March Advanced Training

**Raising Vegetables in Large Containers** will be presented by Mike Brown via Zoom on March 23 at 6:30 pm.

Need a new way to maximize your yield while making gardening easier on the body? Mike Brown will share his real-world experience using 20+ gallon pots to grow very lush and productive produce, especially during the last two years of very wet growing seasons. Large container usage provides unexpected side benefits, even for flowers. Mike will emphasize the effects of colored containers and their sun orientation in maximizing plant growth. Mike has been a Marais des Cygne Master Gardener for five years. He currently maintains four distinct gardens at his country home in Linn County.

Mike holds degrees in Biology and Environmental Sciences from Oklahoma State University. Mike has taught at OSU, Johnson County Community College, and Pleasanton High School, and once worked for the US Environmental Protection Agency.

As a MdC MG, Mike was voted Rookie of the Year for 2016, was recipient of the Seeds of Knowledge (Education) Award of 2018, and served as MdC’S Board Chairman in 2018. He currently maintains 4 distinct gardens at his country home in Linn County: vegetable garden, wife’s flower garden, fruit orchard, and wife’s herb garden.

Katelyn has received permission from Dennis Patton for us to attend the Johnson County EMG Advanced Training sessions, which are being held by Zoom. Only EMGs are given access to the Zoom link, which Katelyn has sent to the membership by email. The link is the same for each training.

Call Katelyn if you have lost link information, or need other help accessing Zoom. **Please do not share the Johnson County link with anyone outside of our program!** It is only for the use of EMGs in the Johnson County program, and they are graciously allowing us to join them. Note that they are all morning programs through February and that participants will need to mute mics and turn off cameras.
Hope Is in the Air
It’s Garden Time!

By Betsy Hasselquist

HURRAY! Glimpses of spring. After a relatively mild winter, we recently endured a true artic blast. But now, signs of spring are popping daily. Grasses are turning green, crocuses blooming, spring bulbs exploding, trees budding. Seeing bees and colorful finches. Love the spring bird symphony.

Hope you’ve ordered/gotten your seeds as they’re again in high demand this year. More and more people are discovering the joys of gardening. Yay! I’ve planted lettuces and spinach, anticipating an early fresh harvest. Getting other seeds started, hopefully before you’re reading this newsletter.

Secrets and benefits to leaf piles: Wait for several warm (50+ degree) days before cleaning up debris where insect eggs, caterpillars have overwintered hidden among the fallen leaves. Some chrysalises, cocoons hide out and can be mistaken for dried leaves. (Read about Lenora Larson’s methods on page 3.)

And Then There’s the Pandemic…

Unfortunately, the pandemic persists long after ever imagined, but there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel. A year ago, I’d never dreamed how Covid-19 would take over our lives with such exceptional times of uncertainty. So MANY things changed… Everyone has been affected in very far-reaching personal ways. Innumerable people lost their lives, millions have lost loved ones and are grieving, social supports have been challenged, increased stress and depression and economic struggles persist. Following maybe the toughest, certainly the most unexpected, disruptive year in our lifetime, signs of hope emerge.

It’s been a time for introspection, a re-examining of values and priorities, social/societal, justice, injustice. What positive changes have you experienced? What are you looking forward to?

I, for one, am happy to have received my vaccines. I feel a sense of relief and reduced anxiety. I feel less stress interacting with my grandkids who “don’t get” social distancing and diminished fear of the risks of severe illness. I can’t wait for my mom to get her second vaccine. She lives in a senior living community and she’s eager to “get out of jail.” Hoping visiting restrictions will loosen up soon. Haven’t hugged my mom in over a year.

The ever increasing number of folks acquiring some immunity is fundamental to loosening of restrictions and stimulating our economy.

Support local businesses!!!

Everyone is tired of the restrictions. Don’t know anyone who likes wearing a mask except maybe during that artic freeze. Hoping good handwashing persists.

Continue to take precautions for yourself and our community. CDC recommendations are evolving.

Be Kind. Be safe. Be healthy. ✿
Leave the Leaves Part II, Spring

By Lenora Larson

Last fall, you decided to “Leave the Leaves” in your ornamental garden. Your trees, shrubs and perennial plants are now saying “thank you,” since they were unscathed by the polar vortex. Fortunately, 2.5 inches of snowfall protected the plants for the eight days of single digit and subzero temperatures. But when that snow fell on two to three inches of fallen leaf mulch, it created a cozy sleeping bag for the plants and beneficial hibernating insects. Even tender zone 7 perennials, like Snapdragons and Verbena on a Stick (Verbena bonariensis) survived. Yesterday when I checked under the fallen leaf mulch, their green rosettes looked back at me as I replaced the mulch to save them from the vicissitudes of an early Kansas spring.

Now What?

Already I’m getting telephone calls and emails: “I left my leaves in my flower beds over winter. When is it safe to remove them?” The short answer: NEVER! “Leave the Leaves” means forever because they are destined to become mulch, then compost, then soil. For instance, last fall, lawns were cleared of leaves by mowing and leaving the leaf particles as mulch and fertilizer, forever. The leaves of many of our native trees like Willows, Cherry, Hedgeapple, Hackberry, etc. will already be decomposed into mulch by spring planting, so there is no work to be done. Just break up any twigs and return them to their spot. We call these trees “self mulching.” However, leaves that fall on paths, patios and driveways should be collected, but added to the nearest flower bed, which may be already piled high with leaves. You can never have too many leaves! Unless you have giant Sycamores or Maples or Burr Oaks that may need some hand-shredding to reduce their volume before being returned to their place in the flower bed. Depending on how finely you crumble, the volume can be reduced by up to 90 per cent. Remember, when you remove a leaf or twig from your flower bed, you are removing nutrients from the system and will need to later fertilize to remedy your action.

Excess leaves, for instance those caught in the bottom branches of a shrub or against a wall, can now be pulled out, gently hand crumbled and replaced in the bed. If the quantity of leaves is just too much to tolerate, simply sit down on the ground and listen to the birds as you hand-shred the leaves. By fall, this leaf layer will have disappeared and the soil microbes will be ready for their fall feeding of fallen leaves. I don’t break up most fallen leaves unless I’m placing a plant in that spot. Then I crumple the leaves that fell into the area and gently return them as a fine mulch around my new plant. (Note: vegetable gardens are different. Their debris should be removed because it harbors many pests.)

Making Gardening Easy

Consider the benefits: I don’t have to rake in the fall. I don’t have to take leaves and debris to a compost pile, then haul it back in spring. I don’t have to buy mulch because my mature garden makes its own mulch. I don’t need to apply fertilizer because the leaf mulch feeds the microbes that feed your plants. And I don’t get tired and sweaty. This heavy mulch is a miracle in your garden as it retains moisture, deters weeds, protects the soil and eventually becomes fertilizer. To reap all these benefits, all I have to do is Leave the Leaves.

✿

February 23:
Pin Oak and Helleborus leaves covered this area under the huge Pin Oak tree. Just two hours of comfortably sitting and hand shredding the leaves achieved a finer texture.

Later that day!
No leaves were removed, but they were hand-shredded to become a uniform mulch. The Helleborus blooming beneath leaves are now revealed and mulched/fertilized for the year.
## 2021 Marais des Cygnes Extension Master Gardener Advanced Training Calendar

Please note: More training sessions will be added throughout the year as they are scheduled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mo</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>#Hr</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mar.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6:30pm</td>
<td>1  Raising Vegetables in Large Containers</td>
<td>Mike Brown, MdC EMG</td>
<td>on Zoom (Katelyn will send link)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6:30pm</td>
<td>1.5 Gardening for Pollinators</td>
<td>Lenora Larson, MdC EMG</td>
<td>on Zoom (Katelyn will send link)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6:30pm</td>
<td>1  Beekeeping/Native Bee</td>
<td>Vickie Vetter-Scruggs,</td>
<td>Katelyn will send Zoom link if necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6:30pm</td>
<td>1  Flora &amp; Fauna of the KS Prairie</td>
<td>Courtney Masterson, KU Prof., Native Lands owner</td>
<td>Katelyn will send Zoom link if necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6:30pm</td>
<td>1.5 Making Hypertufa Containers</td>
<td>Greg Beverlin</td>
<td>Hillsdale Bank BBQ, $30 to make two containers, limit 15 participants, second sessions will be added if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>2  Tour Tropical Garden</td>
<td>Ken &amp; Jodi Hawkinson</td>
<td>10501 W. 50th Pl., Shawnee</td>
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</tbody>
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### A Sneak Peak at the Garden Tour Gardens

Left to right: Stacie Campbell's gardens, Donna Cook’s Blue Door, and Lois Hart's gardens.

Left to right: Laraine Crawford's gardens, Swan’s Water Gardens, and bee hives at Whispering Elms.

### NEWS & NOTES

- Planning is underway for the 2022 Symposium. Stacie Campbell is our new Chair (yea!), with assistance from Susan Thompson, Jeannie Trail, and Lenora Larson.
- The Hotline starts April 1. New EMGs should contact Katelyn if you want to work with an experienced Hotliner. Social distancing and masks are still required.
- Take a Virtual Tour of the new office! It is available on our Facebook page, at the website and on youtube.
- Janette Bennett is working on Seeds for Kids along with Kathleen Brady-Francis, as plans develop for the Miami County Fair.
- Katelyn has emailed a project interest form on which EMGs can indicate which projects they are interested in helping with.

Follow the Marais des Cygnes EMGs on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mdcemg
Paola Plant Sale

NEW LOCATION!
Covid Protocols Observed

9 am to 5 pm
Thursday, Friday & Saturday
May 6-7-8, 2021

Native Plants/Trees • Butterfly Host Plants
Pollinator Plants • Annuals • Perennials
Tropicals • Succulents • Veggies
Hanging Baskets • Combination Planters

913 N. Pearl, Paola, KS 66071
The sale will be held in the parking lot of the new Extension Offices at 913 N. Pearl (Old KC Road)

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K-STATE Research and Extension
Master Gardener Marais des Cygnes District