

# The Gardeners' Gazette

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## Table of Contents

Notes on Dry Shade	1,2
Top Ten Plants	1,3
Notes on Dry Shade	2
Meg's Miscellany	
Top Ten Plants	3
What's In Your Garden?	
Weeds!	
Carrie's Corner	4
The 2009 Class of MG Trainees	5
MG Interviews: Dry Shade	6,7
A MG's Convention	8
MG Profile: Peg Baseden	9
The Book Shelf: Book Review	10



Snowdrops and  
Hellebores

## DRY SHADE

### Notes on Dry Shade

Most **shade** plants prefer moist soil, but **dry shade** presents a special challenge for gardeners. Dry shade exists because not enough moisture reaches the soil or because the soil won't hold the moisture.

Dry shade comes in several varieties: it can be under a canopy of either deciduous or evergreen trees which take moisture from the ground and/or deflect rain water, or it can be a heavy dry shade in

the shade of a building. Dry shade associated with "woodland" sites is yet a different dry shade problem.

If the dry shade is just too dense for anything to grow there, letting in a little more light is a solution: by limbing trees up by cutting off some lower branches or by selective pruning of the crown of the tree. You may recall the Tulip Poplars at Mt. Cuba being limbed up over forty feet. That explains why the "woodland" there is hospitable to azaleas

and rhododendrons.

Besides occurring under a tree canopy, dry shade occurs under trees with spreading, shallow roots—such as Norway maple, beech, willow, and evergreen trees. Lots of organic matter, worked carefully in and down between the roots, will over time help without disturbing the tree. Burrell suggests that "successional species" like most maples, black gum, hickories, and tulip poplars will tolerate root disturbances;

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Top Ten Plants for Dry Shade

1. **Ornamental Grasses:** Evergold Carex (*Carex oshimensis*) and *C. muskingumensis*; Hair grass (*C. comans*); *Dryopteris*

spp.; Hakone grass (*Hakonechloa macra*); *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' (tolerates dry or wet soil); White variegated Monkey Grass (*Ophiopogon japonicum*).

2. **Big-root geranium**

(*Geranium macrorrhizum*):—not the annual geranium genus Pelargonium; or cranesbill (*Geranium maculatum*); Bloody cranesbill (*G. sanguineum*) is a good ground cover and tolerant of dry places.

*(Continued on page 3)*

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but oaks, beeches, and sugar maples are more temperamental.

We know, further, that rain and sunshine only reach the ground under deciduous trees in early spring and late autumn. Some plants, therefore, are best suited to those two periods, namely small spring bulbs, assuming again that there is enough soil in which to plant them.

Bulbs such as snowdrops, winter aconite, glory-of-the-snow, miniature daffodils, wood anemones, and squill can be planted shallowly between surface roots and covered with a few inches of mulch over the soil.

There are also spring wildflowers like bloodroot, bluebells, trout lilies, Virginia bluebells, and trilliums that burst into bloom early in the spring and are long gone by the time of real challenge: summer and fall.

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## Meg's Miscellany

**In vino veritas:** People around the world have enjoyed wine for millennia, but are wine grapes the crop that sparked organized agriculture and early farming societies? Some University of Pennsylvania archeologists think it's possible, pointing to 7000-9000 year old clay jugs with wine residue inside. The Penn scientists theorize that wine was so central to ancient religious rites that grapes may be the earliest cultivated crop. See <http://www.upenn.edu/museum/Wine/wineintro.html>.

Elsewhere from the ancient world, it seems we're not the only civilization to risk destroying itself through environmental disaster. Eco-scientists now believe that the powerful Roman Empire fell in large part because they deforested much of Europe and North Africa to grow grain. After centuries of deforestation, crops began failing, leading to famine and disease. Once the big cities starved, Rome fell to outside invaders.

There's a powerful new website online—one devoted to the business and economy of going green. One of the members of the rock group, The Rolling

Stones, sunk his cash into creating the Mother Nature News, intended to be the CNN of environmental news. MNN covers green technology and investment, community gardening, organics, green lifestyle and much more. You can also get their daily round-up of breaking environmental news by signing up at MNN.com.

And, just to end where I began, with wine, there's a company that wants your wine bottle corks and is willing to pay you for them. Yep, TerraCycle.net wants to buy your old cell phones, yogurt containers and much more because they turn garbage into great stuff. This is one of the most innovative green companies I've ever heard of. Go [TerraCycle.net](http://TerraCycle.net) ≠

[by Meg MacDonald]



## TidBit

Did you know that as a Master Gardener you can be a guest blogger at Horticulture magazine? You can share gardening experience and post blogs in witty, "seasonably fitting and informative ways." Visit [www.hortmag.com/article/blogcontest](http://www.hortmag.com/article/blogcontest).

(Continued from page 1)

3. **Barrenwort** or Bishop's Hat (*Epimedium* x *versicolor* 'Sulphureum' or 'Neosulphureum'. *Epimedium* x *perralchicum* 'Frohnleiten' forms a vigorous groundcover, with evergreen foliage and lemon-yellow blooms in spring. Many others: *Epimedium franchetii*, *E. grandiflorum*, *E. x pinnatum*, *E. pubigerum*, *E. x youngianum*

4. **Ground covers:** Sweet woodruff (*Gallium odoratum*): finely textured leaves, white flowers in spring, and will spread. Other ground covers: *Ajuga reptans*, *Rohdea japonica* (evergreen); Allegheny spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*).

5. **Hellebores** (*Helleborus* spp.): Stinking Hellebore (*H. foetidus*); Lenten rose (*H. orientalis*) now named *Helleborus x hybridus*, 2005 Perennial of the Year;

6. **Ferns:** Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*); Long-eared holly fern (*Polystichum neolobatum*); Korean rock fern (*P. tsussimense*); Makinoi's holly fern (*P. makinoi*); Dryopterises—*D. x australis*; margin wood fern (*D. marginalis*), lacy fancy fern (*D. intermedia*), Mexican male fern (*D. pseudo-filix-mas*), Golden Scale Male Fern (*D. affinis/D. pseudo-mas*); beaded wood fern (*D. bissetiana*). And Common Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*).

7. **Heucheras:** native coral bells (*Heuchera Americana*) or another native *Heuchera villosa*; *H. micrantha*; *H. rubescens* and 100s of hybrids and cultivars. Heucheras **pre-**

**fer** moisture-retentive, well-drained soil, but some will tolerate dry shade.

8. **[Put in your own favorite Dry Shade plant!!!]** Or try these "marginally successful plants which "might" work in dry shade: *Actaea* (formerly *Cimicifuga*); *Colchicum*; *Bergenia*; *Pulmonaria*; *Dicentra*—all of which do much better in moisture-retaining soil and cool shade (but probably not dry).

9. **Spring Bulbs:** Aconites (*Aconitum*), Snowdrops (*Galanthus* spp.); Glory-of-the-snow (*Chionodoxa* spp.); miniature daffodils and other *Narcissus* spp.; and squills (*Scilla siberica*); *Anemone thalictroides*; *Anemonella thalictroides* (Rue Anemone); *Anemone blanda* (Grecian Windflower); *A. sylvestris* (Snowdrop Anemone).

10. **Hostas** (*Hostas* spp.): many cultivars not suited to dry shade; most hostas prefer moist shade—variegated leaves, "blue" leaves, miniatures, giants ('Sum & Substance'); several are suited to dry shade: *Hosta kikutii* and *Hosta longipes* are good for hot-summer gardens with long periods of drought.≠

### TidBits

As noted in the January, 2009 issue of Gardens Illustrated, Duchy Originals, the company launched by the Prince of Wales, now markets 51 different kinds of premium organic seeds—vegetables, herbs, and salad including cabbage 'Derby Day,' mangetout pea 'Norli' and beetroot 'Bolivar.' For details go to [www.duchoriginals.com](http://www.duchoriginals.com). All profits go to the Prince's Charities Foundation.≠

## What's in Your Garden? WEEDS!

[by Pat Hodgson]

Just because you are a Master Gardener doesn't mean you are exempt from having weeds. Hum along as we sing "nut sedge and thistle and stilt grass and spurge, goose grass and bitter cress and onion grass, lesser celandine and chickweed galore -these are a few of our favorite things." Couldn't resist setting it to music. Many of the weeds grow in the flower beds; so remedies must be used with care. Digging or pulling the weeds out is the most "green" way to get rid of them. Meg MacDonald says that yanking out the worst of the weeds is good for the quadriceps muscles. Dick Pelly sprays the thistle when it is young and stomps on the onion grass in the lawn to break through the waxy coating. When all else fails, he digs the onions out. Carmela uses Roundup on the onion grass after she stomps on it. She applies the Roundup with a cotton glove worn over a rubber glove and rubs it directly on the weeds. Then she screams and gives up. When stilt grass is in the beds, Pat Strahorn pulls it out. When it grows in the lawn, she allows it to flower and then mows it before it goes to seed. Clyde Roberts wipes the thistle with a rag soaked in Roundup. Pat Hodgson uses a narrow paintbrush on the thistle. The thistle was the most common weed cited with onion grass a close second. Both weeds are very difficult to eliminate but we keep on trying.≠

## Carrie's Corner

Many of us have read Christopher Lloyd's extraordinary garden books. Some of us have actually visited his home and garden, Great Dixter, in Sussex, England. But only Carrie J. Murphy, our Horticulture Educator in New Castle County, has met and talked with the great man. She was part of a group of 14 from the Professional Gardener Program at Longwood who visited a variety of private estates and public gardens in England in June, 2003. Her student program director was Bill Simeral (who bought and sold Styers), and one of her instructors was Jeff Jabco, head gardener at Swarthmore's Scott Arboretum.

After Sissinghurst and Hidcote, for example, where gardens are laid out in distinctly "formal" patterns, even when relaxed and informal in style, Great Dixter came as a welcome and delightful surprise. Divided into several, separate gardens—the long border (on both sides of a long path leading from the house into the gardens), the Walled Garden, and the Sunken Garden are most famous—there are plants in profusion "everywhere," Carrie says, even along stone steps, pushed into nooks and crannies, and exuberantly planted in the borders. Lloyd was famous for his use of bold colors and combinations.

In June, Carrie saw *Allium* of all colors grouped into "drifts." *Lupines*, *Digitalis*, other late spring/early als. Against a back-shrubbery (the Dixter planted by Robinson for Lloyd's perennial plantings seem in pattern. Lloyd's use oranges and reds, of *ariensis* (later in the *Verbascum olym-* bold colors and combi- makes the gardens at mous. After a tour gardens, Lloyd and his head gardener, sat



great numbers of and sizes, There were also *Aquilegia*, and summer perennials of mature "bones" of Great Lutyens and parents), the per-almost "random" of *Canna* in bold *Verbena bon-* summer) and *picum*, and all in nations are what Great Dixter fa- of the various Fergus Garrett, down for about 45

minutes with the Pennsylvania group, talking in soft tones and very quickly, responding to the numerous questions about succession planting, laying out the designs of the borders, and other matters.

Lloyd was holder of the Royal Horticultural Society's Victoria Medal of Honor and wrote regular columns in Country Life, American Horticulture, and The Guardian. Lloyd's parents purchased Great Dixter in the Edwardian era, and both Edwin Lutyens and William Robinson consulted on the gardens. But it was Lloyd's creative genius that transformed Great Dixter. Fergus Garrett, Head Gardener, worked with Lloyd for thirteen years and continues Lloyd's legacy: "brilliant plant combination were his [Lloyd's] forte." Garrett frequently lectures in the U.S. and designed the 300 foot long mixed border at White Flower Farm in Connecticut using Lloyd's principles. A charitable trust has raised 2 million pounds to guarantee the future of the Great Dixter Garden.

Books: The Well-Tempered Garden; Gardener Cook; Christopher Lloyd's Gardening Year; Christopher Lloyd's Garden Flowers; Cuttings; Foliage Plants; Garden Flowers from Seed; Color for Adventurous Gardeners, edited by Erica Hunningher. Firefly Books, 2001; Succession Planting for Year-Round Pleasure, edited by Erica Hunningher. Timber Press, 2005. #

## The 2009 Class of MG Trainees

The 30 new Master Gardener Trainees who began classes March 3<sup>rd</sup> were asked to identify themselves and respond to the question: "What do you want other MGers to know about you?" Their responses are listed below: **Jane E. Adams** (Middletown): I've been interested and involved in gardening from my early years; I'm not afraid to work and get my hands dirty; **Iain Adamson** (Landenberg, PA): "I love to have dirt under my nails"; **Dan Antal** (Wilmington): "I'd love to get involved in a green/living roof project"; **Kristina Bates** (Newark): "I love being outside watching all my animals and working with my plants"; **Rebecca Christie** (Newark): has lived in 5 states, a half dozen foreign countries, but finds no place as beautiful as Silver Creek, WA where she grew up; **Joe Corsello** (Newark): retired teacher and corporate sales person; early beginning in gardening; **Mary Fontinha** (New Castle): "I love flowers, gardens, fruit, color, and getting dirty"; **Susan Foster** (Jarrell Farms): interested in sustainable habitat creation and management; **Richard Heiss** (Brandywine Hundred): "I am at my best in my garden"; **Demaris Hollembeak** (Newark): avid reader; professional dancer; retired librarian; Backyard Habitat Steward; volunteers at Newark Natural Foods and UDBG Friends; **Steve Johnson** (Wilmington): "My wife does the gardening; I do the yard work"; **Jean Lantz**: "I'd like to learn as much as possible and pass it along to my grandkids"; **Henry**

**Law** (Wilmington): native Delawarean; retired engineer; ornamental gardener; **Jack Little** (Warwick, MD): "Jack of all trades; now retired from all that pay"; lives on a mill pond with 3 acres; **Doug Lloyd** (Wilmington): retired land use planner; degrees in landscape architecture; has "evolving" plantings in small yard; **Tom Maddux** (Old New Castle): garden guide at Winterthur, gardener for the City of New Castle and Immanuel Episcopal Church, and leader of Garden Potpourri class at the Academy; **Laurie Miriello** (Newark): "I love plants!"; **Janet Mitchell** (Middletown): "I do everything possible to live 'green'"; **Elaine Morris** (Wilmington/Slaughter Beach): an R.N.; "Gardening has been a golden thread throughout my life"; **Jane Murphy** (Oxford, PA): with husband operates Hickory Hill Heath & Heather Nursery; **Ellen Pell** (No. Wilmington): "I never met a flower I didn't love!"; **Betsy Rosenberger** (Landenberg, PA): gardening since childhood; recently retired from University of PA Veterinary School after 25 years in microbiology research; **David Shaw** (Newark): proud father of 4 and 5 year old daughters and 2 year old son; **Debbie Starobynski-Jezyk** (Hockessin): life-long gardener; married; works part time; makes wine; **Sande Taylor** (Elkton, MD): "gardening is therapy for me"; volunteers at UDBG; **Gail Tentor** (Newark): "my gardens are always a work in progress"; currently redesigning and replanting front yard; **Bettie von Frankenberg** (Newark): always wanted to be a MG; working to create a maintenance-free garden; one

time achieved it; then built an addition over it; **Misao Walck** (North Wilmington): always had an interest in gardening; grandfather owned a nursery and hybridized camellias; belongs to DE Federation of Garden Clubs (Canterbury G.C.); **Cornelia Weil** (Newark): journalistic career as science writer, later became editor; now returning to her "roots"; **J.W. Wistermayer** (Newark): "My grandmother had a beautiful garden; people told me heaven was a big garden; I thought my grandmother's backyard was heaven!"; **Meg MacDonald** (class of 2007) has also joined the Training class: she notes her Trolley Square garden is only 13'X13', that she was a TV anchor (Ch.10) for 25 years, and that she's currently on the Publicity Committee.≠



Japanese Painted Fern and Asarum

### FIELD GUIDE TO THE MGers

Our group of NCC MGs are a very diverse group. See if you can identify this group of transplants from their native groups, who are blooming very nicely here: 1 MG from Germany; 1 MG born in Italy; 2 MGs from the Netherlands; 1 MG from Kenya; 1 MG born in Israel (hint: think Mt. Carmel); and even 1 MG from Fredonia – cue the Marx Brothers!

## MG Interviews: Dry Shade

Three Master Gardeners volunteered to discuss their problems with and solutions for dry shade. Each has a different growing environment, has chosen different plants and has found unique solutions to the problem of dry shade.

**KARIN ARENTZEN:** Most of her backyard is a hill, with lots of dry shade. If she doesn't water, it dries out fast. As the garden has developed, there is little sun left and, in some places, there is extremely dry shade.

Holding on to the soil and finding out which plants hold on to the soil is a major problem. She has mostly non-natives like *Pachysandra* [*Pachysandra terminalis*], but she also has used the native *Pachysandra procumbens*. In spots, the slope is 60 percent, and both types of *Pachysandra* have worked well. She also has Japanese Painted Fern [*Polystichum*], which she notes is remarkable for holding dirt; she says when you dig up the plant, you have to shake dirt off.

Other plants used include *Epimediums* spp: Ostrich Ferns [*Matteuccia struthiopteris*] which love the hill. She also uses Green-and-Gold [*Chrysogonum virginianum*] and even Hellebores [*Helleborus* spp.], and she says *Carex* do well. Karin has planted Lily of the Valley [*Convallaria majalis*] but wouldn't recommend that plant. A real winner is *Heuchera villosa*, a native. Many freak accidents happen in her yard; for example, Indian Pink [*Spigelia*] will grow anywhere except in the sun, yet it is supposed to be in the sun or light shade. Sweet Woodruff

[*Galium odoratum*] and Ajuga (though it gets droopy in dry weather) as well as Liriope, Bloodroot [*Sanguinaria Canadensis*], and Tirella [*Tiarella cordifolia*] have all worked well. Shrubs that have worked are *Cryptomeria Japonica*, *Leucothoe*, and Hinoki Cypress [*Chamaecyparis obtusa*].

Being a plants-woman by nature and experimentation, she has some favorites for dry shade areas: A very reliable plant is Sweet Box [*Sarcococca hookeriana*] a dense, evergreen shrub 4-6 feet high, blooms in the winter. [Dirr, MANUAL, p. 93, says this plant likes moist, well-drained soil and "once established displays high drought tolerance" in shade to partial shade; it is an evergreen ground cover (var. *humilis*); offers handsome foliage and fragrant flowers; stoloniferous nature is not aggressive"]

Russian arborvitae [*Microbiota decussate*] is a ground cover-like shrub that looks like juniper; it is not stoloniferous but very slow growing. Only 12 inches high, plants can grow 5-5 ½ inches long with a branch growing 23 feet; it is purplish in the winter; so you have to be prepared to accept that. Available in the trade now.

Canby Paxistima [*Paxistima canbyi*] is a native and is evergreen. Dirr, MANUAL, p. 701, says it looks like an unkempt boxwood that gets one-foot by three- to five-feet. It can be used all the way to your tree root system, three-feet from the trunk of the tree;

Karin's last words of advice: "A lot of these plants that I'm mentioning, I just put in where I wanted

and, if they grew, they grew. Even if that location pushed them outside their limits."

**PAT STRAHORN:** Pat's own home has a rather steep slope and dry shade. Another unique plants-woman, she made specific mention of the following successful shrubs and perennials.

**SHRUBS:** According to the books, Oak-Leaf Hydrangea [*Hydrangea quercifolia*] requires moisture, but my garden is relatively dry because it's under some beech trees, which have shallow roots so you know they are taking a lot of the water. There is Drooping Leucothoe [*Leucothoe fontanesiana*]-- not the dwarf one, Winterberry Holly [*Ilex verticillata*] and Clethra [*Clethra alnifolia*]. Both the Clethra and the Ilex are said to require more moisture, but they're doing fine, other than supplemental watering [at least one inch a week during July or August dry spells]. Witch Hazel [*Hamamelis virginiana*], Chokeberry [*Aronia arbutifolia*], Ironwood [*Carpinus caroliniana*] and Ninebark [*Physocarpus opulifolius*] are doing OK, she says, but nothing spectacular. Pat also has a Flame Azalea [*Rhododendron calendulaceum*]. She planted some Staghorn Sumac [*Rhus typhina*] and some Fragrant Sumac [*Rhus aromatica*] but they're not doing very well. There are some naturally occurring Low-bush Blueberry [*Vaccinium angustifolium*]. Like Karin, Pat tries filling up this area mainly to hold the soil.

**PERENNIALS:** Pat has planted

(Continued on page 7)

Chelone [*Chelone oblique*], Cimicifuga [*Cimicifuga*], Blue Star [*Amsonia*], White Wood Aster [*Aster divaricatus* now called *Eurybia divaricata*], Cranesbill [*Geranium maculatum*], *Heuchera* of different species (including such colors as chartreuse, chocolate, green) and the Heath Aster [*Symphothichum ericoides*].

Pat has made one Expert Eye visit to a site with a similar challenge and her team recommended Winterberry Holly, Oakleaf Hydrangea and Double File Viburnum (which she also has). Perennials such as *Lobelia Cardinalis* and *Epimedium* spp. were also suggested. The team ran into a large, overgrown maple in the yard with roots on the surface—a classic dry shade problem! Hostas or ground covers that only need a shallow covering were suggested and, of course, there are always ferns, Pat notes.

**CLYDE ROBERTS:** Since he founded the Expert Eye program, Clyde has visited many clients with dry shade problems. “Many of these clients also have a problem with English ivy that must be removed,” he says. At one Newark client’s home, the English ivy was so prevalent that Clyde estimated it would take three years just to get it cleaned up. Clyde’s team recommended that the client begin by clearing a 3-4 foot circle around each tree and, in instances where these circles intersected, begin working up an area for pachysandra (the client’s choice for a replacement ground cover). Then, over the next two years, the client could clean up the remaining ivy, remov-

ing 1/3 each season while being vigilant to not let the ivy become re-established.

For many clients, Clyde suggests that they consider limbing up or removing some of the crown to let more light reach the soil surface. This will allow them the opportunity to consider additional plants for this area. Usually the client



wants to establish a ground cover, he says. Depending upon the client and the location, the team has recommended ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*), pachysandra (either *P. terminalis* or the native *P. procumbens*), epimediums (*Epimedium* spp.), Carolina jasmine, and prostrate junipers. The team will often suggest various ferns, but clients frequently are not familiar with them and usually do not want to use them as a ground cover. Clyde reminds clients that when they are establishing ground covers “sleep, creep and then leap.” Use mulch while the ground cover is being established, he adds, as this will reduce the amount of weeding.

In their three dry shade garden areas in Hockessin (under thornless honey locusts ‘Shade Master’ and under a heavily pruned maple), the Roberts’ have established Sweet Woodruff as their main ground cover. But because it tends to “melt

out” in the heat (much like hostas), it is not a strong competitor for weeds. And the couple continue to add Epimediums which are essentially evergreen, have interesting fall leaf color and in the spring yellow or soft pink flowers. At the drip line, they have perennial geraniums especially *Geranium* ‘Rozanne.’

In the backyard, the couple needed to include additional evergreen screening. They planted three small cherry laurels and, after es-



tablishment, they are doing very well, Clyde says. In this area, they tried various ground covers and nothing is really doing that well. They have not had success with hostas, which “melt” in the summer heat, or with azaleas, rhododendron or astilbe. Hostas will work in dry shade, but they have to be very drought tolerant, Clyde cautions.

#### CLASSIFIED AD

A kind horse owner in the Middletown area has offered FREE manure on a shovel-it-yourself basis. If you are interested, please contact Laura at ladybaron@atlanticbb.net and make your own arrangements to come at a mutual convenient time and avail yourself of this resource. It's shovel-ready!

## A Master Gardeners' Convention...how conventional!

Las Vegas: so many lights, so much plaster and plastic! How could it attract green thumbs? Try information, motivation and affirmation along with cheery welcomes. The International Master Gardener Convention was held April 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> in Las Vegas, Nevada, this year. Around nine hundred participants gathered from most states, a few Canadian provinces, and included four NCC MGers: Suzanne Baron, Gail Hermenau, Eva Rotman-Oehler, and Sherri Stiles.

Gardening lovers looking over the itinerary started getting excited even before getting a travel ticket or room. There were, for example, opportunities to learn about new plants, new techniques and insect and pest strategies. Our Nevada hosts would even measure our fitness which can be a pleasant side effect of making the garden plan happen. Tours gave a guided look at Hoover Dam, Grand Canyon, Bellagio and Wynn Resorts, Red Rock Canyon and Las Vegas Springs Preserve. There was a recreation of pre-settlement valley ecosystems in other gardens and parks. Choosing classes and tours was a formidable task.

Soon after landing and settling in, the people of Las Vegas made

sure we knew they appreciated our presence. Our Nevada Master Gardeners whisked everyone through registration and into the schedule with all the ease of setting out rows of annuals. They had created the proper growing medium. Desire for information became motivation.



would keep me from the humorous speaker with the serious message or the dry speaker with the flowery new urban project. There were idea exchanges taking place both during class and in between. Especially inspiring were the presentations of awards for outstanding programs. While the descriptions were read, it was only natural to try to calculate how to adapt the program for use back home. Classes were taught by Master Gardeners, Extension staff and industry experts. The trade show exhibited a myriad of vendors with some familiar products and curious new items like the hat I bought as a souvenir.

The moment that epitomized the event for me was when a Nevada Master Gardener answered questions from someone who had recently moved to that area. The Master Gardener taught her about local plants, water conditions and restrictions, and desert gardening

techniques. This struck me as so universal. Whether a transplant or someone with limited exposure to the natural world, people need the guidance we can give. It dawned on me why we are Master Gardeners. We have something great to share, and we can fulfill a great need. We are there for those who are new to our area, never gardened in this climate or for those learning about the natural world for the first time.

Will I go to the next convention in West Virginia in two years? You can bet on it! I can't wait for the registration forms. I hope to see the new friends I made out West. Plus, there will be more to see and learn to help others and me in our Master Gardener mission.≠

[by Sherie Stiles]

### Useful Info?

The colorful and can be planted in sun or shade chameleon plant (*Houttuynia cordata*) is an invader and a thug! It will take over everywhere (ask Susan Amadio!). You cannot cut it down, spray it with anything herbicidal that will work, or pull it out. Sold to solve gardening problems (have a spot where nothing will grow?). Repeated sprayings of herbicide may eliminate it. Pull out all the roots (they have a pungent celery-like odor). Be diligent!

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Apologies for fragments and brief style; do not blame the Copy Editor; it's the Editor's fault!



## MG Profile: Peg Baseden

Peg Baseden's gardening career started half a world away, and her thinking about plants and our environment has traveled just about as far. From the lush English style garden her parents kept in Kenya to the native plant and water-thrifty landscapes Peg teaches about today, her thinking about gardens and plants has shifted 180 degrees. Peg's own garden is ecologically balanced, and she's won a National Wildlife Certification for it as a safe habitat for birds and beneficial insects. Peg's also served the longest as an active member of the New Castle County Master Gardener program, Class of '86.

This spring all of us in the Master Gardener program applauded Peg when she won the National Wildlife Federation's prestigious 2008 Affiliate Volunteer of the Year Award. It honors Peg for her work in the NCC community in the name of nature and conservation. She was one of only three winners among the thousands of Federation's volunteers. It's truly a lifetime honor. The award isn't only a recognition of her dedicated work

in teaching homeowners and school children about wildlife habitat. It's a symbol of Peg's dedication and inventive ways of changing community ideas about eco-healthy gardening.

I spent a wonderful couple of hours recently with Peg in the North Wilmington suburban house where she and Tod, her husband, have lived in more than 40 years and raised their six adult children. Peg also raised and changed her landscape on their large lot, changing plantings and scaling down as her children grew up.

Then, suddenly, Peg discovered the life changing fact that the University of Delaware offers classes totally free to students over sixty. She jumped in, and her ideas about habitat and eco-landscapes began to grow, and her beliefs about teaching greener gardening practices took focus. Peg says her years of study crystallized into her desire to teach greener gardening by showing people examples they can see, touch and smell.

Like Nature, Peg abhors a vacuum. And there, just behind Townsend Hall, lay a most tempting vacuum indeed. A patch of empty land invites the imagination and Peg's imagination saw a wildlife habitat trail, using the features that were already there, to teach school children and the public about the wise and beautiful ways of native plants and landscapes. Peg spearheaded the drive to create the trail, and soon it was incorporated into the University of Delaware Botanical Gardens.

Not surprisingly Peg was the

NCCo Master Gardener of the Year in 1995. And there are many more / accomplishments: Peg is so entranced by butterflies—their beauty and their usefulness, that she learned to shoot and edit video to make a gorgeous short movie about the life of butterflies. It's another way that she teaches through engaging the public's imagination. She was instrumental in getting the "Keep It Green" series started.

In fact there are so many ways in which Peg has introduced new ideas about green gardening practices to local gardeners that I'll let the CEO of the National Wildlife Foundation say it best. In giving Peg the prestigious 2008 award, Larry Schweiger remarked, "Peg Baseden demonstrates the critical connection between conservation and activism that has so enriched her community". When you meet Peg, she seems quiet and almost self-effacing; a small woman with a soft boarding school accent that isn't quite British. But don't be deceived. Peg is a dynamo of ideas and she has had the will and energy to make those ideas real. ≠

[by Meg MacDonald]

## TidBit

If you're visiting Chicago in the near future, be sure to check out the Lurie Garden in Chicago's Millennium Park, which is a wonderful example of prairie planting by Piet Oudolf and, for a special treat, the many features and activities at the Chicago Botanic Garden, which also has a prairie garden.

## FROM THE BOOKSHELF

[by Anne Boyd]

### *The Botany of Desire; a Plant's-Eye View of the World*, by Michael Pollan

As gardeners we often talk about the ways in which we manipulate plants to suit our needs. Michael Pollan's provocative book *The Botany of Desire* takes us in a whole new direction, considering how plants, by exploiting their utility to humans, have manipulated us to ensure their continuation.

Pollan seeks to investigate the reciprocal relationship between humans and plants by focusing on four basic human desires, e.g. sweetness, beauty, intoxication, and control. The plants that he chooses to personify these attributes are the apple, the tulip, marijuana, and the potato. As he says,

“ . . . we have spent the last few thousand years remaking these species through artificial selection, transforming

a tiny, toxic root node into a fat, nourishing potato and a short, unprepossessing wildflower into a tall, ravishing tulip. What is much less obvious, at least to us, is that these plants have, at the same time, been going about the business of remaking us.”

He begins with the precept that the prime evolutionary objective of a plant is to continue passing along its genes by reproducing, and that they have ‘learned’ to succeed by playing on our conscious and unconscious desires – thus his question of who is manipulating whom. The four separate

separate parts of this book each explore one of the plants above, and he interweaves social history with the stories of the plants’ development. The section on the apple is particularly enlightening: apples were valued in pre-1900 America not for eating as fruit but as the basis of alcoholic cider. You will never think of Johnny Appleseed in quite the same way again after reading this book!

Michael Pollan has garnered a great deal of renown in the past several years with his books *In Defense of Food* and *The Omnivore's Dilemma* in which he writes about the

### For information, contact

University of Delaware Cooperative Extension  
New Castle County Office  
461 Wyoming Road, Room 131  
Newark, DE 19716-1303  
(302) 831-2667

<http://ag.udel.edu/nccmg>

Carrie J. Murphy, Extension Educator, Horticulture

**Editorial Board:** Susan Amadio, Gretchen Cox (Diagnostics), Bob Deming (Editor), Bill Huxtable (Photo Editor), Cornelia Weil (Copy Editor), Pat Jackson, Meg MacDonald

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American diet. My advice is to start with *The Botany of Desire*; it is a thoughtfully written and provocative exploration of the relationship between us and the plants we rely on.

*The Botany of Desire; a Plant's Eye View of the World*, by Michael Pollan; Random House, N.Y., 2001. Available at Morris Library, University of DE; New Castle County Library System; or by request from Anne Boyd.