



Bluff Country Master Gardeners



Volume 5, No. 2

February 2006

Something to Ponder

by Marilyn Rebarchek, President

We have two big events coming up this winter that we are hoping everyone will attend. Both events are on a Saturday; the annual meeting in February and the garden workshop in March. Mark your calendar and plan to attend. These are both good opportunities to get acquainted with other MG's and start working on your continuing education hours. Is there any better way for obsessed gardeners to enjoy life than to "eat out" and "talk gardening?" ♣

Herb of the Year 2006: Scented Geraniums

The International Herb Association has designated scented geraniums as their Herb of the Year for 2006. Scented geraniums, in the genus *Pelargonium* (which includes over 200 species, some scented and others scentless) are relatives of the common red, pink or white flowered summer annual zonal geraniums (derived from the relatively scentless pelargonium, *P. x hortorum*). They are grown more for the highly aromatic foliage than the flowers. Plants have a wide range of leaf types which are used for making potpourris, sachets, and flavorings. The scent is contained in oil produced in special glands at the base of the leaf hairs. Bruising or crushing the leaves breaks open the glands, releasing the scented oil.



Scented geraniums were originally brought to Holland and England from South Africa in the mid 1600's. Since then, breeding and hybridization has resulted in hundreds of varieties, in a wide range of shapes, sizes, and color, and in rose, mint, spice, fruit, and pungent fragrances.

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Master Gardener Annual Meeting And Free Catered Luncheon

Saturday, February 4th

LOCATION: La Crosse Public Library on Main Street

TIME: 10:00 – 1 p.m.

RSVP required by January 30th

Everyone is invited to attend the MG Annual Meeting on February 4th. You must RSVP to be included in the lunch count.

- RSVP by January 30th to Steve Huntzicker at 608.785.9593
- Bring non perishable food items for the food pantry
- Bring Silent Auction items for the March 4th Garden Workshop

Candidates for Board of Directors
(Nominations will also be received from the floor).

Lynn Nelson
Jane Travis
John Hoscheit

Lynn Tshumper
Sue Kellogg
Rita Champion ♣

INCLEMENT WEATHER

The general rule of thumb is that if the La Crosse School District has cancelled classes because of bad weather, we would automatically cancel our meeting. If the buses don't go out, we don't go out. How's that? Watch your email box for notices of meeting cancellations due to inclement weather. If you're not on the MG email list, please send your email address to: bluffcountrymg@yahoo.com. If you don't have access to email you may call the Extension office by 5 p.m. at 608.785.9593. ♣



Continuing Education

February 10-12, 2006



WPT GARDEN EXPO Alliant Energy Center, - Exhibition Hall, Madison, WI
(Directions to the Center are on the web site listed below).

More than 85 educational seminars make Garden Expo a can't-miss event for those thirsting for knowledge on gardens, lawns and landscapes. Many popular seminars are offered more than once during the three-day event. All are taught by experts who are very willing to field questions and swap stories.

A sampling of topics this year includes rain gardens, ornamental grasses and tree pruning. A full list is available at <http://www.wpt.org/gardenexpo>

February 2 & 3, 2006

Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers conference & Trade Show
St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN Contact: Marilyn Nysetvoid at 763.434.0400

February 7, 2006

3rd Annual Fresh Market Produce & Bedding Plant Workshop

10:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Cashton Community Center

Main St., Cashton

Cost \$15.00

Contact : Monroe County Extension Office at 608.269.8722

March 11, 2006

Master Composter Program

9:00 – 3 p.m.

Cost \$30.00

Contact: Penny Pierce at 608.789.7570 9piercep@cityoflacrosse.org

FEATURED BROADCAST PROGRAMS ON WISCONSIN PUBLIC TELEVISION

2 p.m. Sundays Garden Smart. Practical advice and ideas about the latest garden gadgets. <http://www.gardensmart.tv>

2:30 p.m. Sundays The Victory Garden. Host Michael Weishan tours gardens and offers tips. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/victorygarden>

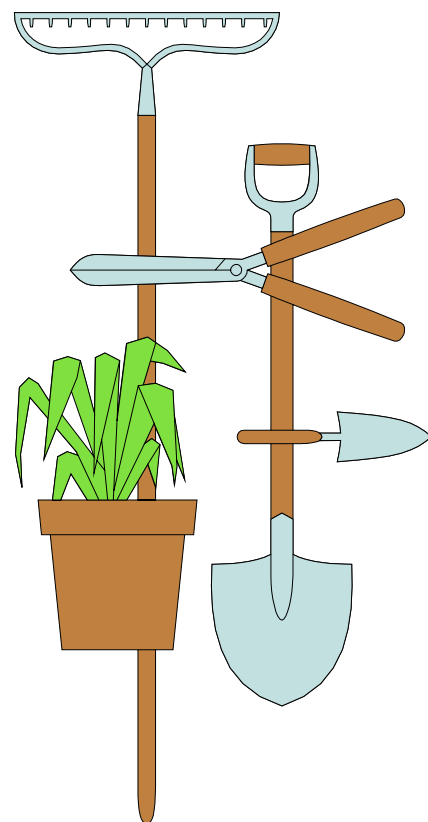
3 p.m. Sundays P. Allen Smith's Garden Home. Thoughts on blending indoor and outdoor spaces. <http://www.pallensmith.com>

April 11, 2006

Kid-Friendly Gardening

Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Madison, WI

When kid-friendly, gardens can be great places of joy and learning. Presenter Joan Laurion has been gardening for 35 years. For twenty of those years, she ran her own family child care home and gardened with children ages 1–12. Join her from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. for this slide lecture about setting up a kid-friendly garden. \$13 (\$11 members) by April 4. For more information contact Olbrich Botanical Gardens, 3330 Atwood Ave, Madison, WI 53704 at (608) 246-4550 or download the classes and workshops brochure. ♣





Upcoming Events

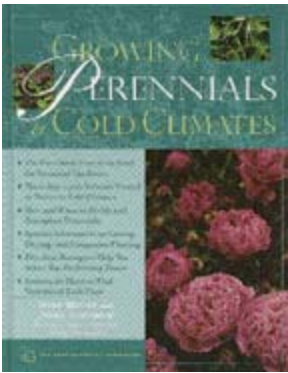
DON'T MISS OUR BIGGEST EVENT OF THE YEAR! Spring Into Gardening Workshop - March 4, 2006

See enclosed brochure and registration form for details on speakers and topics. Please feel free to photo copy the brochure and post at your place of employment.

We hope that everyone will attend this information packed day and support our local organization. If you would like to help at this event, please call Marilyn at 608.781.3278. Note: Everyone who volunteers for this event will be able to attend the educational seminars as well. We don't want anyone to miss out. ♣

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

MICHAEL L. HEGER – Keynote Speaker



Michael L. Heger, along with his wife Jean, owns Ambergate Gardens located near Chaska, MN. Though a foreign language major in college, his love of the outdoors brought him into 15+ years of employment with the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Ambergate Gardens was started in 1985 while he was still employed at the Arboretum. In 1988, it became a full time business for Mike and Jean. Ambergate Gardens is a retail mail order/walk-in business devoted entirely to herbaceous perennial flowers. It also offers a line of wholesale containerized perennials to local designers and landscapers.

Mike is active in numerous plant societies and trade organizations related to perennial flowers. He has lectured on a wide variety of gardening topics throughout the northern tier of states. Mike is also the author of "Perennials A to Z", a series of articles that were originally published in Minnesota Horticulturist and coauthor of "Growing Perennials in Cold Climates",

a recently released hard cover book written specifically for the colder regions of this country. Most recently, he has served as a consultant for the "Midwestern Garden Book" to be published by Sunset Publishing Corp. in the near future. ♣

Herb of the Year *Continued from page 1*

The scented geraniums are a very large group of plants with many species that are categorized by scent (the names are sometimes confused however, with true species, cultivars, hybrids all mixed together). Some of the more common ones include:

- Apple-scented geranium, *P. odoratissimum*, is a trailing type with heart-shaped, apple-scented, grey-green ruffled leaves and white flowers.
- Coconut-scented geranium, *P. grossularioides*, is more cold hardy than many other species. The low growing rosette of deep green rounded leaves produces tiny magenta flowers and has a pleasant scent that not everyone describes as coconut.
- Lemon-scented geranium, *P. crispum*, has a clean lemon scent from the small wrinkled, fan-shaped leaves. It bears tiny purple-pink flowers and does well in containers.
- Lime geranium, *P. nervosum*, has ruffled, round, light green leaves and lavender flowers. It flowers freely and self-seeds.
- Nutmeg-scented geranium, *P. fragrans*, is a small plant with grey-green leaves with a nutmeg-pine scent and small whitish flowers with pink veins.
- Oak-leaf geranium, *P. quercifolium*, has lobed, dark green leaves with an almond or incense scent and small rose colored flowers.

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**Bluff Country Master Gardeners
La Crosse County UW-Extension Office
400 4th Street North
La Crosse, WI 54601**



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**OUR Mission is to . . . GROW in our knowledge of horticulture SHARE our knowledge with others
INSPIRE our community through volunteerism ENCOURAGE in our youth an enthusiasm for growing things.**

Our Bluff Country Master Gardener Association Board Members are:

President.....Marilyn Rebarcek, 608-781-3278
Vice-President.....Suzee Farmer, 608.785.7240
SecretaryJanice Hatt, 608.788.8815
TreasurerDiane Palm, 507.643.6970
HistorianLynn Nelson, 608-786-0607
At LargeDori Block, 608.781.8657
At Large..... Bruce Odeen, 608-634-4422
Ex-officio memberSteve Huntzicker, 608.785.9593
e-mail address: steve.huntzicker@ces.uwex.edu
State Board Representative Marilyn Rebarcek

State MG Website Address:

<http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener>

The **Bluff Country Master Gardeners Newsletter** is published monthly, excluding December.

Editor.....Margo Merola, mmerola@charter.net

*Deadline to submit articles for the next newsletter is March 10th.

All submissions must be print ready.

Produced in cooperation with the County Extension Office.



University of Wisconsin-Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating.
UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA.

BERRIES TO SPICE UP THE WINTER GARDEN

Plan now for adding berry plants so next year's winter garden has some spice to it. Consider: an American cranberry bush with red berries, which can reach a height of 12 feet and needs partial to full sun; black choke-cherry with dark-purple berries and grows to 4 - 6 feet, needing partial to full sunlight; common snowberry with white berries, will be 3-5 feet and does well in sun and shade; or northern bayberry with pale blue-grey berries that is hardy and will be 4 - 10 feet. For more ideas: <http://www.helpfulgardener.com>. ♣

Herb *From page 3*

- Peppermint geranium, *P. tomentosum*, is a spreading or trailing type with medium- to grey-green, lobed leaves and white flowers with a reddish center. While the leaf has a minty scent, the flavor has other overtones so real mint (*Mentha* spp.) is best used for cooking.
- Rose-scented geranium, *P. graveolens*, has spicy rose-scented foliage with small clusters of pink flowers among the large, lobed, dark green leaves and is well suited to growing in containers. 'Rober's Lemon Rose' is a common variety with a strong lemony rose scent. 'Snowflake' is a variegated form.

To find out more about the 2006 Herb of the Year, go to: <http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener> ♣