germination rate or that are scarce should be carefully nicked.

Scarification should be shallow enough to cut the seed coat without damaging the plant embryo inside. Most seeds have a 'hilum' or scar where it was attached to the ovary inside the fruit. Peas and beans have easily identifiable hilums. The eye of black-eyed peas is its hilum with the embryo just below, so nicking on the opposite side works best.



Caring for Seedlings

Living in NE Ohio precludes planting the seeds of many plants directly in the soil. If you don't buy from a nursery, it's easy to start plants indoors. Like raising children, a healthy early childhood will be of benefit throughout life. Here are a few things to consider when caring for seedlings. Most gardeners sow multiple seeds per container. Begin culling weaker seedlings as they grow.



Damping off is a fungal disease that causes plants to wither and die. Look for a thinning stem near the soil. Prevention starts with cleaning and sterilizing containers with a 10% bleach solution. Too much water will cause roots to rot so water when the soil surface is dry. Grow lights should be on a timer set to 12 hours per day and as close as possible to the plants so they won't become leggy by chasing the light. The light's heat may dry the soil so check daily. Too



much water will cause roots to rot so only water when the soil is dry to the touch.

Depending of leaf location, yellowing may be a sign of trouble or just natural. The first starter leaves (cotyledons) will naturally yellow and wither when more mature leaves appear. Yellowing may be due to over-watering so allow the soil dry a bit.

Initially, seedlings don't require much if any fertilizer, too much of which will cause the plants to lock out essential nutrients. If you see white mineral deposits around container holes, you've probably over-fertilized. Flush the container with clean water. If you haven't fertilized, start slowly and see how plants react.

If you started your plants too early, or if spring weather fails to warm as expected, transplant large seedlings to larger containers. Also look for roots emerging from the container holes. When weather permits, begin hardening off plants 2 weeks before installing outside by gradually extending the time they are exposed to the temperature, sun and wind outside. Cold frames and row covers are good hardening tools.

gardeningknowhow.com is the source of these two articles. Sign up for periodic postings.

Pruning Blueberries

Blueberries should be pruned yearly, and in winter when the plants are dormant. Crop production, plant health and fruit quality depend on how aggressively the plant is pruned. Pruning maintains an open habit, improves air circulation, reduces disease and opens the plant center to sunlight. It encourages growth of new, fruit-producing stems and removes dead or damaged branches susceptible to disease. It also increases fruit quality and quantity because more energy goes toward fruit production rather than more leaves.

After cutting dead or damaged branches to their healthy stem, or dead stems to the ground, cut any crossing branches to prevent them from rubbing together. For young bushes or those that have been properly pruned in the past, cut one third of the remaining stems to the ground choosing the oldest and thickest ones for removal. This will encourage new stems to emerge from the roots.

For older bushes that are overgrown or haven't been properly pruned, cut the oldest, thickest half to the ground. New stems will grow from the roots. Branches 7-8 years old have greatly reduced fruit production. Over the next 2-3 years, remove the remainder of the oldest stems a few at a time. In all cases don't try to shape the bush because fruiting buds are located in the outermost 2-3 inches of stem growth.

Growing Dahlias

We have come to the conclusion that the average gardener is intimidated by the thought of growing dahlias, feeling that they require too much attention. A good example occurred during at our 2017 Plant Auction when Rodney Toth, an expert grower, offered a mixed collection but received no bids. With the National Garden Bureau selecting them as the Bulb of the Year, a short growing and care tutorial might be in order.

Dahlias (*Asteraceae* family) are tuberous plants with a 120 day plus growing season ranging from 2” lollipop-size to 15” dinner plate giants. Perennials in zones 8-11, the tubers require storage in this area. The plants do best in full sun



and rich, well drained, 6.5-7 pH soil.



Delay planting until soil reaches 60 degrees in an area offering some wind protection. Avoid tubers that appear wrinkled or rotten. Pink ‘eyes’ and a little green growth are good signs. Small, bedding varieties can be planted 9-12” apart while intermediate sized plants growing to 3’ should be spaced 2’ apart. Larger varieties that grow to 5’ plus should be planted 3’ apart.

The 6-8” deep planting hole should be slightly larger than the root ball. Mix in some compost or peat moss and bonemeal into the soil. After setting the tuber (eyes up) in the hole, cover with 1-3” of soil. As shoots appear, continue to cover until reaching ground level. Smaller varieties can be grown in containers, and plants can be started indoors a month prior to installing.

Blooming begins about 8 weeks after planting, usually mid-July. Don’t mulch around the stems as it supplies a hiding place for slugs, and dahlia roots love sunlight. Apply slug and snail bait throughout the growing season. Other pests include spider mites, earwigs, cucumber beetles, aphids and deer. Begin spraying for powdery mildew in late July or August.

Don’t water until shoots appear, then hydrate with 2-3 deep waterings per week as necessary. Fertilize when shoots appear and every 3-4 weeks until early Autumn with low-nitrogen (5-10-10 or 10-20-20) liquid fertilizer. Over-fertilization, especially with nitrogen, will harm the plants and blooms. When plants reach 1’ tall, pinch off 3-4” of the main stem to encourage bushy growth.

Larger varieties will need stake supports inserted at the time of planting and, on rainy and windy days, check for damage and blooms filling up water. Remove the 2 smaller buds next to the central one in the flower cluster. This will allow for fewer but larger blooms. Moderately pinch, disbranch and deadhead to produce showy blooms lasting 3 months or more.

Smaller, bedding dahlias don’t require staking or debudding. Pinch off the main stem above the third set of leaves to get a bushier plant. Deadhead spent blooms. Dig up the tubers after the first frost leaving some soil attached and store in sawdust in a cool, dark area. For the full tutorial, go to Almanac.com and enter ‘Growing Dahlias’ in the keyword box.

Farmer’s Flubs February

The *Old Farmer’s Almanac* missed the boat when predicting February temperatures across the country would be 3-5 degrees warmer than average. We don’t know about the national average, but the last week saw the polar vortex’ setting record low temps in the Midwest and East. Actually, except for the cold snap, *Farmer’s* would probably have been on the money.

The *Almanac* claims an 80% accuracy using a secret formula devised by its founder, Robert B. Thomas, in 1792. Originally based on the influence of sunspots – magnetic storms on the sun’s surface - the formula has been refined over the years using state-of-the-art technology and modern scientific calculations.

Phil Casts No Shadow

We tend to doubt that Spring begins in March but the calendar says otherwise. Daylight Saving Time starts on the 10th and the Vernal Equinox occurs on the 20th. If you need further proof, Groundhog Phil didn’t see his shadow on Feb. 2nd so we won’t have to wait ‘til April to reap the season’s blessing this year.



All through the long winter, I dream of my garden. On the first day of Spring, I dig my fingers deep into the soft earth. I feel its energy, and my spirits soar. Helen Hayes

Can words describe the fragrance of the very breath of Spring? Neltje Banchan

Everything is blooming most recklessly; If it were voices instead of colors, there would be an unbelievable shrieking into the heart of the night. Rainer Maria Rilke

I think that no matter how old or infirm I become, I will always plant a large garden in Spring. Who can resist the feelings of hope and joy that one gets from participating in Nature’s rebirth? Edward Giobbi

It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold; when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade. Charles Dickens

Never yet was a springtime, when the buds forgot to bloom. Margaret Elizabeth Sangster

People ask me what I do in Winter when there is no baseball. I’ll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for Spring.

Rogers Hornsby
Spring shows what God can do with a drab, dirty world world.

Virgil A. Kraft



The Germinator

March 2019

Thank you to the MGCY Friends for their Civic Fund donations.
Members are urged to give them a visit.

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The Germinator

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calendar of events



March 6	General Meeting.....	FRG	7:00 pm
March 13	Board Meeting.....	APL	6:30 pm
March 16	Spring Breakfast	FRG	9:00 am
April 5	General Meeting.....	FRG	7:00 pm
April 12	Board Meeting.....	APL	6:30 pm
May 3.....	General Meeting.....	FRG	7:00 pm
May 10.....	Board Meeting	APL	6:30 pm

Please Join Us!

The purpose of The Men's Garden Club of Youngstown is to create a better understanding of gardening and to encourage and promote the beautification of our community. In order to meet this endeavor, several civic projects are completed each year.

Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the D. D. Davis Center at Fellows Riverside Garden. Members receive a monthly newsletter, "The Germinator," which has timely gardening hints, club news and other local and regional horticultural events. Members also become members of The National Men's Garden Club of America.

Membership is open to residents of the Mahoning Valley and surrounding communities with an interest in gardening.

To join, contact us at: **Men's Garden Club of Youngstown Ohio**



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or on our website at www.mgcy.org

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