



What's Up in the Greenhouse?

by Joan Andersen

I recently visited Munsinger Clemens Gardens greenhouse to learn about preparations for the 2013 season. Although the plugs for next year's flowers will not be delivered until late March, there are still lots of plants to see on a snowy day. The sun is getting higher in the sky and Gardens Supervisor Nia Primus reports that temperatures in the greenhouse can get over 80° on a sunny day, and the tropical plants living there for the winter really like it. So does Todd the toad. He has lived in the greenhouse drain all winter, enjoying the warm temperatures while his relatives are hibernating outside.

Nia is growing some carnivorous plants this year for the first time. These plants



produce a sap that attracts insects. Bugs and flies that land on pitcher plant or cape sundew become stuck to the plant and can't escape. Leaves curl around the insect and the plant uses it for food. The plants will be kept in the greenhouse to see if they help control fruit flies and other insects.

Nia has also developed a passion for succulent plants. At the end of last season, plants were removed from containers and kept in the greenhouse over the winter. Right now, she is doing cuttings to grow more succulents for containers in the Gardens. This is a three-step process: On Mondays and Fridays she prepares the cuttings for planting. Leaves are removed from the mother plant and set aside for three

days until the cut area is calloused over. Then the cuttings are placed in a tray of sandy potting medium to grow roots. (If you try this at home, you can use a cactus mix or add some sand to regular potting mix.) It is important that succulent cuttings or plants not be overwatered or they will rot. As roots appear, the cuttings are planted into individual pots to grow to a larger size. Eventually the successful plants will be transplanted into containers outside in the Gardens. Nia is also creating several vertical succulent containers that will hang on the wall of the gift shop/restroom building this summer.

Succulent plants come in an amazing variety of sizes and shapes, but they all share the same characteristic: they tolerate drier conditions because they store water for use during dry periods. Cactus is probably the best known

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Simplifying Your Garden

William M. Cook, PhD

Gardening is often fun and rewarding, but it is also frequently a lot of work. At some point almost every gardener realizes that they want to redesign something so that it requires less work and maintenance, whether because they are downsizing their garden, re-prioritizing their time, or just plain growing older. Here are several ideas for keeping your garden looking great with a little less work or added convenience.

- 1) Plant more perennials and fewer annuals. However, be careful because there are many high-maintenance perennials. Plan for a smallish number of easy-going species, and vary the colors and sizes. It is easiest if your species grow into clumps which suppress weeds from growing up under them. Old standby species like daylilies, irises, and hostas are very hardy, can be

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- flexible about microhabitat within reason, and spread laterally to crowd out weeds.
- 2) Plant fewer species but more colors or cultivars of the same species. Repeat more individuals instead of planting a few each of a large array of plants (I am always guilty of the latter).
 - 3) For difficult spots, allow 1-2 species of groundcovers to take over. Be careful, however, that they are not species which grow out of control.
 - 4) If you have an area which is kind of out of the way and you mostly need to fill the space with something that looks different, consider a row of small shrubs. These might take a few years to grow up, but if carefully selected they can end up being fairly low maintenance. You can then plant a smaller number of annual flowers around or in front of the shrubs if you want to add color.
 - 5) To irrigate, lay down some drip or soaker hoses or a sprinkler on a timer. Make sure you're irrigating at an effective time of day. If you are using a timer, the ideal time is early morning just before dawn, since the temperatures are cooler then and the sun is not evaporating your water away. If you are watering manually, pick a time in the early morning or when sun is not shining directly on your area.
 - 6) If you are moving hoses around a lot, use quick-connect couplings to make the attaching and detaching easier and more convenient. These should cost only a few dollars each.
 - 7) Mulch! A layer of organic material several inches thick, such as bark or wood chips, will hold moisture in at ground level (this works well with soaker hoses), can look nice, and help to suppress weeds. Any weeds

that grow up through the mulch are likely to be easier to pull out.

Especially be sure to mulch walking paths or strips between beds or rows.

- 8) Convert some of your garden areas, maybe some of your annual vegetables or flowers, to raised beds or larger containers. These are easier to access without bending down and help define the layout of your yard or garden. Also, if you use weed-free soil mix and make careful use of mulch or landscape fabric, you will largely eliminate weeds in these areas particularly if you never walk in them. Remember that raised beds and especially containers dry out faster and need to be watered more often.
- 9) If you are feeling overwhelmed, feel free to simply not plant an area of an annual or vegetable garden, mulch it well, and let it be dormant for a year. You can always replant it the next time if you want to.
- 10) If you have compacted soil in places where you walk back and forth constantly, have you considered whether you want to put in a permanent walkway? Hardscaping should be fairly long-lasting and in general doesn't require weeding. Also, you can install edging, which defines the contours of planting beds, helps keep grass out, and has visual appeal.
- 11) Consider if you have any individual plants or species which require excessively large amounts of effort to keep going. Maybe replace your hybrid tea roses, which are prone to pest and disease problems, with cultivars that are hardier and require less maintenance.

By the time you read this, it will not be long before you can consider putting some ideas into action. Maybe sooner, if we have an early spring like in 2012!



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succulent, but other familiar examples include jade and aloe. One of the plants in the greenhouse is *Euphorbia milii* "Crown of Thorns." It is blooming now and it will bloom again in summer. *Kalanchoe* "Flapjack" has large pancake-shaped leaves and will get a large flower spike in summer. *Lithops* or "Living Stones" look just like small rocks—no two are exactly the same. They should get daisy-like flowers in late summer.

The greenhouse also contains *Agave* plants that grew along Kilian in 2012. They are so large that they are overwintering in recycled kiddie pools or tall plastic trash cans. Nia waters them once a month during the winter. She mentioned that they have a very sharp thorn on the end of each leaf. For personal safety if you do any work with them, wear safety glasses or remove the leaf tips.

As far as outside jobs go, there is always snow removal. The gardens have many arborvitae, and in one of her more unusual duties Nia puts on her snowshoes and walks around knocking snow off the arborvitae to prevent broken branches. Time to think spring!



Lily, Looking for a Modern-Day Miracle

by Idella Moberg

It comes up every year. Spindly thing. Sometimes I accidentally back up on it while pulling weeds and crush it. Or I get carried away clipping and down it goes. Other years I leave it alone and it just stands there until it withers and goes all yellow. I should just pull it out, I keep telling myself. It's never going to bloom. But for the past ten years or so, I've left it growing in my garden. I don't know what possessed me, really, to take a hot-house flower and plunk it in the ground like that. I never really expected it to get through even one winter, much less ten. I just seem to keep falling for the same old line: Maybe this year a miracle will happen. Maybe it will bloom big trumpet blooms, snowy white with a sprig of gold inside. My Easter Lily, resurrected at last.

Lily is, after all, a symbol of new life and love. I'm not the first person to have trouble with a white lily. Picture Venus (I'm thinking Botticelli here), ancient goddess of love, rising out of sea foam. Creamy white Venus with her long flowing golden hair is emerging from a huge sea shell, all nubile and young, her whole life of love and beauty ahead of her. And then, while she is still rising, she looks around, so the old story goes, and her gaze lights upon lily. Lily's whiteness and beauty fill her with jealous envy. This cannot be, she thinks. I've only just begun. And look. A rival. Already. I need to nip this bud. To mar Lily's beauty Venus causes a huge monstrous pistil to spring from the center of the snow-white lily. That ought to do it.

But I am not like Venus. I'd love to have snow-white lily show her face in my garden. If I am jealous of anyone, it is of my mother-in-law, who plants the Easter lilies I give her each year, and they all come up the next spring, and they always bloom.

"What do you do to them," I say, "to get them to bloom like that?"

"Oh, nothing," she says. "I just put them in the ground."

"Like, when?" I say.

"Oh, whenever I think of it. I put them in the garage for a while, until it warms up, then I just throw 'em in whenever."

There's something fishy about this. She must have some kind of trick she's not telling. Or maybe she's streaming in some secret something from beyond. I seriously doubt this, though, since she is way too pragmatic to delve into anything even remotely mysterious.

My Easter lily is more immortal than she is beautiful, living as she has for so long in my garden. I need a more mature mentor than Venus if I expect to have a miracle. One who will divulge the secret to success. I need Hera. Lily was dedicated to Hera, Greek goddess of love and marriage, wife of Zeus, King of Olympus. One ancient legend has it that after Zeus fathered Hercules with the mortal woman Alceme he devised a way to make his son more divine. He drugged Hera and had baby Hercules placed at her breast to nurse. The ploy would have worked out just fine if Hercules hadn't maybe guzzled so loudly or perhaps pulled so hard—he was Hercules, after all, strongest man on earth even as a baby—or even outright bitten Hera. Zeus may have miscalculated the dose and the drug wore off too soon. Who can know for sure. But Hera surely did wake up from her stupor, horrified—who can't relate to that!—and she flung the baby from her. Her milk streamed across the sky and formed the Milky Way. Some milk drops fell to earth and wherever they landed large beautiful fields of lilies sprang up. As to the baby, well, his father succeeded in making him immortal, mostly, and the rest is history.

But I'm not looking for immortality. I think maybe my old Easter lily has that already. Nor am I wanting a whole field of white lilies, though one would be wonderful. What I mainly need is to figure out a way to persuade lily to bloom. Perhaps a queenly Christian figure can unlock the mystery for me. Virgin Mary has been known to transform a lily now and then. It is told that lily had been yellow until one day Mary stooped to pick it up. At her touch, the bloom turned pure white, and gold within, and became a metaphor for the sacred lady. Because she is associated with Virgin Mary, lily has become a symbol for chastity and purity. Medieval paintings depict Mary with lilies. The Church has adopted lily as Mary's flower. According to general belief, Mary's tomb was adorned with white lilies.

The Easter lily stands for hope and life. That's what I need. Hope and life for my lily. I don't need lilies springing up where some holy person treads. Nor do I need them upon the graves of falsely executed people, even though legend practically guarantees that. I don't expect lily in my garden to protect anyone from ghosts and evil spirits, or to foretell marriage, happiness, or prosperity. I just want lily to bloom. Because she is beautiful. And fragrant.

I resort once more to my local version of the Queen of Heaven, my darling mother-in-law. Not that the ancient divine queens are obsolete. They do have their place in the pantheon of greatness. But my mother-in-law has a green thumb like you wouldn't believe.

"Come on, now, Kay," I say, "What's your secret?"

"No secret," she says.

"I suppose you just chant something and you pull a miracle out of the air, and your old Easter lilies bloom like crazy."

"No," she says. "It comes in a box."

"A miracle?" I say.

"No," she says. "Miracle Grow."

Go figure.

Looking Forward to the New Season in Virginia Clemens Rose Garden

by Joan Andersen

As I write this article, it is still six weeks until mid April when the tender roses are uncovered. After the construction blankets are removed, compost is gradually pulled away from the plants and left in place for the growing season. Timing is important. If you wait too long, the roses start growing under their cover and can experience disease problems. If uncovered too early, staff must watch the weather forecast and be ready to cover the roses in case of a cold snap.

New roses are added to the large collection each year. Deb Keiser, Rose Specialist, tries to find good new cultivars that are more resistant to blackspot and other diseases so that they need to be sprayed less with fungicide. Sometimes she has tested a new rose in the Clemens Test Rose Gardens before it has been officially named and introduced on the market.

Some new roses for the Gardens in 2013 are from the Weeks Roses "Easy to Love" series. Three colors being added this year are "Hot Cocoa," a deep brick red, "Easy Going," a yellow, and "Living Easy," an orange. They are floribunda roses with a shrublike form and lots of blooms. An extra bonus is that they have some fragrance. Many modern roses that perform well here have lost their fragrance, and it is nice to see rose hybridizers working to get fragrance included in new cultivars.

Miniature roses are used as edging plants in all the rose gardens. Deb has selected some plants that she has trialed and some additional ones that look promising. "Diamond Eyes" was successful when trialed here so more plants are being added; it is purple with a white eye. "Whimsy" is a pink-and-white bicolor. "Teeny Bopper" is a very hardy plant with tiny red flowers and a shrub like form. "Tiddly Winks" (don't you love the names!) winters well



here—it is a showy hot pink-and-yellow bicolor. "Smoke Rings" is a melon orange with a smoky eye.

Of course, an important part of Virginia Clemens Rose Garden is the wonderful collection of hybrid tea roses. Deb adds new ones every year, and this year she made a special effort to find fragrant roses. Some new additions include "Grand Dame," which has large pink blooms and an intense old rose fragrance. Pope John Paul II is white with a strong citrus fragrance. "Veteran's Honor" is a long-stemmed red with large long-lasting flowers and a pleasant fragrance.

Finally, "Distant Drums" is a Buck Rose classified as a floribunda. It has soft mauve pink flowers borne in clusters and a myrrh fragrance. You will have to visit the Gardens to find out what that is! Fortunately, the roses are labeled and you should be able to find "Distant Drums" and check out the fragrance for yourself.



Photo Contest

by Mary Margaret Bjorklund

NOW IS THE TIME! for a unique (early) spring glimpse of Munsinger Clemens Gardens. The photo contest committee is hoping to receive entries that represent all four seasons in this year's contest. Photos can be taken NOW until early November. Snow can hide some aspects of life in the Gardens, but it can highlight and contrast also. Then spring presents us with interesting and surprising peeks of developing plant life.

Any visitor to the Gardens until early November is eligible to enter the photo contest. Categories are Hardscapes adult and youth-18, and Landscapes adult and youth-18. Winning photos will be displayed in a variety of locations in the Saint Cloud area. Please refer to the Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society website for details of the 2013 contest.

Winning photos of the 2012 contest have already been exhibited at River's Edge Convention Center, CentraCare Plaza, and the main GRR Library. This spring and summer they can be enjoyed at Waite Park Public Library, Whitney Senior Center, and other locations. They can also be seen at our MCBS

website. The photo contest committee encourages you to make frequent visits with your camera to the Gardens, enjoy the seasonal changes, and share the moments you capture of our beautiful Munsinger Clemens Gardens.

Forget the Aspirin, Pennies, and Vodka – But Wash the Vase Extending the Life of Cut Flowers

by Carl Hoffman

Many of us have cut flowers from our gardens or have purchased flowers from a floral shop to brighten the inside of our home and have been very disappointed when the flowers wilt and become unattractive a day or two later. In an attempt to prevent this from happening a second time, we may be tempted to use one or more of a variety of home remedies in the water. As many of us have learned, these home remedies really don't make flowers last longer.

To explain why these home remedies are ineffective, I will begin with a very short botany lesson. When a flower has been cut, it is removed from its source of water, its major source of food. The wounded end of the stem is vulnerable to invasion by bacteria and fungi, which begin the decay process. Meanwhile, evaporation from the leaves causes water to move through the leaves, increasing the need for water to move into the stems. Therefore, a good floral preservative contains carbohydrates, acidifiers, and a microorganism growth inhibitor. The carbohydrates provide food to the cut flowers, the acidifiers lower the pH making it easier for the plants to take up water, and the microorganism inhibitor prevents bacteria or fungi from growing in the water.

While the most effective way to supply the needs of cut flowers is the use of a commercial floral preservative, home remedies have been used as a cost-cutting alternative. Some of these alternatives include aspirin, gin or vodka, 7Up, pennies, and bleach. Although there is some logic behind the use of these products, science does not back them up. For example, copper is an effective fungicide, but the copper in pennies is not soluble. 7Up and similar soda products do not supply enough sucrose in an available form to

supply the carbohydrate needs of the cut flowers. The alcohol in gin, vodka, or wine is only slightly effective as a bactericide and it is expensive. Bleach is more efficient and cheaper in killing bacteria, but the free chlorine in bleach will damage flowers. One author says that there have been reports that sildenafil citrate, the active chemical in Viagra, has increased flower life—I will say no more.

The ineffectiveness of the home remedies leaves commercial floral preservative as the best choice. A floral preservative is a complex mixture of sucrose, a water acidifier, an inhibitor of microorganisms, and a respiratory inhibitor. Floral preservatives are available at floral shops and, although there is a cost, the value of a longer lasting cut flowers arrangement is worth the expense. If you have recently purchased cut flowers from a florist shop, you are familiar with higher prices. I paid nearly \$50 for a half dozen roses arranged in a vase on Valentine's Day.

Whether you use a preservative or choose to use nothing, *always start with a carefully washed vase*. Previously used vases may contain bacteria that will quickly multiply and block the movement of water through the stems as well as begin the decay process. Following are some additional tips to help extend the life of cut flowers:

- Cut garden flowers early in the morning or late in the evening when they are crisp with water. Cut them with a sharp knife or shears to avoid tearing or smashing the stems.
- "Harden" flowers cut from your garden by immediately placing them in 110-degree F water plus a preservative; take the warm water to the garden with you. Place them in a cool location for an hour or two before arranging them. When you buy

flowers, recut the stems and harden them in the same way.

- When arranging, remove all foliage below the water line to reduce decay and bacteria buildup.
 - Check the water level of the container and add water plus preservative whenever needed. When the water becomes murky (about every third day), recut the stems, wash the vase, and fill with clean water containing preservative.
 - Keep flowers away from hot or cold air drafts and hot spots like radiators, direct heat, or television sets. Hot spots reduce the flowers' life by speeding water loss and use of stored food and increasing the rate of petal unfolding and maturation.
 - When you're away from home, move the flowers into the refrigerator or a cool spot in the home to slow down water loss, respiration, and maturation of the flowers.
 - Never store fruit and flowers together, particularly apples. Apples produce ethylene gas, which causes aging in flowers. For example, the petals of carnations will curl inward and the flowers will "go to sleep."
- While preparing this article, I learned that researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are attempting to breed flowers that hold their beauty longer. The horticulturists have found that several genes determine how long cut flowers remain attractive and they are focusing on the plant trait linked to longer-lived cut flowers. At the time of the cited research, a horticulturist demonstrated that breeding could extend the life of cut snapdragons to 11 days and longer. I'm dreaming, but wouldn't cut roses that lasted in vases for two weeks be wonderful?

You Can Go a Long Way for a Little Romance

by Idella Moberg

You can go a long way for a little romance. We're looking for it, Mark and I, in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Pale and light deprived, we've come seeking a reprieve from northern winter blues. We're in Karen and Kent's condo that overlooks the city and the ocean.

Karen has been paging through the Puerto Vallarta city paper. An article catches her eye: "Springtime at the Botanical Gardens."

"Romance in the Gardens! Enjoy an afternoon stroll through the gardens, take a dip in the river, steal a kiss and then join us in the Hacienda de Oro for a special Valentine's Day menu."

We can do this. Mark and I can go with Karen and Kent. What could be better than that? Karen disappears into the bedroom to call on the Magic Jack.

"We have a reservation for tomorrow at 2:00 pm," she announces. "It costs 250 pesos per person."

"What time should we leave?" "How should we get there?"

"That might depend on whether we take a cab or the bus." We decide to take a taxi out there and come back by bus. I run off to charge my camera battery. We'll need to be on our way by 9:00 am.

Next morning we hail a Taxi. In Puerto Vallarta you hail a cab by standing on the corner and look. Within a few seconds a taxi pulls over. We negotiate the price and pile in. Our driver is Franco. He's very proud of his rather large new taxi. For twenty years he's been driving a taxi in Puerto Vallarta. "I work 7 1/2 days a week," he says with a laugh. "Mexican hours."

We drive south of town about a half hour. To our right are magnificent views of Banderas Bay, the third largest bay in

the world. Out there wintering whales are frolicking. Frolicking in the bright blue sea. That's what we are, wintering whales going out for a frolic. The road follows the coastline for a while, then Franco turns inland for a few miles and drops us off at the entrance to the Gardens. Vallarta Botanical Gardens is a 20-acre botanical garden, 1,300 feet above sea level in Cabo Corrientes, Jalisco, Mexico. It was started in 2004 on the site of a cattle ranch and an area of old growth tropical deciduous forest.

We buy our tickets, plus a can of bug spray to ward off tiny no-see-ums with their big bites. The Gardens staff doesn't use poisonous insecticides because they want to preserve biodiversity that includes beautiful and environmentally important insects such as butterflies, dragonflies, and praying mantises. We spray our legs and arms and any spare parts we'd like to protect from the *jejenes*, or no-see-ums, and proceed into the Gardens.

The Gardens feature miles of hiking trails both through the native forest and within the manicured garden grounds. We first wander onto a rainforest trail. There we see native tropical plants like banana trees and coffee plants and a vanilla bean tree.

Next we walk along the Camino del Rio, which is actually a footpath that leads to Rio Horcones and the many steps that take us down a steep hill. The river borders the property and is a good place to take a swim. At the river's edge we succumb to the enchantment of the place. The water is clear. A deep pool is rather still because huge boulders interrupt the river current before it swirls around and pushes out, noisily rushing on its course. We each find a big white boulder for a perch. We sit and watch the water flow. The terrain here is wild. Tall hills filled with native flora.

Rocks and scruff. No buildings in sight. No sign of cultivation. We dawdle on the riverside for a while, then walk back up the steep-stepped slope.

Lunch in the Hacienda de Oro today includes a special Valentine's Day menu. Our chef's name is Carolina, a lovely svelte woman with a long auburn braid all the way down her back. Very suntanned. She's from London via British Columbia.

We sit at a table with a colorful table cloth on a long veranda. Hanging on strings from the eves of the porch are colorful glass hearts, Mexican *corazones*, red and blue and yellow. Spinning hearts sway in the gentle breeze that flows down from the surrounding hills. We eat slowly. We linger. We put our heads next to our life's love. We smile for the camera with a "You are Always in My Heart" smile. Never, ever, take being with your life partner, being with old beloved friends, for granted. It is new each day. Especially this day. We order coffee.

Mark and Kent buy Karen and me a red *corazone* to remember the day. As we leave, a teenage boy hands each lady a crimson hibiscus. A teenage girl holds out a wreath of turquoise Jade Vine flowers. The Jade Vine is just now coming into bloom. Karen takes it and puts it on my head. "Here, you should have this," she says. Then we step out of the Hacienda and into the Holstein Orchid and Vanilla House. Here we see more Jade Vine flowers, less commonly known as *strongylodon macrobotrys*, a member of the pea family, hanging on a woody vine down from above, in clusters like grapes. The flowers resemble stout butterfly bodies with closed wings. Karen and I take turns photographing each other wearing our Jade flower wreath next to the cascading Jade flowers. We have fallen under the spell

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of the place. Orchids are everywhere. Hundreds of them. I can't take it all in. I am overcome by the beauty and abundance of it all.

Eventually we move out to more gardens. The collections showcase plants of the Tropical Dry Forest Biome, a large naturally occurring community of flora and fauna, as well as exotics from around the world. Over 6000 Blue Agaves have been planted in the hills, and the area is being reforested with native tropical hardwood trees *tabebuia*, mountain pine, and mahogany. Other notable collections include native oaks grown from acorns, bromeliads, and wild palms. More orchids grow among the plants and trees. We stumble upon a pineapple patch.

Mark and Kent disappear. They have gone to the Hacienda and taken over a couple of the day beds that are scattered about the place. There they sprawl, looking out at the hills beyond the river. Gossamer panels of white flutter in the breeze. Scattered about are framed butterfly collections, potted palms and norfolk pines, old posters, heavy oak tables and chairs, and beds and pillows and pinatas. A most pleasing prospect.

At last we leave the Vallarta Botanical Gardens. We cross the road and wait for the bus back to town, which comes about every half hour. Forty-five minutes later we climb on and scramble for a seat. The bus rocks and rumbles its way out of the hills and back to Puerto Vallarta. We bring away sweet memories of beauty and romance and flowers. Our hearts are full. We are far from Minnesota, far from snow storms and short winter days. We can walk through a garden in the middle of February. It just goes to show you. You can go a long way for a little romance.

Plant for Early Spring Color

by Joan Andersen

Are you looking for a hardy perennial plant that blooms early in spring? Try Pasque Flower, which has been a reliable mid-April bloomer in my gardens for years. The plant's common name tells us that it blooms near Easter or Passover. The botanical genus is *Pulsatilla* and it is part of the *ranunculaceae* family. Sometimes the plant is labeled "meadow anemone" and is considered closely related to anemone. It is native to meadows, prairies, and alpine locations of North America, Europe, and Asia. Many cultivars are labeled zone 5, but I have successfully overwintered them in my zone 4 Central Minnesota garden.

For another variety, you can look at the native plant section of a nursery or mail order catalog and find *Pulsatilla patens*. It has lavender flowers in early spring. This plant is a native of the northern American Great Plains region and is the State Flower of South Dakota. It is a very tough plant, able to survive cold, wind, dry conditions, and summer heat. Grow this one in Zone 3!

Pulsatilla vulgaris is native to Great Britain, Sweden, and much of central Europe and is commonly available as a perennial plant. It has deep lavender flowers with frilly yellow centers. The fernlike foliage is a grayish green with soft hairs on the leaves, stems, and buds. The flower stems and buds rise above the leaves and the blooms open in mid-April in my garden. The flowers then develop very decorative fluffy

open seed heads. Eventually the seed heads start to dry and I cut the stems off. If you prefer, you can leave the seed heads on the plant for a while and allow the plant to self seed. The foliage continues to grow into a nice mound that can be enjoyed for the rest of the season.

Other cultivars are also available for our gardens. I grow *Pulsatilla alba*, a white-flowered plant that closely resembles the lavender-flowered one and blooms about the same time. *Pulsatilla rubra* is a red-flowered form with greener foliage that blooms in May and is not so hardy—I cover *rubra* with mulch for the winter.



In its native habitat, *Pulsatilla* grows in exposed areas with relatively poor soil. In our gardens, the plant needs sun and well drained soil. A sunny rock garden with average soil and good drainage is an excellent location. Mulch around the base of the plant to keep the roots cool and reduce weeds, but avoid mulching too close to the crown. A plant that is growing in good conditions will increase to a nice large clump (9" high x 15" wide). Because it has a deep tap root and transplanting is very difficult, it is best to plant it in a permanent location.

I enjoy growing Pasque Flower because it blooms early and looks interesting for the entire growing season. Rabbits don't seem to bother it, but I have been known to put a cage over the plant just as the flower stems are emerging so the deer do not "taste" the flower buds!



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Art Fair in the Gardens, July 18
Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 7th Annual Art Fair in the Gardens on
Thursday July 18 from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm. Shop for high quality artwork for your
home and garden as well as jewelry, weaving, pottery, painting, sculpture, and more.
Enjoy the flowers, food, and beverages, plus live music.
NOTE TO ARTISTS: We are always looking for new artists for the Art Fair. If you are interested,
contact maryannphelps@gmail.com or call 320-743-2663 for more information.
Photo Contest, January-November
Theater in the Gardens, July 21

in the Gardens

MCBS Garden Events