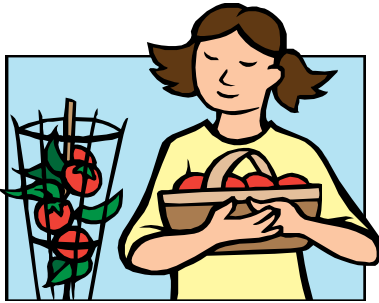


# Roots & Shoots



Master Gardener  
Society of  
Oakland County, Inc.



## August – September 2014

 A logo for August featuring purple gladiolus flowers. A yellow banner at the bottom contains the text "August Gladiolus".	<p>August 12, 2014 @ 6:30pm MGSOC General Society Meeting &amp; Location Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church 5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304</p> <p>Speaker : Janet Macunovich Education: "Choosing and Planting Trees"</p> <p>A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational Program.</p>
 A logo for September featuring yellow and orange aster flowers. A yellow banner at the bottom contains the text "September Aster".	<p>September 9, 2014 @ 6:30pm MGSOC General Society Meeting &amp; Location Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church 5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304</p> <p>Speaker : Molly Robinson Education: "Decorating with Molly"</p> <p>A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational Program.</p>
 A logo for October featuring orange calendula flowers. A yellow banner at the bottom contains the text "October Calendula".	<p>October 14, 2014 @ 6:30pm MGSOC General Society Meeting &amp; Location Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church 5631 North Adams Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304</p> <p>Speaker : Sue Grubba Education: "Shady Characters in the Garden"</p> <p>A business meeting will take place, prior to the start of our Educational Program.</p>

## Carol's Corner



{Carol's articles will resume in the next issue of Roots & Shoots}

### The Year at a Glance—MGSOC Meetings/Events for 2014

August 12	Janet Macunovich	Choosing and Planting Trees	
August 18		MGSOC Board Meeting	7PM @ Extension Office
September 9	Molly Robinson	Decorating with Molly	
October 14	Sue Grubba	Shady Characters in the Garden	
October 20		MGSOC Board Meeting	7PM @ Extension Office
November 11	Julia Hofley	Take Back Your Garden and Protecting Your Investment	
November 17		MGSOC Board Meeting	7PM @ Extension Office
December 9	Holiday Potluck		

*...from the cabbage patch*



Please remember to notify our Corresponding Secretary, Nancy Schmid, with member news so she can forward the appropriate correspondence to our fellow Master Gardeners. As corresponding secretary, Nancy sends cards of cheer, congratulations and condolences to our members as the situation warrants and Nancy would welcome being alerted to any such opportunities. She would also appreciate knowing whether or not the member wishes to share their news with

everyone.

Nancy has been a Master Gardener since 2010 as well as a member of the Project Support Team since then. Nancy is also the keeper of the Master Gardener cookbooks so please keep her in mind if you have news to share or need a gift for gardener.

Contact Nancy at 248.651.7639 or 586.662.9394 (cell) or via email at [nancy.c.s@comcast.net](mailto:nancy.c.s@comcast.net).

## Species and Small-Flowering Clematis

Cheryl English presented a talk on species and small-flowering *clematis* for our June membership meeting. She handed out an excellent introduction to *clematis* with planting, fertilizing and pruning instructions. She lives in Detroit and will conduct a tour of her garden on August 16.

Small-flowering varieties sometimes bloom to November and are very disease resistant. They often have lovely seed heads with seeds dispersed by the wind. Lattice is not appropriate for use as a clematis trellis because the leaf petioles are not long enough to wind around the wood. *Clematis* like cool moist roots. Her handout suggested digging an 18" by 18" hole and filling the bottom with compost or well-rotted manure. Add topsoil so that about 6" of the stem is below the soil line. Secure the stem carefully to the support. Planting a small shrub in front will insure a cool root system.

There are three pruning groups of *Clematis*. Group 1 consists of spring bloomers that bloom on last year's growth. After the main blooming period and no later than July, prune out dead, weak and broken stems. Group 2 are varieties that have at least two bloom periods. In the early spring as buds begin to swell prune out dead, weak and broken stems. Then starting at the top, prune down about 1/3 of the height, cutting just above a strong pair of buds on each stem. Group 3 plants bloom from early summer to fall on the current year's growth. Prune in spring when the buds begin to swell and danger of severe frost has passed. Starting from the base of the plant, move up 12-18" and prune, leaving two pairs of buds on each stem. Some *Clematis* are herbaceous and will die all the way back to the ground.

*Clematis* are heavy feeders. Use a balanced fertilizer, preferably an organic rose or tomato fertilizer. Add 2-3" of mulch.

Cheryl described and showed pictures of many different varieties of *Clematis* with bloom times and pruning groups. Without the pictures a description of each would be boring to read (and to write)! Breeders have gone all out to create many different colors and forms of the flowers with bloom times from spring to late fall. Most *Clematis* varieties are hardy in our climate.

—Submitted by Jean Gramlich



## Living Walls

James Rizzo spoke about creating living walls for our July membership meeting. His company sells the hardware for living walls, but he says he has no expertise in what plants should be used and their care and maintenance. Historically, the hanging gardens of Babylon are the first examples of living walls. Ivy has been grown up walls for hundreds of years.

Living walls on buildings provide many benefits. They have the obvious aesthetic quality of being beautiful, but they improve the acoustics inside the building by dampening the sound from outside the building making the interior much quieter without traffic and other noxious sounds. They provide better indoor air quality and protection for the building. In our climate, energy savings add up to 20%. Living walls add LEED points, and the whole building is more sustainable.

Various types of hardware and structures support living walls ranging from small wall hangings to the sides of whole buildings including hydroponic systems, cables, hydrofoam and felt pocket systems. Of interest to master gardeners are the small wall hangings that can be used inside or outside the house. A local example of a living wall is at Planterra. Modular planters with soil and drip line irrigation can be used. Other systems use hydrofoam: the plants are placed in the foam with no soil and are grown hydroponically. Felt pockets are easy to hang and plant using larger plants to hide the planter. The felt contains the soil and allows the plants to breathe, and the installation can be hand watered or irrigated.

In systems using soil, regular potting soil with no wetting agents and fertilizers should be used. In hydroponic systems, pH is absolutely critical. Fast growth is not desirable, and cutting the plants back is necessary. Plant materials can be tropicals, annuals, perennials and herbs.

Living walls are an art form with color and textural variegation. Some artists are creating live art with frames for indoor decoration. Mr. Rizzo claims that with proper installation and maintenance there is no problem with mold.

—Submitted by Jean Gramlich



Advanced Master Gardener Peggy Wanat in front of the living wall at Planterra.



# Spring Garden Tour in England

## May 19 - 24

*Submitted by Karen Brant*

Pale lavender *Wisteria* dripping from weathered wood, towering *Rhododendrons* in rainbow colors, fragrant pastel colored roses...a springtime trip to the English countryside is a delight to the senses of a garden enthusiast. The uniqueness of each garden is a joy to discover. Kiftsgate's hillside gardens lead the viewer up and down precarious steps to terraces of flowers including roses, *Irises* and peonies accented by colorful shrubs. The centerpiece at the bottom of the steps is a half circle reflecting pool that opens to a vista of the countryside revealing a patchwork of fields in every shade of green imaginable peppered with huge squares of vibrant yellow rapeseed in bloom.



Garden rooms at Hidcote Manor, just across the street from Kiftsgate, are bordered by sharply manicured shrubbery and linear paths that reveal surprises around every turn. Picture a whole garden room of tree peonies with elegant blooms in shades of pink, white, yellow and tangerine offset by the height of pointed shrubbery and trees forming the walls of the room.

*Wisteria* in white and shades of lavender drape many old walls, but the most striking display is at Coughton Court where head gardener Sam Tippens and his staff have trained the *Wisteria* to grow into four groomed trees the size of a Michigan ornamental crab tree. Peonies in various shades of pink contrast beautifully with the pale lavender *Wisteria* trees making a stunning display.



In Pashley Manor Garden sculptures accent the landscape and finding them becomes a treasure hunt. Reedy grass and a bed of white *Azaleas* hide a crew team carrying their boat above their heads. A careening hula hooper is tucked into a corner of the vegetable garden and a young lady reads a book on a bench in front of golden *Irises*.



A huge urn with herbs sprouting from side pockets and shooting forth from the center greets visitors to the vegetable garden. Lining the sides of the entrance are gooseberries trained into topiaries. The design

is artful with geometric shapes creating a vegetable tapestry. Broad beans with tiny white and black flowers promise a future harvest that contrasts with artichokes ripe and ready to be picked.

Great Dixter is an extraordinary experience. The home and gardens reflect the philosophy of its previous owner, Christopher Lloyd, 1921 – 2006, a renowned gardener and garden writer. Unlike many gardens where the flowers are arranged in tiers of low, medium and high and the viewer observes them from a path, at the Great Dixter, a riot of flowers, shrubs and trees in all shapes, sizes and colors seem to envelop the viewer. It is like walking inside a painting rather than viewing it. Juxtaposed with this controlled and striking jumble are huge shrubs perhaps twenty feet tall trimmed to perfection in other worldly shapes lending structure and continuity to the scene.



Great Dixter: Oast House and Gardens

Tea with head gardener, Fergus Garrett, who spoke at Goldner Walsh this past spring, gave us a personal interaction. He is very proud of his training program for students who live in the Great Dixter Manor home while completing their work study program in the gardens. Currently there are six students, each from a different county, including one from the USA. All of the money Fergus earns on speaking tours provides scholarships for the students who are personally mentored by Fergus and will soon be ready to be head gardeners all over the world.



Rounding out our trip was a day at the Chelsea Flower Show in London. This mecca for gardeners is unforgettable. Huge collections of flowers are featured in the Marquee (convention hall), which houses about 100 exhibitors. Foxglove, lavender, *Geraniums*, carnivorous plants, and daffodils were some of the collections featured in every color and size imaginable - all grouped by species so the viewer can compare them. No matter what the peak bloom time for each flower might be, they are all in prime bloom for the flower show, so some flowers such as *Primula* are held back and some such as lilies are forced to bloom early. Outside the Marquee were display gardens where ideas abounded – all were accented with ponds, waterfalls, garden sheds and art. Also outside were lanes of vendors selling a variety of garden related paraphernalia including edging, ladders, tools, stationery with plant pictures, soaps using herbs, gloves, plant labels, outdoor furniture, sculpture, fine paintings, and clothing. One booth that I found interesting was women’s gardening clothing by Garden Girl. It was quite pretty and functional. So many interesting ideas in one place.





England is truly a gardener's paradise. Winding and picturesque country roads link one garden after another. The complete list of gardens my companion, Lisa Markevich and I visited is below. We saw so many flowers and plants we recognized like lupine, *Iris*, *Peonies*, roses, foxtail lilies, *Clematis*, calla lilies, *Wisteria*, lots of globe *Allium*, and *Rhododendrons*, but whenever possible we learned some new plants such as *Cistus*, broad beans, Byzantine *Gladiolus*, *Laburnum* or golden chain tree and handkerchief tree. Lessons in positioning plants so colors and textures play off of one another abounded. This trip was truly a delight for a garden enthusiast.

Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire

Hidcote Manor Garden in Gloucestershire

Kiftsgate Court Gardens in Gloucestershire

Coughton Court in Warwickshire

Sissinghurst Castle Garden in Kent

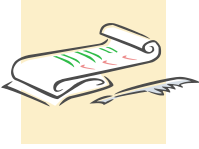
Pashley Manor Gardens in East Sussex

Great Dixter in East Sussex

Merriments Gardens East in Sussex

Hever Castle and Gardens in Kent

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in southwest London

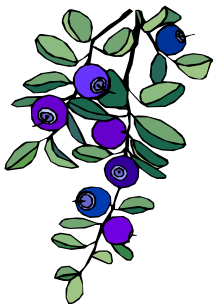


Oh those fleeting days of Summer! The rush of spring has given way to the lazier days and the TO DO list becomes the SHOULDA DONE list, with just a dash of I don't care anymore and a generous shovelful of sorry, it's out of my control.

So much of the successful garden depends on timing and there never seems to be enough time when the window of opportunity flies open. Well, too bad; it happens every year as far my experience goes and I should be used to it by now. I can't control anything but myself and that takes extra effort at this time of year. I am always tempted to take off on rescue missions wherever plants are sold. Of course that makes more work because although I've gotten a heck of deal and I didn't have this kind of that plant, upon arriving home I can't find any location that deserves new neighbors let alone might tolerate them for long. Know that the danger to be faced at this juncture is thinking about making a *new* bed with the *new* bargains. If you really, really need another garden to maintain, plan it now, prep for now but let sleeping microorganisms lie.

The activities that really get me through the end of the season are harvesting, reacquainting myself with the houseplants plus repotting those in need, making compost, and pruning almost anything that bothers me (as allowed by law). With some of the pressure off, there is more time to observe and record the good, the bad and the ugly in the surrounding estate. And also the strange.

*Wisteria* has behaved as if almost freezing to death was a good idea. Although blooming was minimal, especially on the youngest one, the robust regeneration after appearing completely shot was amazing. One anomaly was the size of some of the leaflets. Normally very delicate and feathery, some of them were huge, being on the plant version of steroids. This only occurred on the first flush of leaf-out which I attributed to the same type of energy burst I enjoy when spring finally arrives. But by this time of year a lot of things are ready to give up or give in. I can't even bear to deal with *Adenophora* (ladybells) anymore. Soon they will be at your house and don't say I didn't warn you. Purslane has decided that there is nothing more suitable as a groundcover between the stepping stones than they and I am ready to agree with them. My squirt bottle with vinegar has no effect on them. If they stay tiny they're actually kind of cute.



Blueberry bushes have had a lot of problems since before the 2012 assault. Do not buy or pilfer plants from out of state because Michigan has a quarantine for a disease that severely jeopardizes our number one fruit industry. What I observed with my four varieties of blueberries took me on a little bit of a roller coaster ride. The newest plants were very well protected for the winter compared to the elder bushes. The older bushes didn't appear to suffer like the youngsters. Unfortunately two of the youngsters were varieties that should have never been sold here because their hardiness ends at a temperature of 35 degrees. When I researched Chandler I thought it was a typo and had the minus missing. Oops. For the strange side of the story: I kept checking the b-bushes for signs of life as advised by the Extension bulletins and after finally pronouncing one dead it suddenly sprouted a large, amazingly healthy, four cubic inches of leaves on a 6 -inch branch- - in 4 days. Three days later it was brown and shriveled and has since gone to the great compost pile in the sky. I



blamed another death on the ‘fatality flush’ syndrome which is a dormancy related issue. Alas, poor Chandler - - - we hardly knew ye.



Since pruning is another activity which supports my sanity here at Nutcase, I am always looking for sound ways of using the “prune-age.” The twigs and branches cut from *Buddleia* in the spring make the best pea fence for the shorter edible pod varieties like Oregon Sugar Pod, Dwarf Gray Sugar, and Sugar Ann, all of which only grow to 1 ½ feet. The butterfly bush branches are conveniently outfitted with side shoots that turn each branch into half a ladder. Set your pea fence in as soon as you see sprouts and you will avoid disturbing those precious babies. For taller varieties you can try bamboo and bungee cords. The goal is to be creative of course.

Since I never managed to put together very many pots of annuals my sessions with the houseplants will have to fill in for my need to propagate and decorate. I can’t believe I forgot all about the *Dahlias* in storage and I feel like a real soilbag. (Master Gardeners don’t use the “D” word.) Several of my other experiments missed the boat and rather than discuss them, let me just pause for a second to thank self-watering pots.

In propagation via seed, I usually fail the first seven times. Janet Macunovich says “You never really know a plant unless you kill it three times.” I apparently need more time to get suitably familiar. One of the problems with seeding my perennials is that either nothing comes up or they all do and I can’t bear to let any of them suffer harm and then I have too many. Suddenly I go from famine to feast and I am overcome and overrun. It took seven years for me to grow my *Knautia* and blue morning glories from seed. Now I can’t get rid of them.

Though Nutcase no longer has a nursery license to sell perennials, we still have vegetable plants for people who think they’d like to try a plant or two. You currently don’t need a license and inspection to sell veggies but never call them “organic” unless you have certification. And from that thought we slide into the biggest topic of this part of the season - - - harvesting.

Many vegetables will let you know when it’s time to bring them in by giving you clues. All you need to know is how to recognize what they are trying to tell you. The vegetables you grow at home will likely be the best you’ve ever tasted. It helps the process to know when your crops are at their best.

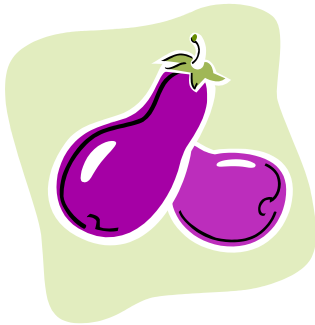
Tomatoes are probably the easiest to determine the level of ripeness in fruitland. Use as many of your senses as you can, when you can: touch, smell, sight, taste and not so much sound. Perfection comes when the fruits are a little firm and a little soft. If picked a day or two early they can finish ripening in a paper bag in a dark place. The love at first sight kicks in because of color. Most people understand to pick a tomato when it has reached the color that it is supposed to be—that’s easy. What you may not know is that winter squash will do the same thing, just developing their full color when ripe. They can take some frost as well, so if they’re not ready don’t rush it. Just be sure to get them in before a killing frost.



Squash will also register its ripeness with color. Spaghetti squash turns a warm, mellow yellow gold while butternut moves toward orange-tan. A patch of orange-ish yellow appears on the bellies of acorn, delicata and buttercup types of winter squash. Along with that technique, winter squash should pass the thumbnail test by resisting having its skin punctured. Harvest before a hard frost because they enjoy a little chill to bring out its flavor. And always leave at least a 2-inch stem when you CUT it from the vine. Cure for a couple of weeks in

a warm place (80-85 degrees) and once cured, store at 50 – 55 degrees in a cool dry place. Don't transport pumpkins or squash by dangling them from their vines. You break it, you buy it. But you can also make delicious soup with the shattered pieces.

For summer squash, the masses suggest they're best when harvested small, 4 to 6 inches for zucchini, straightneck and crookneck squash. Pattypan types should be 3 inches or less in diameter. If you don't keep summer squash picked you will eventually wonder why they've stopped producing and upon inspection you will very likely discover a few squash the size of a toddler. And that's where zucchini bread comes from.



Eggplants are ripe when their skin is deep purple and shiny. Over-ripeness causes them to be bitter and filled with seeds. Harvest them when the eggs are still young and firm about 1/3 of its mature size, somewhere between 4 and 8 inches. Always use pruners or scissors to cut from the plant. The Dingo harvested an eggplant as a puppy and was not impressed with its flavor. We had run out of cucumbers so she nosed around until the eggplant caught her eye. I know she couldn't have possibly used scissors but she never injured the plant plucking her one and only aubergine. Her precision was surgical.

Another clue in successful harvesting is the categories of size. Starting with **Relatively Small** as in snow and sugar peas, which you eat pod and all, these should be picked before the seeds inside start to develop; likewise garden beans and wax beans. Kohlrabi should be harvested when it is about the size of a golf ball; any larger and it gets woody, which ruins the flavor. Summer squash and cucumbers can be eaten when they are bigger, but squash tastes better when it's young and cucumbers have a tendency to get seedy as many things do later in life. Cucumbers grow fast and should be checked every day. For fresh use, a cucumber should be plump to be crisp and juicy, and can be from 6 to 9 inches long. For sweet pickles, cucumbers are best harvested when they measure from 1 1/2-to-2 1/2-inches long; for dill pickles, the ideal length is from 3 inches to 4 inches.

The next size category is **Relatively Big**. The opposite is true for peas and beans that you will remove from the pod, to a point. For most, like shell peas and limas, go ahead and let them get plump. For fava beans, the same is almost true because after a point they can get woody as well.

The last size category covers a lot of territory and is known as **That Depends**. Okra should be harvested no bigger than what the seed packet recommends. For most this is just a few inches,

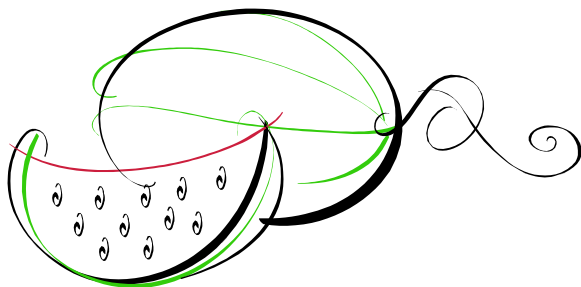
but some varieties grow larger. Okra needs to be checked every day, just like cukes. It's said that they can go from prime to pitiful in 24 hours. Cabbage can be harvested small, or allowed to get bigger. You can control the size by adjusting the spacing between plants at planting time. However, if they get too big, they can split; still edible, but not as pretty. Brussels sprouts are like miniature cabbages, and can be enjoyed at any size, just don't let them go to the point of starting to open. Carrots will give you an indication of how big they are if you brush back a little soil from around the stem. Be careful though: carrots are great deceivers. Even though they may actually be smaller than they appear, they are most likely still edible. Carrots do well when soil types and varieties are matched well. Shorter varieties do better in hard soil than long ones. And with a good mulch you can pick through the winter.

Then there are the timing categories like the **Before They Bolt** category. Bolting is simply the term used for when a plant produces flowers that we don't want. What we harvest from broccoli and cauliflower are actually unopened flower heads, and that's the way to harvest them - - - unopened. The same is not true for basil and most salad greens; they are better brought in before they start making flowers. Pinching them back as you would *Coleus* flowers will lengthen their harvest. Bolted lettuce can be left to reseed but for the most part is inedible because of its bitterness.

**When They Fall Down.** Really, does it get any easier than an actual show of "we are ready"? Potatoes, onions and Jerusalem artichokes, aka sunchokes, will actually fall over when it's time to harvest. Potatoes can be picked as 'new' potatoes as soon as you see flowers, but the stems falling over is an indication that the plants are done producing, in most cases. This is not always the plant's choice as the Dingo has shown me that by using the potato plants as speed bumps on her way thru the garden they will appear almost exactly as they would had they fallen of their own accord. Onions are most certainly done when they fall over. Jerusalem artichokes can be harvested starting at this point, and continuing on even after a frost. Some say they actually taste better then. Leeks don't necessarily fall over but can be harvested when the stems are at least an inch in diameter.

And then there's Miscellaneous. Pick both hot and sweet peppers early to encourage more growth, then let them turn color as they mature, depending on the variety. If you want your hot peppers to be at their most brisk, cut back on water when they're ripening.

Pick corn when the ears produce a milky substance from the kernels. This is about 3 weeks from when you first see the silks. Bring in all your sweet potatoes before the frost. And all potatoes prefer to be cured.



Melons are Difficult but picking the right melon is one instance where you can use your sense of sound as well as of sight. Watermelons should make a "thump" that sounds hollow and deep when you tap on them, and their skins turn color where it meets the ground. The overall surface of the fruit will lose its gloss. Not too bad, although this system doesn't seem to work for everyone.

Melons simply take practice to know when they are ripe. With cantaloupes and muskmelons, though not all, the netting becomes more pronounced as the fruits ripen. They also readily loosen from the vine and you should be able to catch a whiff of that wonderful aroma. Some, though, will not readily detach from the vine so to determine its progress check the tendril closest to the fruit. It should be turn completely brown as its signal.

Kale leaves can generally be harvested about 40 days after planting, but a frost really sweetens and enhances the flavor, so it's best to wait. Harvest by taking off the outer leaves as needed and they are frost hardy so you can be using it fresh well into December and with protection, even longer.

Lazily riding out the end of the season seemed like a plan but as they so often do, plans fall apart. Early in the summer we were notified that Consumers Energy would be working in the neighborhood to upgrade the gas lines. There was much digging and pounding and vibration. Suddenly Nutcase Nursery became home to a totally freaked out mole which of course totally freaked me out. In over thirty years, no such creature ever dared darken our doorstep. None but a completely deranged critter would consider entering the domain of the Dingo, who seemed to be quite entertained by this new entry. At first I thought it was hilarious but that dissipated quickly. It was initially amusing to see where it would run into edging and make a sharp left or right and follow the bed down the line. Then it started rearranging the patio stones and we had to put our feet down. Literally.

And if that wasn't the last straw, the weather decided to take out a tree next door so we lost power for a few days. Fortunately, it wasn't 95 and muggy, nor were we in the midst of making tomato sauce.

But like I said earlier with just a dash of I don't care anymore and a generous shovelful of sorry, it's out of my control, I intend to enjoy what's left of the season. We need to bloom where we're planted.





## Some Information You Should Know

### MGSOC Board Members

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**Treasurer: Crystal Castle .....(248) 860-5445 (c)**

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**Hospitality Greeter: Carole Carroll.....(248)321-8669**  
**& Sally Teague.....(248)546-0280**  
**Membership: Lavon Cook.....(248)939-7047**  
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#### Mission Statement

**It is the Master Gardener Society of Oakland County's Mission to assist, enable, and encourage its members to use their horticultural knowledge and experience to help the people of their communities, enrich their lives through gardening and good gardening practices.**

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“Bringing Knowledge to Life”

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