CALENDAR

OCTOBER 15
Soil and Water Quality, Jessica Barnett, JoCo Ext. Ag Agent, Paola Extension Office, 6:30 pm, 1 hour AT credit

OCTOBER 16
Rain date for an afternoon working with a local fifth grade class at the Courthouse Gardens, 1 p.m. All are welcome to come and help!

OCTOBER 17
Gardening for the Birds and Bats, Theresa and Nik Hiremath, Wild Bird Center, at the Kauffman Conference Center, 6:30 pm, 1.5 hours AT credit

NOVEMBER 12
Compost Is the Answer: What Was the Question? Stan Slaughter, Paola Extension Office, 6:30 pm, 1 hour AT credit

DECEMBER 12
Christmas Cookie Exchange (details on page 2)

Board meetings are the second Tuesday of each month, 9:30 am, Extension Office, Paola.

Soil and Water Quality—October 15

SOIL: the foundation of a great garden! Come learn how to make a quality foundation for your garden. K-State Research and Extension–Johnson County Ag and Natural Resources Agent Jessica Barnett will present “Soil and Water Quality” on October 15 at the Paola Extension office, 6:30 pm. Jessica grew up in north central Kansas in Belleville and spent her school breaks in western Kansas around Rexford and Sharon Springs. Because of this, she considers all of Kansas to be home. Her passions revolve around soil, water, agriculture and the environment, and this is what guided her through her education. After graduating from K-State with a B.S. in Agronomy and a B.S. in Biological Systems Engineering, Jessica spent two years as a crop consultant and agricultural engineer in southern Colorado, before coming back home to work at KSRE–Johnson County. Jessica hopes to see you all on the 15th!

Compost Is the Answer—November 12

Stan Slaughter is the region’s best known and most honored environmental educator and speaker. He has taught biology and physics for 11 years, worked for the Carter administration on energy conservation, and produced and presented over 4,000 programs to 400,000 students in 27 states. He has received almost 20 regional, state-level and international awards and honors, including a personal invitation from HRH Prince Charles to speak on composting at a festival in England in 2016.

Currently the Education and Garden Specialist at Missouri Organic Recycling, Stan has an M.A. in Biology and was US Composting Council Educator of the Year, 2000. With His trusty guitar, he sings his message with songs such as, Put Me in the Compost Pile and Feed It to the Worms.

NEWS & NOTES

• Wednesday workdays at the Courthouse Gardens will continue until the end of October, according to Phyllis Benedict.

• Clean-up day at the Trial Gardens will be announced by email.

• Watch for an emailed ballot from Katelyn asking for your vote for Board candidates. There are four candidates for four open positions, so voting should be easy.

• Mark your 2020 calendar now for our Awards Banquet on January 28 at Town Square. Watch for more details in future newsletters.

• The Courthouse Gardens made the Fox 4 Facebook LIVE feed last Friday when they were in town.

• Sue Burns is checking on the possibility of our participation in the Kansas Day event at the High School in 2020.

• Please let Betsy, Jan or Lenora know if you know of an outstanding Miami County garden we might feature on a 2021 Garden Tour.

Follow the Marais des Cygnes EMGs on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mdcemg
HELP WANTED!

**Master Gardener History Project**

*By Patti Armstrong — class of ’96*

One thing for sure... time passes quickly and goes on even if you aren’t paying any attention. So we Master Gardeners find ourselves in a position of #1 having a history...a credibility, if you will; and #2 finding the history a good thing to put into print. We have done a lot over the last 20-plus years, including the training of 150 individuals to the joys and advantages of growing food, as well as ornamental gardening, all of which benefits both the gardener’s health and the environment.

This endeavor is projected to take about a year and a half, and here is where we start:

**Collecting old email addresses:**
If you have an old membership list still clinging to your computer or know the e-mail of an inactive member, send to: patti41@gmail.com

**Pictures, old newspaper clippings, agendas:** anything you consider important. Pictures need to be identified—the year, the event or project, and who is pictured.

**Stories**… fun stories regarding events that happened. Why the program and its participants have been important in your life.

**Take these things to the Paola Extension Office:** There is a designated and labeled file cabinet in the office near the front door of the extension office. If you want your information or pictures back, be sure to indicate that. We’ll accept paper copies and storage devices (discs, flash drives, etc.).

Or you can email digital files to Patti or to judy@springvalleynursery.com

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE help us with this exciting project!

Christmas Cookie Exchange

Come and share your favorite Christmas cookies with your EMG friends! We will meet at Cafe Latte at the Jackson Hotel in Paola on Thursday, December 12, 9:30 to 11:00. Please RSVP to Jan Thompson at jkg.thompson@gmail.com or text 913.579.4150 by Monday, December 9. Also indicate type of cookie(s) you are bringing so we can label with your name and type of cookie(s).

Plan to bring at least two dozen cookies and a container to take your samples home. We encourage you to help support local business and purchase a coffee, etc. from Cafe Latte, which will help defray any cost of the room. Looking forward to seeing you and sharing Christmas cheer!
Meet Our New EMGs-in-Training

CINDY KATZER:
My name is Cindy Katzer. I married my high school sweetheart, Danny, 43 years ago and we have two children and four grandchildren. Two of our granddaughters live near Houston, Texas, and we only get to see them about two or three times a year. Our other granddaughter and grandson live in Spring Hill and we love going to all of their activities and taking them fishing.

We have had a vegetable garden for years and I plant many annuals and some perennials every year, but have always had an interest in developing a formal garden, but do not have the knowledge. I have a sister-in-law who has been a Master Gardener for 25 years and she has always encouraged me to try the program. After retiring two years ago and needing more to do, I decided to try the Master Gardener program. I am excited to learn all that I can about creating a beautiful garden, getting ideas by visiting gardens in my community and sharing the knowledge with others.

My other interests include traveling (finally visited my 50th state, Delaware, this year!), golfing, walking, reading, cooking (love to try new dessert recipes), and visiting new restaurants, breweries and wineries.

JANETTE EVERHART:
My husband, Mike, and I recently moved to Miami County. With some acreage between Paola and Osawatomie, we grow specialty crops. Last winter I put in a gourmet garlic test plot which produced eight different types of garlic.

Did you know there are over 200 varieties of garlic? This spring I added a 1,000 sq. ft. vegetable and herb garden with many plants from the Master Gardener sale! I am designing gardens to surround the barn and house. Such a gift to be given a blank slate – and the opportunity to learn through the Master Gardener program.

We have a son, Wesley, who lives in Overland Park and works for Honeywell, and a daughter, Jessica, who is with her husband, William, in the Army currently stationed in Germany. I was very active volunteering while our children were in school in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and PTA. I served as co-president of the choir parents support group for two years. I was also president of the Kappa mom’s club while Jessica was a Kappa at K-State. I continue to volunteer with the local KKG chapter.

I retired early after 33 years at Hewlett-Packard using my Computer Science degree and finishing in the Training and Development organization. I then joined Mike’s business for six years. Since we moved, I have been focusing on development of our new homestead and farm.

Most of my gardening experience has been with an annual herb and flower gardens at our previous residence. I am joining the Master Gardener program because I want to learn more and share my knowledge and love of plants and to connect with others in Miami and Linn county with similar interests. My father loved gardening – getting his hands into the soil. He had a green thumb. I hope I inherited that! I feel peace, calm, focus and hopefulness when gardening and I want to help others have the same experience.

Migration Happening
This is the sight that greeted Betsy Hasselquist in her yard when she returned from a trip on September 29. There were hundreds of migrating Monarchs in her Sweetgum tree, having embarked on a monumental journey of their own.
Multi-Color Fun at the Thompson’s House

Volunteers gathered at the home of Bob and Susan Thompson recently, wearing their paint clothes and ready to spray paint more than a hundred pots and saucers that will be the centerpieces at the Symposium next February. The theme of the Symposium is “Color in the Garden,” and a variety of horticultural presentations will touch on the use of color to brighten a garden.

The rainbow of pots will be filled with freshly grown spring grass, sure to brighten a late February day. The terra cotta pots and saucers were donated by Donna Cook. Painters donated paint from their own stash.

The Symposium will be held February 29, 2020, at the Lighthouse Presbyterian Church in Paola. Watch for more information about the speakers and how to register.

Photos—and lunch!—by Susan and Bob Thompson
October: Mealybugs

By Lenora Larson

Introduction: Insects are a part of every gardener’s life. Each month you’ll meet a common insect with advice on whether you should eradicate, tolerate or embrace this six-legged visitor. Please send Lenora your insect requests!

Many of us move our houseplants outdoors for a rejuvenating summer vacation, returning them inside when nighttime temperatures fall below 55 degrees. Unfortunately, many wee creatures accompany your plant’s journey back into the house, including tree frogs, grasshopper eggs, slugs and snails, roly-polies, scales, white flies, spider mites, thrips and my arch enemy, the mealybug. This unarmored scale insect sucks the juices out of your plant’s tissues and will feed on most vegetation. They occur naturally in tropical locations but have been spread by the nursery industry and have naturalized in our homes and greenhouses. The overall cost of damage to crops and subsequent control measures is estimated to be over $700 million dollars per year in the US.

The Life Cycle

Mealybugs first appear on your plants as nymphs, the crawlers. Like other true bugs, they do not pupate, but gradually mature as they eat and shed their skins. The adult males look like small furry gnats and fly about the plants, looking for love. They are short-lived and never eat. The familiar cottony mounds are always produced by females which do not develop wings and soon settle in one spot. Favorite locations include the juncture of the stem and soil, along the stem, in the crotch formed by two stems and the underside of leaves. They exude a waxy protective coating while they suck your plant’s juices and excrete a sweet honeydew that attracts ants. When outdoors they are often protected from predators by ants in a relationship similar to ants and aphids. The mass of waxy cotton is the female’s home and then the nursery for 50 to 100 eggs. Mom dies after laying all her eggs, and the newly hatched nymphs may remain in her cotton mass or travel to new feeding spots on the plant or even crawl over to neighboring plants. Large colonies may go unnoticed until you see wilting leaves and then leaf drop. Severe infestations may kill the host plant.

Mealybug Control

Outdoors, mealybugs are well-controlled by natural predators but bringing a plant indoors often allows unchecked proliferation. The best defense is an aggressive offense. Before bringing a plant in, inspect it for lodgers and evict them. Then thoroughly spray the foliage with water and submerge the pot in water overnight to flush out any soil dwellers.

Minor infestations can be controlled by frequent inspections and hand crushing of crawlers and cottony masses. Some people delicately swab the masses with rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol. The Internet offers many recipes and techniques for alcohol/soap concoctions. The alcohol dissolves the waxy coating so that the soap can kill them. Neem oil and insecticidal soaps provide some control but must be used routinely. Surprisingly, systemics, even the neonicotinoids, are not effective against these sucking insects. In greenhouses, ladybugs can be released for control since both the adult beetles and their larvae relish mealybugs (and also devour aphids). While I would never use an insecticide outdoors, in my greenhouse by mid-winter I am desperate enough to spray Malathion. Each application protects the treated plant for about a month. But many times, I just give up and toss the plant/pot outdoors where both victim and mealybugs perish in the freezing temperatures.

Crawlers may be male or female. I think they are kinda cute! A female crawler beginning to make its waxy nest. An accumulating mass of mealybugs.
Dealing with White-tailed Deer in the Garden

By Judy Moser

Like many gardeners, I have a love-hate relationship with White-tailed Deer.

For 20 years we had dogs, and we never had a problem with deer eating the daylilies and hostas, of which we enjoyed hundreds if not thousands. Unfortunately, a succession of dogs grew old and died, and the deer wasted no time figuring out that the coast was clear when the last dog went to the doggie hereafter last summer.

I’ve studied so many lists of “plants deer don’t like.” Invariably they include plants that seem to be my local Bambi’s favorite. Begonias, violets and asters come to mind. Trial and error seems to be my future.

The good news is that the deer have a taste for my ubiquitous mulberry weeds (Fatoua villosa) that have proliferated between the chomped hostas. The bad news is that they just bite the tops out, and the weeds quickly become multi-branched and stronger than ever.

I’m researching Milorganite, a 6-4-0 granular fertilizer made from human waste in Milwaukee and marketed since 1926. Online reviews are mixed on its use as a deer repellent in ornamental gardens (it is not recommended for use on food crops). Most user comments say it works if applied regularly—twice a month and after a rain. This might be practical on a few favorite ornamental plants, such as my beloved ‘Winter Flame’ dogwoods. I plan to try it in 2020 unless another EMG tells me it doesn’t work.

Fencing is out of the question, and we are too old to adopt another dog. Maybe I’ll try hanging bars of Irish Spring. I’m desperate. Next they’ll be knocking on our door!

d Brown says deer seem to enjoy her soybean/hay fields the most. “They do seem to enjoy munching crown vetch on the hillside outside my eating area,” says d. She had 11 of them on a regular basis last fall. “Just wish I could get them to eat the crown vetch in the herb, front and back gardens. Now, that would be awesome.”

d says she is surprised that so many gardening books don’t even mention deer as pests. The Southern Living Garden Problem Solver does suggest surrounding the garden with a mild electric shock fence. “Coat the wire (turned off, of course) with peanut butter. Deer love peanut butter and when they lick it off receive a mild zap. They quickly learn to avoid the fence. Their only other good suggestion, other than spraying, is an 8’ tall deer fence constructed of wire mesh,” says d. (Very tall and pricey deer fencing has not solved the problem at the OP Arboretum.)

Another idea is to scatter mothballs around the plants the deer prefer. As long as the odor is present, the deer will leave the plants alone. However, mothballs are a hazard for children and pets, and maybe other life forms too.

Linda Stuart was an early member of our EMG organization before moving away a few years ago. d sent Linda’s recipe for a repellent spray.

Per One Gallon Diluted Spray:
1 cup buttermilk
2 eggs
1 Tbls. Tabasco
1 tsp. cooking oil
1 tsp. Dawn
1 Tbls. Fragrance Oil (Eucalyptus or Cinnamon)
1 cup water

Add all ingredients to a blender and puree until smooth. Strain and add water to make 1 gallon.

According to Linda, “My spray keeps forever and works for deer and perhaps rabbits.”

White Sack Strategy

“When I was growing vegetables, if deer destroyed the crop two years in a row, I stopped growing that crop,” says Lenora Larson. “For example, sweet potatoes and ambrosia cantaloupe. So, you have t-posts at both ends of the row about 4 feet tall. At about 40 inches high, tie on a white plastic bag by the handles so it flaps in the breeze. The deer see it and think it’s the white tail of other deer running away from danger, so they run away too. For many years, the white plastic bag trick worked but then they must have caught on. It really did work for years.”

Thanks, d and Lenora. Still, I’m thinking the Wal-Mart bag idea would not be aesthetically acceptable in an ornamental garden!
AY FALL!!

Cooler weather is a welcome reprieve from those hot and humid days in the garden. ’Tis the season to enjoy the great out-of-doors. And...time for garden fall harvests, clean up, mulching, soil prep, and maybe still a little planting. Fall prep enhances the chances for success and easier gardening next year.

HARVESTING:

Fall harvests and, for some, this gardening season’s end, are welcome. My vegetable garden is nearly done. Pick your green tomatoes before the first frost and try wrapping them individually in newspaper in the hope they’ll ripen. I’ve had “real” tomatoes at Christmas from this method. (Check the tomatoes periodically.) Pumpkins and lots of apples are ready for harvest.

Gather herbs and flowers for drying. Tie their stems in small loose bundles and hang upside down in a warm, dry place out of the sun.

Harvest seeds, such as heirlooms, you want to plant next year. I save and plant okra and annual flower seeds.

CLEANING UP YOUR GARDEN:

With so much rain this year, the weeds were prolific. Though you’re tired of weeding, it’s still a really good idea to clean up your garden. Get rid of the weeds! Next spring, you’ll be glad you did with fewer weeds and smoother prep. Pull up dead, diseased plants and old vegetable plants by the roots. Cut back peonies and trim spirea to promote spring growth. Research fall pruning. After a hard frost, cut perennials that are diseased or that you don’t want to self-seed to the ground.

TO TILL OR NOT TO TILL, that is the question. Tilling can really clean up a garden of existing weeds, break up compacted soil and make planting easier. Don’t till when the soil is wet as it can destroy soil structure, creating compacted soil, and destroying aeration and drainage. Avoid overdulling. Tilling has some drawbacks as it disturbs healthy soil bacteria and fungi, damages invertebrates and earthworms, actually stirs up weed seeds and increases erosion. The key to a no-till garden is regular mulching.

COMPOST only healthy plants to enhance your soil. Add fallen leaves to your compost. Burn or throw in the trash any diseased plants. Remove plants that harbor disease, such as tomatoes, potatoes, raspberry canes and plants with evidence of powdery mildew to reduce fungal diseases. Diseases spread in your compost. Avoid adding pesky weed seeds to usable compost.

ACKNOWLEDGE the BENEFITS of leaving healthy vegetation, perennial foliage, stalks and leaves for winter interest, wildlife food and habitat, refuge for beneficial insects, including caterpillars and natural mulch. Asparagus and ornamental grasses are great.

MULCH, MULCH, organic MULCH protects soil from erosion, curtails weeds, enriches the soil with nutrients, provides worm-welcoming humus, adds protection from extreme temperatures and helps preserve moisture. Weed before mulching. Two or three inches of compost or organic matter, chopped leaves, decomposed manure, straw, is recommended. Newspaper or cardboard can be used under mulch to help weed control. Mulching adds to the aesthetics of gardens.

Cover crops such as winter rye, sown in early October, enrich the soil. Thinking I should try it!

Fertilize in spring/summer.

PLANT spring flowering bulbs, garlic, rhubarb. Trees and shrubs can also be planted, but need to be watered. You can divide/move spring perennials (daylilies, ornamental grasses, hostas) if desired. Try sowing spinach seeds and you may reap what you sow when others are just planting spinach next spring. If your herbs are still looking good, consider potting some and bringing them indoors.

SOIL TESTING and amendments: Amendments can be slow acting, so fall is a good time to test your soil and amend it to get ready for spring gardening. You can have your soil tested free through the Paola Extension Office.

WATCH OUT for that first freeze:
• Bring in your house plants soon. Try to ensure they’re free of pests.
• Empty/bring in, clean clay and concrete pots and bird baths.
• Drain and roll up hoses.
• Prepare and fill bird feeders as food sources become more scarce.

Cooler weather is a good time to clean, sharpen, oil your tools and, of course, start planning and dreaming for next year.

Sweet dreams...✿
Some comments:

“Wonderful day at Lenora’s gardens. The weather was pleasant and we missed the rain. Lots of butterflies. Such beautiful gardens, lots of fall color. The soil in her garden is loamy from yearly mulching with the existing vegetation. Always in awe of her gardens.” —Betsy H

“One of my Polyphemus Silk Moths emerged from his cocoon this morning. He was supposed to wait for spring! Now he’ll die without fulfilling his destiny of finding love and fertilizing eggs for the next generation...I released him and he cooperated by holding still for photos before he flew off.”

—Lenora L