

# The Garden Master News

## Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

ISSUE # 2

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SPRING 2009

### AMGA



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## AMG OPPORTUNITIES

### Urban Farm Museum Society of Spryfield

The Urban Farm Museum Society of Spryfield is a group that runs two garden sites based just outside of Halifax.

[www.urbanfarmspryfield.com](http://www.urbanfarmspryfield.com)

The group is currently working on creating a lecture series to be hosted throughout the year for interested members and public. They are looking for more speakers

to share knowledge with the community throughout the spring and summer. Interested AMGA members who would like to volunteer as a Speaker please contact:

**Joanna Brown**  
**(902)423-6112**

**Coordinator/Volunteer Nurturer**  
**Spryfield Urban Farm**  
**Museum Society.**

### The Goodness Grows! Dartmouth Gardening Network

Is open to all with a passion for and commitment to gardening and the Dartmouth community. Goodness Grows! is supported in part by funds from the Dartmouth Community Health Board's Community Development Fund, 2008. If you have questions about Goodness Grows! or want to become a member, please contact Mary-Jo Monk, Founder of Goodness Grows! and Lead for Network Development, at:

[goodnessgrowsdartmouth@gmail.com](mailto:goodnessgrowsdartmouth@gmail.com) or (902) 463-9326.



## AMGA Crests

AMG Crests have arrived and are now available at \$6 each. If you would like one (or more) to wear to your MG projects, please contact Sue Stuart: [suestuart@accesswave.ca](mailto:suestuart@accesswave.ca)



# PREPARATION FOR GARDENING

- CHRISTINE BOARDMAN

There's a saying that 'He who does not make time for exercise will, sooner or later, have to make time to be ill.' Doubtless this is true, but I would amend it slightly to say 'Gardeners who do not make time to warm up before gardening, and to stretch every now and then whilst gardening and after putting their tools away, will, sooner or later, have to make time to be ill!' Not so catchy, but....!

Many minor injuries, particularly of shoulders, hips, backs, and the joint at the bottom of the thumb on your dominant hand, develop when muscles and joints are suddenly jolted into action or overworked. Totally appalled, they rebel! Personal experience has shown me that this assertive response worsens with age! I would like to suggest some ways to prevent injury.



## Coming out of dormancy!

Obviously it is easier to get back to gardening tasks if one has continued to exercise during the winter. Most municipalities offer classes of various kinds and levels. However, even the fittest would be wise to start by warming up every day when venturing outside to work. Those who have studied Yoga or Martial Arts as well as most exercise programs will already be well aware of this. Some of the following exercises are gleaned from various classes I have given, (for example, long ago to a group for the 'frail elderly' (not like us!), back

when I was an OT student) or taken, in Tai Chi and Karate classes. Most however are from recent classes I have taken from Edward Rafuse, Chester's fitness guru. His knowledge is more up to date in regard to body mechanics and recent research than mine, and so he is kindly monitoring this article. Thanks Ed! I know it is hard to bother, but I think it is worth investing 10 to 15 minutes per day in warming up!

## Firstly.

ALWAYS STOP if anything hurts.  
NEVER force any movement,  
.....(and yes! I am shouting!)

Also look out for furniture and Grandma's Spode when you exercise indoors!

## Warming Up.

A muscle at normal body temperature is considered cold when it comes to sudden exertion. The necessity for warming up obviously depends on the outside temperature, as well as when your body last exerted itself. At the beginning of the season, which is usually chilly at best, it is important to start slowly. I suggest that you repeat each of the following movements from 5 (at first) to 15 times.\*

## Heel Raises.

This is something you can do at the same time as the dishes! Simply rise up and down on your toes. You can steady yourself on the sink if need be. Do this several times to flex and warm your calf muscles.

# PREPARATION FOR GARDENING

- CHRISTINE BOARDMAN



## Marching

Whether on the spot, around the house, or outdoors if it is warm, this is a good way to start. (If outside you can strut around while you decide on your day's gardening priorities!) Some of the largest muscles get going which generates heat. Once in rhythm, swing your arms at the same time. When feeling a bit warmer, start the following movements while continuing to step. Alternatively, walking or running upstairs is a great warm up as large muscles are used and it gets you breathing more deeply.



## Shrugging

Shrugging your shoulders is a good warm up for your neck and upper chest. Don't worry about crackles! Do 15 to 20 shrugs.

## Shoulder Rolls

Continuing to march, roll your shoulders back in circles about 5 times. Gradually increase the size of your circles, and continue the larger rolls at least 5 times. Now roll them forwards, small circles at first, a slowly using a greater range of movement. Gently use any muscles that feel like joining in. There is no reason to isolate your muscles groups. Increase to a min. of 15 as you feel able. Your legs and torso should now be feeling comfortably warm. If not, march and shrug some more.

## Torso

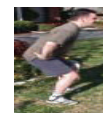
At first, standing in an erect relaxed posture with your feet and knees pointing forward,\*\* clasp your hands, tuck your

elbows into your waist, and twist slowly to one side. Hold it for a second or two, then go back to the centre. Now twist to the other side and hold. Do this several times. Once your muscles feel loose and relaxed, try the following. Choose somewhere with lots of room. Stand in the same relaxed posture, with your feet and knees pointing directly forward. Twist your waist as far as is comfortable, swinging your arms, then twist to the other side. When comfortable with this, let your hips join in and get a bigger movement. Twirl from side to side, but monitor your movement so that you do not stretch past your comfort level. ("Like a carefree child" as one of my Tai Chi instructors used to say!) Repeat as often as you can. This is a great warm up for the entire body.



## Reaching

Standing in the same position with legs a little further apart, reach both hands up high to one side. Now reach them both to the other side. Alternate fairly quickly to keep your muscles warm. Do this a few times, trying to slowly stretch your shoulder muscles. Be careful not to over stretch. To rest, shrug some more.



## Squats.

Keeping your arms out in front, bend your knees as far as comfortable and straighten them again. It is important to keep your toes and knees pointing in the same direction, to avoid stress on your knees. Repeat a few times, but stop if your muscles tighten uncomfortably. March out any cramps. Ed suggests that you hold your spade out in front of you! Maybe start with a lighter tool (not sharp ones!) one in

## PREPARATION FOR GARDENING

- CHRISTINE BOARDMAN

(Continued from page 2)

each hand, as spades can be a bit heavy! Squats help immensely with strengthening your legs and improving the flexibility of your ankles, ready for those many kneeling jobs. Using a tool as a weight improves arm strength.



### Outside at last!

#### Spreading the Load.

Our culture tends to encourage finishing one job before starting another. However, when the work is heavy, this is very unwise. Repetitive tasks, such as digging, edging, and especially pruning, can cause injury and strain in the muscle and joint groups used. If you have arthritis already, repetitive tasks will worsen it.

Try not to overload wheelbarrows or buckets! It is more sensible to make twice the number of journeys than risk a strain from heavy lugging. Also try to share dominance. Do some jobs, if you can, with your nondominant side for a while. (Your dominant side will soon take over again, of course! It is well named!) Try to do jobs such as edging in both directions, each for a few minutes at a time. (Well, realistically, try not to edge in each direction more than half an hour at a time.) I suggest that it is unwise to perform a single task for more than about 20 – 30 mins. less if you have arthritis of any kind. There is always weeding to be done somewhere, when you can kneel or sit, stretch your arms and shoulders to reach, and generally move and wriggle as much as possible. (If your weeding is all up to date please come over to my garden!).

### Tools

Firstly using the right tool for the job really helps, even if you have left it inside somewhere! Going to find it provides a break and a stretch anyway ... all to the good! Keeping tools sharp is very important when trying to prevent joint injury. Let the tool do the work, not your body!

### Stretching (My favourite part!)

I would recommend taking frequent breaks to stretch a little between tasks, plus more extensive stretches, assuming you feel warm, before you go indoors again.



### Legs

With legs a stride apart, one ahead of the other, both heels on the floor, lunge forward on your front leg and hold for several seconds. This stretches your calf muscles. Repeat and then do it twice on the opposite side. If there is something to hold on to, do so and, standing on one leg squeeze the other foot up towards your bum, holding on to your foot. It may not go all the way. Never mind! You are still stretching the muscles at the front of your thigh. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat on the other side and hold. Aim towards about 15 secs. You may then want to step it out by marching on the spot of a minute.



### Gentle neck stretches.

**These must be done very carefully and only when you are comfortably warm.**

A lot of important 'stuff' is carried in your neck! Think of where roots and stems join,

## PREPARATION FOR GARDENING

- CHRISTINE BOARDMAN  
(Continued from page 2)

and how careful you are to treat this area of your plant correctly! Stand still in the usual erect posture. \*\*

Tilt your head to the left, ear towards your shoulder and hold for several seconds. Never force your head further than is comfortable. Now hold your head upright for a few seconds. Bend your head again to the right this time, ear to shoulder and hold for a few seconds. Be very careful not to over stretch!

Relax your neck by shrugging a few times. Now look along (not over) your left shoulder and hold for a few seconds. Come back to the centre and shrug a couple of times. Now turn to look across your right shoulder for a few seconds. Relax and shrug. Repeat!



### Side Bends

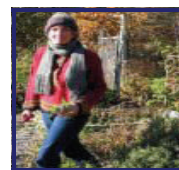
Feet apart and knees slightly bent as usual, bend to one side as far as is comfortable, one arm stretching down towards the side of your knee, and the other bent over your head. Hold for a few seconds and stand upright. Now bend to the other side and repeat this on the other side.



### Triceps stretch

Point your right elbow to the sky so that your hand is behind your right shoulder. Bring your left hand over your head and press your right elbow gently back. Your right hand will slide down and in towards your spine. Hold for several seconds and

repeat. Now do the same on the other side, pressing your left elbow back. Personally, I find these last two stretches most refreshing. You can walk round the garden while doing both of them. (Never mind the neighbours)



### Cool down

This is a great time to wander round your garden, deadheading and deciding what to do tomorrow.

Just walk and shrug for a while.

Of course you will remember to keep yourself hydrated! The more bathroom breaks you get the better!

The perceptive among you will have guessed that I am terrified of hurting anyone! This is probably because I cannot watch you and make sure you are not injuring yourself! I do realize that most of you already know all of this as well as I do ... I hope it helps to be reminded! It is so difficult to make one's self pause and take the time to warm up and stretch when we are eager to get out and get our hands dirty! We all have our own hang ups! Personally I find not finishing a job before starting another the hardest thing, and this really has resulted in 'having to make time to be ill!

But this year I'm going to practice what I preach!

\*If anything hurts stop immediately!

\*\* This is a good posture for most exercises, unless otherwise mentioned.

# Scattered Seeds II

- By Carol Goodwin

Well, what a winter! I finally gave in and every morning for five days I put up a section of deer fence. The whole yard isn't done, but they seem to think it is – and that's the main thing! I bought the deer barrier at the Co-op. \$50 for 25 feet of fence, 76 inches high. It seems a lot of money for something that looks like stiff pea netting. However, it's a better investment than blood pressure capsules – which is where I was going, otherwise! There's a single flower bud left on my *Viburnum alnifolium*, and a few holly and euonymus leaves remain – protected by the deep snow. Thankfully they failed to notice my spring witch hazel!

The only other wildlife struggle I'm facing is the Cooper's hawk feeding in my backyard. I don't like it, but somehow it's less offensive than deer browsing. I intervened yesterday – he had a starling on the ground, but it had sheltered under some branches where he couldn't quite reach it. I shooed him

off, and the starling, unsure of my intentions, dove into the wood pile. It seems everyone has had more than enough winter! I love it for about two months, but by the end of February I'm ready for spring. Usually my friends poo-poo my attitude, but this year it seems we're all in agreement! I have to admit, though, it was a joy shoveling on the Sunday in early March. The snow had left that wonderful 'clean air' smell. The sun was strong enough that I was out with just a sweater on. The buds are visibly swelling. The pussy willows are about half emerged – just waiting to pop! I always plan for next year's early spring on days like that. The snow has melted along the foundation – a few crocus tucked in there would be up by now. The spring hazel will be out by mid March, and some winter aconite would provide a shot of yellow with the last orange hazel flowers as they start to fade. I need to get a duckbill anchor for the obelisk, which is leaning drunkenly off to one side. A February daphne next to the rose



on the south side of my house would flower about the same time as the hazel in the back garden, and would provide a nice whiff of fragrance every time I step out with the dog. And to think I was convinced I had no more room for plants!

March 25, 2009 – Epilogue

Well, that last snow fall has all but 'done me in'! Enough, already!! There's something just insulting about a late spring snowfall. We got 30 cm in Truro, so no more garden work tantalizing me. I was trudging through the garden this morning just feeling sorry for myself, and the bright yellow of my Hamamelis flowers caught my eye. Thank God for early spring flowers! It's funny, we hardly notice the autumn hazel when it throws out its petals in late September, but its March flowering cousin is practically worshipped!

It just shows how your frame of mind changes over the seasons.

The deer have broken through my deer fence twice now. Literally. The wooden 2X2 fence posts snapped in half. They were temporary, until the ground thawed and I could replace them with steel T-rails. It's annoying, none the less! It's just one more reason to be impatient for spring.

As you might know, I'm just tying up the loose ends to take my class to the UK. It's always a thrill to go, but it means I miss spring altogether unless it starts early! By the time we reach England in early May spring is over, and by the time we come back in late May, it's finished here (well, with any luck at all). I expect no sympathy, but it's the one thing about the course that I regret. Well, I'll head out and admire my Hamamelis and enjoy spring!



**HAMAMELIS**  
Spring hazel

**Carol Goodwin**

Associate Professor  
Department Of  
Environmental Horticulture  
Environmental Sciences  
N. S. Agricultural College

# An Edible Landscape

- By Anita Sulley

Have you noticed a "growing" Interest in home vegetable growing? Whether it is due to a tightening economy, a desire to eat better or just for the fun of it, growing food in backyards is on the rise.

Food plants can fit into just about any size landscape. It's all about planning. Even the tiniest space can produce a bountiful harvest. How many wonderful herbs and tomatoes have been enjoyed from patio containers? I discovered the hard way that big is not necessarily better. As a plant enthusiast I planted a small farm of vegetables the first year we moved to our two-acre property. As summer got into full gear, I was rewarded with more weeds than I care to admit to. Needless to say the harvest was also a bit disappointing. Last year I had much more success with my 'urban' raised bed garden. I planted small amounts of our favorites using techniques from the Master Gardener course. The end result was a garden that was not only pleasing to the eye but also easier to manage and far more productive.

Before you dive into the seed catalogues and are lured by the

baskets of multicolored vegetables and fruits, it's best to decide what you like to eat and how much time you want to put into it. A little homework will go a long way. Consider your soil conditions and space available. Pumpkins are fun but if you are on a small city lot, their size is a consideration.

Often vegetables are bought as starter plants in the spring. This is handy but the selection will be limited. Don't be intimidated by starting from seed - it's a fun and easy project and you will have a wide variety of vegetables to choose from. Order well in advance, as different vegetables should be planted at different times and who knows our Spring may be early this year.

Maybe you will want to try organic gardening. A small backyard garden is just the place to perfect the technique. The joy of walking out onto your own patch and picking leaves, fruit and roots to be eaten straight away is even greater when you don't have to wash the chemicals off first.

How about trying some Heirloom varieties. Do you remember those old-time vegetables varieties that your grandmother used to grow in her



## An Edible Landscape

( Cont'd)

garden? They were eaten right from the garden and were so very good. Today, we as gardeners, have the opportunity to same vegetable varieties by growing heirloom vegetables. We don't have to worry about mass production and storage for shipment, like commercial growers. A home garden is where you can grow these treasured varieties that have stood the test of time.

Let's experiment and report back on our results. It's half the fun.

### Scarlet Runner

Races for "Fastest Growing Bean" Title



## Raised Bed



## Homegrown

# Florida Master Gardeners Shine

- by Heather Connors-Dunphy

When my husband and I were getting ready to go to Florida this year, I was just completing work on "The Art of Gardening". Gardening was on my mind, so I googled "Master Gardeners in Florida". To my surprise, one of the first hits was a MG sponsored garden event in Ocala, Florida. This article talks about the work of the MGs and the show.

The Marian County Master Gardeners' Spring Festival is held in Ocala, Florida. It is co-sponsored by the Master Gardeners, the local newspaper and radio stations, the University of Florida Extension Services and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. This year's theme was "green home gardening". "Due to the current economic difficulties the educational component focused on home food production". Before the show there was an eight page insert in the newspaper; this served double duty as a show guide.

The grounds are in a pleasant, live oak shaded area. Live oaks draped in Spanish moss really say, "this is the South"! The grounds included a large tent occupied by people presenting education material. These included the Camellia, Rose and Bonsai Societies, Florida Yards and Neighbourhoods, 4-H Youth Development, State Extension Services and a question and answer area staffed by Master Gardeners. Other exhibits included a display of native insects and results of the work of an Amaryllis Study group. Master Gardeners

were selling for \$15 their Garden Guide and Journal which outlines season by season, what gardeners in the area can/should be doing. Access to the education tent was free.

Beyond this area was a main gate. For the fee of \$1.00 there were over 70 exhibitors selling everything from plant material to worm castings, to water barrels to garden art and antiques and landscaping services. There was also a food court area. The grounds were buzzing with people browsing and buying. Patrons' large purchases were hauled in carts to the pick up area by local 4-H club members.

The plant material was glorious to a colour-starved Maritimer. Many of the items we use as house plants, such as crotons were in abundance as were cactus, bonsai specimens, and magnificent vanda orchids. "Outdoor" plant material consisted mainly of shrubs and annuals with some perennials and herbs mixed in. Imagine being able to purchase an olive tree!

At the back of the grounds there is a vegetable demonstration garden. It is a garden plot with a few fruit trees,



**plant material  
for sale**

## Florida Master Gardeners Shine

(Cont'd from page 10)

vegetables, a lasagna garden (the herbs used in making lasagna, planted in soil that started out with shredded newsprint and sand, amended with compost) a butterfly garden and a herb garden. Along one side there is a number of composting devices and compost is actively being made in a 3-bin system.

Due to the economic situation there was a lot of interest in this garden and what was being grown in it. As a side note, most of the soil in this area is sandy to say the least. The garden soil has been heavily amended with compost.

This garden was the site for a number of talks on subjects such as: mulching and composting, growing root crops, growing corn, greens and onions, growing tomatoes, peppers and squash, and container plantings of fruit and vegetables. Master Gardeners presented all of these topics. Some were done on both show days. Other topics were proper tree planting presented by a State Horticulture Agent and Water Conservation presented by a Florida Yards and Neighbourhoods Agent. In a nearby auditorium, topics such as safe food handling and preserving and cooking with fresh herbs with delicious samples included!) were presented.

I attended the composting and water conservation talks. Most people had no knowledge of composting and the presentation was geared to them. The presenter (a Master Gardener) explained the basics of greens and browns,

demonstrated how the various composting devices worked and showed compost in various stages. Each person was given explanatory handouts and a sample of compost made in the garden.



**composting  
presentation**

Since there is a serious water shortage in Florida (I was in Florida for over 30 days and there was rain on three of them!) there is regulation of water use for outdoor purposes. "Florida residents used an average of 155 gallons/person/day while Marion County (where the show was) residents use an average of 203-250 gallons/person/day". Most areas allow outdoor watering twice per week. The presenter (a Florida Yards and Neighbourhoods Agent) spoke about conserving water through the use of watering systems and rain barrels. She demonstrated some of the micro-irrigation equipment available. The micro systems are based on 1/2" poly tubing and a series of misting stakes and the drip kits are based on 1/4" vinyl tubing and dripper stakes.

The rain barrel presentation was very informative. Topics included how to catch the water and get it to the barrel, where to find a barrel (the storage tank), how to set up and use the system including filtration and distribution of the water, and how to make the barrel a part of your home's hardscaping.



## Florida Master Gardeners Shine

(Cont'd from page 10)

Again effective brochures and practical advice were available.

This is the 15<sup>th</sup> festival. This event and the sales of the manual mentioned above are the main fund raisers for the Marion County MGs. Both Marion and Volusia (an adjacent Florida county) MGs were working together. All wore green tee shirts or golf shorts identifying them as Master Gardeners or Trainee Master Gardeners by county. I even spotted a spouse sporting a bright green tee shirt with "Help!!! I'm married to a Master Gardener" on it.



**Master  
Gardener  
spouse**

The day was informative and interesting. I truly lusted for some of the plant material, but that was not to be! This festival looks like a great way to integrate aspects of environmental and horticultural interests to the benefit of the community.

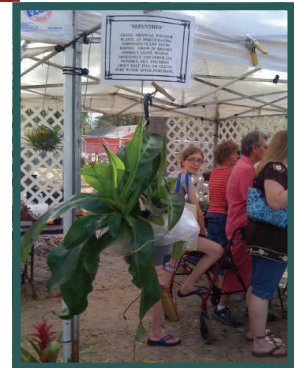


**Master  
Gardeners**



**bonsai  
for sale**

**exotic  
pitcher plant**



**bougainvillea**

**Vanda orchid**



## Fun Plant Facts

\*The bright orange color of carrots tell you they are an excellent source of Vitamin A which is important for good eyesight, especially at night. Vitamin A helps your body fight infection, and keeps your skin and hair healthy.



\*Onions contain a mild antibiotic that fights infections, soothes burns, tames bee stings and relieves the itch of athletes foot.



\*Asparagus is a member of the lily family, which also includes onions, leeks, and garlic.



\*The rose family of plants, in addition to flowers, gives us apples, pears, plums, cherries, almonds, peaches and apricots.



\*Peanuts are beans.

