



The Garden Gate

October 2003

Events at a Glance:

Oct 22: Graduation Night

Oct 23: North Idaho Regional Conference organizational meeting

Nov 3: BCMGA Board of Directors meeting (all members welcome)

Dec 9: Christmas Party



The President's Bloomers

All wet. That's what this month's article is. But before you think, that's how all of my articles have been, this one does, indeed, emphasize lots of wet things. Of course, I'm talking about water, and more specifically, about ornamental ponds, water plants and the "goodies" that go along with them.

In the summer of 2002, my husband and I decided that we would install a small ornamental pond near our house and have some plants and perhaps a couple of colorful fish in the waterscape. Before we undertook the grunt work – read: digging, dirt hauling, etc. – we researched as much as we felt we needed to put us on the right course. Naturally, that meant we did not do enough. Can one ever do enough research, particularly on a new project? After several days of digging, we finally had an oval-shaped hole where once there was a semblance of a lawn. Since we wanted to over winter as many of the plants and all of the (future) fish in the pond itself, we made the "pit" about three-and-a-half feet deep. With that depth, the water in the pond should not freeze completely. (It didn't last winter!). Overall, we wound up with a pond that holds about 4,500 gallons in its 12 feet wide by 15 feet long dimensions. But before I get ahead of myself on details, here are a couple of items you might consider if you want to explore putting in your own pond.

Unless you have the perfect soil type after you've dug your pond, you'll need some means of retaining the water and the best way is by using a liner. Yes, you could install one of the pre-made forms (you'll come across them at most home improvement stores), but none that we've found is deep enough for our winters here in North Idaho. Liners made of PVC are inexpensive but they don't last very long. Instead, use one made of rubber (in pond literature you'll see it as EDPM rubber). In essence, it's the same material roofers install on flat surfaces; the rubber membrane is quite tough but flexible and, above all

else, waterproof. Nevertheless, you should place some underlayment in the hole you've dug because sharp stones and other objects can puncture the liner. Old carpeting, even several layers of newspaper, can do the job and are considerably cheaper than the material stores want to foist on you. Don't forget to get an oversize liner since you'll have to include the depth in your calculation, plus some extra for overlap to hold the liner in place. Ours, for example, was about 15 feet by 20 feet.

Once you've finagled the liner in place – that means you've placed folds in the “corners” and laps over the rim of the pond where rocks or other heavy objects will hold the liner in place – it's time for the water. Regardless of your water source, it's going to take quite some time to fill the once-gaping hole. Before you fill your pond-in-the-making to the top you should also account for any plants and decorations. If you intend for the water to remain clear, i.e., anything other than algae-green –you'll not want to place your plants directly in soil that's immediately on top of the liner. Without going into a long explanation, let me just state that it's infinitely easier to grow the water plants in containers that rest on the liner or some supporting item, e.g., bricks, concrete blocks, or rocks. If not, you'll have a permanent bog instead of a pond in your yard!

The types of plants you choose will be determined in part whether you'll have fish in



your pond. Ours include, among others, cattails, water hyacinths, lilies, and water lettuce. Having a combination of rooted (i.e., rooted in pots in the water) and floating plants adds variety and functionality: they oxygenate the water, help to mitigate algae growth and add cover for your fish. Besides, or more accurately, the plants are beautiful complements with their shades of green and other colors, especially from the hyacinths and lilies. Remember, if

your pond is deep enough – in the 3 to 3.5 foot depth range – all but the floating plants can stay in the water over the winter without fear of loosing them.

If you initially thought of only having plants, you'll surprise yourself if you add a couple of fish to your pond. In fact, you may find yourself, as we have, thinking of the fish as the sole reason for having the pond.

Whether you have cheap goldfish, yes, the 10 cent variety, or at the other end of the price range, imported koi (=Japanese carp) in your pond (they can run into the thousands of dollars range each!), you'll find yourself enthralled by their colors and



undulating movements in and on top of the water. This summer we added to our small resident school of department store goldfish some Comets and koi. In no time, the fish have come to know us – honestly! – and wait to be fed even by hand like your typical kitty or pooch. And do these wet wonders grow! Our once-little goldfish and Comets are now almost twice their original size. With the right conditions, your watery residents will



outgrow and even outlive your other pets, both the animated and stationary kind. Have you ever seen a 25-pound koi in a pond? I have and I'll assure you, it'll scare the taste for tuna out of Felix, the Feline!

Obviously, you'll have to filter the water whether you have fish or only plants in your liquid "land"scape and that means you'll need some mechanical means to achieve the desired effect. Without going into details in this short article, I want to emphasize that virtually any pump that can operate efficiently along with a suitable filter will work fine. I'll gladly provide particulars on what has worked for our pond if you contact me. (Tip: Plastic food-grade barrels plus some locally available materials - from your local hardware or department store - can become the basis for an effective filter.)

As involved as the labor and mechanics of setting up a pond may initially sound, a bit of research along with common sense will stand you in good stead. Believe me, it'll be worth your effort. Perhaps then you, too, will say to yourself, in putting in the pond I got all wet and I like it!

Michelle

Michelle Reichelt



Graduation 2003 - October 22

Congratulations and **W**elcome to the Master Gardener Class of 2003. Join us at the Brown house at 6:00 for an evening of convivial conversation, great food, and good cheer. Please bring a potluck item to share; drinks will be provided. Volunteers will be recognized for their commitment and contributions. Dues for the BCMGA year 2004 will be collected; the fee to recertify will be \$10. This fee reflects an increase in expenses such as copy costs and postage incurred by the organization.

Regional Master Gardener Conference

Bob Wilson

Plans are being made to put on three regional Master Gardener Conferences in Idaho in 2004. One will be held in the Boise/Caldwell area, one in the Idaho Falls area, and one here in northern Idaho, likely in Coeur d'Alene or Moscow. This is a spin-off of sending 20 Idaho MG's to the 2003 Gardener's Mini-College in Corvallis, Oregon.

There will be a planning meeting to get things started for a northern Idaho regional conference on Thurs. Oct. 23 at the Kootenai Co. Extension Office in Coeur d'Alene. There will be a get-acquainted potluck lunch (optional) at Noon followed by a planning meeting from 1:00 - 3:00 PM.

The agenda will include:

- * Location for the conference
- * Time of year, possible dates
- * Conference length

As time permits: How to organize and divide up the different tasks involved in putting on a conference.

We may not decide all of these at the first meeting, but we need to discuss options. A date and location need to be set fairly soon. We are starting from scratch on this and it will be the privilege of those participating to design the kind of conference they would like to have.

I would encourage any MG's who are interested to attend this meeting. If you are unable to be present but would like to participate in some way, please let me know.

Directions:

Drive south on Hwy. 95 through Coeur d'Alene. Just before crossing the river, turn left on Northwest Blvd towards downtown CDA. Take a right at the next road, which is marked with a U of I sign. Turn right again to go to the Extension Office. Follow this road around to the second parking lot.

I know three MG's from Bonner County that will be attending and will be carpooling. If you would like to join them, or if you have any questions, please give me a call or email.



Master Gardener Mini-College

Don Childress

From August 6th through August 9th, 2003, I, along with fellow Idaho District 1 representatives attended the Oregon Master Gardener Mini-College held in Corvallis, Oregon. Other Idaho representatives from our District included Jeannie Borer from Boundary County along with Barbara Ford and Sharilyn Robinson from Kootenai County.

The event started with a Leadership conference that included a presentation based on Abraham Maslow's "Theory of Motivation" and how it applies to Master Gardeners. This was followed by a detailed explanation of Robert's Rules of Order and then a discussion of the less complicated Wolfe's Rules of Order, an excerpt from "Making Things Happen-How to be an Effective Volunteer" by Joan Wolfe. The afternoon included a series of breakout sessions for Presidents, as well as one for Treasurers, Secretaries, Historians and newsletter Editors. All contained pertinent information for Master Gardeners.

The next two and one-half days were filled with 1-2 hour classes that included: Garden Smarter-Not Harder, Flavored Oils and Vinegar's, Plants You May Grow to Regret, What's Wrong With My Plant?, Slug Biology and Control, Pruning How-To's, Teaching Skills for master Gardeners, Home Irrigation systems, Pesticides in Perspective, successful

community Education Programs, Hands-on Perennial Propagation, Backyard Composting, Plant Identification for Master Gardeners, Now and Unusual Vegetables for the Gourmet, Medicinal Herb Gardens and Diagnosing Insect Damage by our own Bob Wilson.

There was also a walking tour and campus tree ID, a field trip to the Lewis Brown Farm Ornamental and Turf plot, and tours of some of the area Master Gardener Gardens.

The frustration was that you could not take all the classes that interested you due to time constraints. The Mini-college also provided a perfect format for Master Gardener networking as there was an evening social each day.

The Idaho Master Gardeners in attendance were essentially guests and were there to learn and observe so that they could provide insights and leadership in setting up an Idaho Master Gardener Conference in the near future. Bob Wilson has details on the organizational meetings that are planned.

Save yOur Seeds



The Holidays are just a whisper away - mark your calendar for Tuesday December 9th for our annual Christmas party. This year we plan to share the bounty and hold a seed exchange. What a great way to catch the spirit of giving and receiving labors of love.

Tips Tried and True



Pat Moss writes: I thought I knew about the birds and the bees. Well. . . . I observed that some of my raspberries were plump and juicy and others were at small and dry. Oh the imaginings I did - too little water, too little sun, a micro climate in the same row - so many factors. Upon doing a little research, I discovered that there are male and female stalks. Duh! Female stalks are smooth, larger in diameter, and give forth plump, juicy berries. The male stalks are thorny (imagine that), smaller and do not bear luscious fruit. One male plant is sufficient to fertilize an entire row so I pulled up the excess males (sorry) and hope to have a hearty crop next year.



Wild Greens Greetings Master Gardeners,

What a season of gardening we have had. And, it goes on and on. Our garden has not frozen, yet, although it is eminent. With this most recent rain, we will undoubtedly receive a frost on the back side of the system as it moves east. If you have any garden to preserve, better get the cloches and row covers out. Otherwise, hang up your tools and put your garden to bed.

Due to family obligations, we were away for the latter part of August and most of September. Our garden was minimally watched over by a neighbor...she did a bit of watering, picked some Sun Gold tomatoes, snagged a few nectarines before the raccoons wiped them out. Upon our return, we were pleased to discover pole beans which were putting on a second crop, rampant cherry tomatoes, a few summer squash still edible, armfuls of flowers, and a bonus delight of golden raspberries.

What did I learn from this garden season? For one, don't plant anything which will be ready for harvest while you are away. I lovingly raised eggplants, peppers, cabbages and lettuces from seed, which had to be pulled out before we went south (the garden is much too large to ask someone to care for meticulously while we are out of town). Secondly, a garden left to its own devices can offer a few surprises. The late crop of golden raspberries was very unexpected, ornamental millet-Purple Majesty thrived without my watchful eye, we had a bumper crop of hops from a newly planted root. Potatoes grow amazingly well without a drop of water if planted deeply and thoroughly mulched.

Additionally, to elaborate a bit on the above, here are some plant varieties which were of interest to me this season:

Epazote...grew like crazy but I don't like the smell or taste~too much like engine oil.

Ornamental Millet-Purple Majesty...gorgeous! Start indoors early. Okay in a pot.

Chioggia Heirloom Beet...sweet and pretty (red and white rings).

Super Sugar Snap Peas...the best of the best. Abundant crop, long season.

Grandpa Ott's Morning Glory...lovely on a fence, deep tri-color.

Bright Lights Cosmos...prolific bloomer, seeds marvelous for the birds.

Gloriosa Daisy (*rudbeckia hirta*)...blooms abundantly the first season from seed.

Green Goliath Broccoli...tight, tender heads. Easy to grow from seed.

Konserva Kale...amazingly drought resistant, excellent green early and late.

Joe Pye Weed...slow starter, small blooms the first season if you are lucky.

Noreaster Pole Bean...couldn't be a finer, more tender or prolific bean. Delicious.

We struggled with hot weather and low water, like many of you. The perennial garden was a disaster following multiple raccoon raids (they were hungry and searching for any food source available). Nevertheless, as I gaze upon the last of the blooming flowers, pick tender herbs before the frost nips their tips, enjoy a cup of fresh spearmint tea, I am filled with thankfulness and wonder at the depth of beauty surrounding me. There are many chores ahead of us before the snow flies, but for just a moment I think I will pause and smile at the glory of this fall season. *J'nene Wade, Master Gardener*