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## ***Looking Forward to Summer in the Gardens***

by Joan Andersen

I recently visited with Garden Supervisor Nia Primus about what is happening in the Gardens as staff get ready for the summer season. As you can imagine, there is a lot of maintenance to be done after the long winter. Lots of painting is needed on the iron work and the deck by the gift shop. The pond and fencing around it needs cleaning. The goal is to have all the fountains up and running by Memorial Day.

Staff are caring for plants in the greenhouse, cutting back grasses and perennial plants, and hauling away straw and leaves to compost. Roses were uncovered the first week of April and need pruning and shaping. Volunteers are needed all season long to prune and deadhead roses. Call the greenhouse at 320-650-3128 or email [deb.keiser@ci.stcloud.mn.us](mailto:deb.keiser@ci.stcloud.mn.us) if you want to volunteer to help with the roses.

The wedding/event area is being readied. Special containers are planted early so they will look lush and beautiful for the first weddings of the season. Staff members conduct "wedding orientation" meetings with people having

*Continued on page 3 • Summer*

# Vertical Gardening

by Joan Andersen

The enjoyment of growing plants on supports appeals to most gardeners, whether you have a small urban lot or a large yard. It's a way to provide highlights to your garden space and often the only way to successfully grow most vining plants. To look their best, most flowering plants need full sun at least part of the day, so plan to have your trellis in a sunny area. Fortunately, you can move these structures to another area if necessary or change the plant growing there to get a new look. Even if you really don't like the style of a garden trellis, you have the

option to plant something big and bushy to disguise the support. Finally, a trellis can give you winter interest in your garden when all that is left is the vine above the snow.

Remember that garden trellises need to be very sturdy since they will be supporting mature plants. If you are planning to grow a wisteria, which has a vigorous

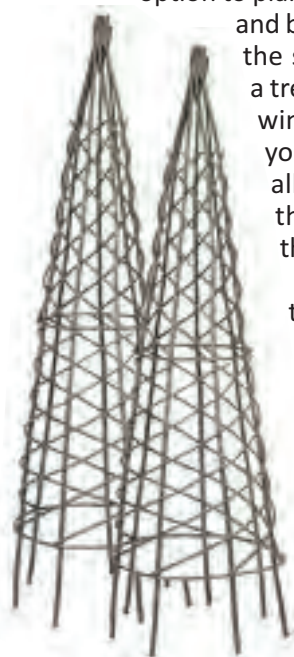
growth habit and a heavy woody vine, you will need a very strong metal or wood structure to support the vine. If you have a flat trellis for a vine, it will need to be fastened to a sturdy fence or wall to remain upright when the plant living on it grows to maturity.

There are many styles, shapes, colors, and strengths of garden supports. Garden trellises, arbors, and tuteurs can be homebuilt by a handy person, or purchased in a wide range of materials. I would recommend something you find attractive on its own because it will be visible while the plant grows and you will see it all winter when the plants are dormant.

The tuteur trellis is shaped like a teepee. It is best to have the base wider than the top and attach the bottom part securely to the ground or you risk having the entire thing tip over in a strong wind. This style of trellis looks great inside a garden where it provides a special highlight.

Flat trellises are made of wood lattice, plastic coated wire, metal, and many other materials. Again, look for something durable and strong. There are many uses for a flat trellis, but they need to be attached to a fence or wall to look good and stay upright. Avoid flimsy wooden trellises, because they are not strong enough and probably won't last more than a season or two.

*Continued on page 3 • Trellis*





## Root Vegetables

by William M. Cook

When I was a boy, our family spent the whole summer in an old farmhouse in New Hampshire. Think of this as kind of like a lake house up north, but because of its location we never got to open the place up until school was out in June. Because of this timing, my dad always planted (still does, for that matter) simple annual vegetables, including squashes, tomatoes (from starts), lettuce, beans, beets, carrots, and radishes. The latter three plants fall into the category of root vegetables, one of the most popular categories of vegetables grown in backyards, and also the topic of this article.

Root crops are popular for several reasons that are readily apparent to me. Many plants are relatively small, which means they don't take up a lot of ground space, and also don't grow tall enough to require staking or generate much shade. They can be fast maturing, which means that you can just seed them directly into the garden, and are relatively easy to keep alive. Root crops can be flexible about when they are harvested, and they often store very well; a number of species have no problem waiting months in the refrigerator to be eaten.

Most conventional root crops are cool weather annuals or biennials, preferring to grow in the mild temperatures of the spring and fall. (It is generally irrelevant to gardeners that many species are biennial, because we usually eat them in the first season and don't care about the plants producing seeds.) Although directions for several species tell you to plant seeds "as soon as the ground can be worked," I have not had success planting very early (i.e., early April), as in this year. My part-sun location prevents soil from warming to germination temperatures until late April or May. If you live outside of town and have true full sun conditions, you may be able to plant earlier. Root vegetables prefer loamy garden soils and consistent water and full sun; many will grow, at least tolerably, in acidic soil. Due to their small size, root crops can often be grown in

containers or on porches. Downsides to smaller root crops include problems with root maggots, annual weeds overtaking them, and the need to thin them after germination.

One of the major groups of root vegetables comes from the Brassicaceae, or cabbage family, which includes radishes, turnips, and rutabagas. (Other relatives, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and kale, are grown for other edible plant parts.) Radishes are probably the most widely grown of these. Radishes are known as a hyper-quick crop; under ideal conditions, they can go from seed to your salad in three weeks or so. Plant them in the spring as soon as the ground warms up (in my yard, this is late April or early May), and watch them go. If the weather is hot or dry, radishes will bolt (speed through their life cycle and go to seed without growing much edible root), so I wouldn't bother trying them in July or August. You can plant another crop once things cool a bit in late summer, if there is enough sun in your garden at that time.

Turnips and rutabagas are other brassica root crops, which are traditional European vegetables. They grow larger than radishes (turnips ideally 2-3 inches across, and rutabagas up to 5 inches) and take commensurately longer to mature. Turnips are usually said to require closer to two months from seed to table, and rutabagas three. Their leaves are also edible as a boiled vegetable. Turnips and rutabaga roots keep well in the ground in the fall, and I may leave the last ones until early November. Their flavor tends to improve after frost. I plant them about the beginning of May. Depending on your location you may also be able to try turnips as a fall crop, but probably not rutabagas.

A second popular group of root vegetables includes carrots and parsnips. Everyone knows and likes carrots. Seed packs usually tell you that they are ready to eat in about 2 ½ months, but this is rarely true in my experience. I usually plant carrots in May and harvest beginning in September, leaving the last ones in the ground until November with the turnips. Perhaps if you have a sunnier location than mine you can grow multiple crops. Carrot seedlings are very small and delicate for a while, so they can be grown mixed in with faster things like radishes, which grow up and are eaten while carrots are still getting going. The related parsnips look like giant white or pale yellow carrots but taste very sweet after boiling. They are larger than carrots, both above and below ground. The downside to parsnips is their seeds; they take a long time to germinate and are fussy about soil conditions, and they store very poorly before planting. I have too often waited around for parsnips to start growing and eventually decided they just weren't going to. Like turnips, parsnips taste better after hard frost in the fall, and can even overwinter in the garden and be dug up in spring.

Beets are another common root vegetable, related to swiss chard and the less commonly grown sugar beet. Beets are planted in late April or May, and can be



# Perennial Garden

by Carole Pike

"I wanted to show what a perennial garden in full sun would look like in Minnesota," said David Morreim. By 1995, as Saint Cloud nursery supervisor he had chosen the plants and color schemes for the Clemens Rose, Rest Area, Formal, and White Gardens. In addition, representatives from Robinson Iron of Alexander City, Alabama, had laid out the original master plan for the hardscape of the Clemens Gardens in anticipation of installing a fence around the Rose Garden. They thought that the next vacant space moving south would be a good place for a replica of a pre-Civil War fountain, a copy of one in Columbus, Georgia. It was a boring area, according to Morreim, with nothing there but scrubby trees. A sledding hill sat on the southern end. On the west side was a series of gravel and sand terraces and pines, constructed and planted by WPA workers in the 1930s.

Morreim did not have a drawn plan for the perennials. He worked from ideas in his head. "The challenge was to have season-long blooms." He chose lavender Russian sage for a tall background plant and started it in the greenhouse from cuttings. Multi-colored "McKana Hybrids" columbine made up the medium height row and "Bath's Pink" dianthus provided the low-growing front border. He planted "Palace Purple" coral bells on the north and south ends with rosea coreopsis.

"I thought the pink would be pretty with the "Palace Purple," he said. He added Asiatic lilies and fern-leaf peonies. He also put in delphinium, something unheard of in public gardens. He used "Magic Fountain," a variety with a stronger stem, as he explained.


He planted things that would bloom at various times. Tulips came up in early spring, the annual celosia replacing them in the summer. Annuals dusty miller and wax begonias also

Morreim often attended workshops at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum to keep up on the latest botanical specimens. "I wanted to hear about new introductions that were unique to our zone," he said. The workshops inspired him to use Minnesota mums for autumn color in his design.

The project had its share of controversy. At first the neighbors objected because the new plantings would take away the children's sliding hill. "Where will the children play?" they lamented. The hill presented its own set of problems. It cost \$12,000 to cover the gravel and sand with soil and refigure the slope.

Another problem occurred when installers came to set up the 12-foot-high fountain. A March snowstorm necessitated renting a tent to shield the welders from the weather. After the completion of the Garden, Morreim liked the result, but someone told him it looked like a jungle.

In spite of the problems and criticisms, many of the original plants remain today, 17 years later. In May, bleeding hearts, lupine, and columbine join the "Bath's Pink" dianthus. Lining the red brick walkways, the pinks not only give off a spicy fragrance, they also provide nectar for sphinx moths. After the early spring blossoms, delphinium, Russian sage, iris, and peonies take over. Finally mums and sedums create an autumn display. The Perennial Garden continues as a showcase of plants that thrive in Minnesota.

	<b>Clemens Gardens</b>
	<i>Documenting History</i>
	1985 • Formal Garden
	1989 • Rose Garden
	1993 • Rest Area Garden
	1994 • White Garden
<b>1995 • Perennial Garden</b>	
1996 • Treillage Garden	

gave summer color. He propagated the "techny" arborvitae in his private nursery from cuttings. Located on three sides of the garden, they create the boundaries. "The whole idea was to have a series of outdoor rooms," Morreim said. The eye leads the viewer into the next section. He also coordinated the perennials with the plantings in the urns located at each end of the garden.

## Trellis • Continued from page 1

Another option is an arbor that can be used over a path or as the entrance to a garden area. Choose a structure that is high enough so that you can walk under it when the plant is growing there, and sturdy enough to hold the plant. These are very heavy structures, so be sure to install in a good place so you won't have to move it!

What kind of plants can be grown on a trellis? The first one that comes to my mind is clematis, which is available in a wide variety of colors and shapes from huge single flowers to cultivars with masses of small flowers or bell-shaped flowers. Be sure to add some chicken wire or bird netting to your trellis so that the "feelers" on your clematis vine will cling. Many vining plants, including clematis, need something with a small diameter to cling to—they can't hang on to the wide frame of a trellis. You can also plant annual vining plants such as morning glory, hyacinth bean, or

thunbergia to cover your trellis. Other plants such as climbing roses do not actually cling to the trellis, but the canes can be tied for support to encourage the rose to grow upward.

Trellising is also good in the vegetable garden because it is a way to grow more plants in a small space and it takes advantage of the natural growth habit of some plants. Place your trellis along the edge on the north or east side of the garden where it will not shade low-growing vegetables from midday sun. Consider the prevailing winds, and anchor the trellis well. If you do use a trellis shaped like a cylinder, be sure the diameter is wide enough to hold the plant. It can be anchored to a fence post or pounded into the ground. Make sure the style of the trellis makes it easy to harvest and that you don't have to crawl under something to reach your produce!

Pole beans and peas are examples of plants





# Miniature Gardens

by Carole Pike



The biggest thing in gardening is very small. This year gardeners are buying miniature plants and doll-house sized furniture to create fairy or miniature gardens. They can be as small as a tea cup or cover a large area of the garden. "It can be fun, exciting, and magic," according to Arlena Schott, who hosts a radio show, "Garden Wise Living," in White-water, Wisconsin.

She recommends choosing a theme and using things you might have on hand. For a woodland scene use small sticks for logs, a little log cabin, and a fire pit of small stones. A farm scene could have a miniature bird house, a path of pebbles, a tiny silo, and a small basket for collecting eggs. Using little violas in the spring and miniature pumpkins in the fall makes them seasonal. Adding miniature plants like tiny succulents or dwarf conifers creates the finishing touch.

Creeping thyme surrounds Saint Cloud gardener Julie Menken's fairy house that she has nestled behind a water garden. Colorful marbles and shells cover the little dome that is about 20 inches wide and 8 inches high. "It's a little funky," Menken said. She strews colored aquarium rocks for paths and erects a giant glass marble for the fairies to use as a gazing ball. "The hardest thing about creating the fairy garden is matching the scale," Menken said. "You have to keep your eye out."

She shops for doll-house furniture as well as accessories for model railroads and Department 56 villages. She uses acorns for bowls, shells for mailboxes, and feather-filled milkweed pods for beds. She found a birdhouse at a discount store and transformed it into a fairy house. The hole serves as the window while the clean-out flap makes a nice door. She covered the walls with stucco and stones and used sticks to define the windows. Some of the elements are not weatherproof, so this house stays on a covered porch. She likes natural materials and hopes one day to find the perfect log with an opening for a door.

Menken has never seen the fairies who visit her garden, but Lorna Nestel has many doll-like ones residing in her Sartell garden. Some lounge on rocks and others sit at wee tables. Their multicolored gossamer wings sparkle in the sunlight. Nestel tucked her 10-foot by 15-foot garden on the edge of a woods. She started the garden when she visited the Chelsea Garden Show in England. "The little fairies were the easiest things to carry home," she said. She has since added eight cottages and a church. The molded cement cottages stand about 1-foot high. Made to look like European cottages, they feature wooden doors. A metal cross hangs over the door of the church. She purchased the cottages at nurseries in the Twin Cities.

Nestel has planted a variety of greenery in the area. Low-growing sedum shares the space with a birds-nest spruce and dwarf juniper. Some things stay short because of the shade. Nestel keeps others pruned. Most of the plants are things that didn't grow any place else in her spacious yard. Blue-bells and bleeding hearts bloom early spring but die back in the summer. Impatiens, growing in an antique crate, add color to the area in the summer. Nestel also hopes to add a miniature rose.

Even Munsinger /Clemens Gardens Supervisor Nia Primus plans to join the trend. She will plant some low-growing succulents near the Rest Area of Clemens Gardens this summer.

Now is a good time to scour your attic or basement for minuscule items. Also, Thomsen's and Fairview Gardens carry some miniature supplies. Woods Nursery sells a kit for making a fairy garden.

Choose a theme and consider if the garden will be inside or out, sun or shade. "A fairy garden can be whatever you want it to be," Menken said. It's easy to do. "You don't need a bobcat to move the rocks," Schott said. "Have fun with it."

This is the year to think small.



## What's Blooming in the Gardens?

by Joan Andersen

Did you know that there is a "Bloom Calendar" on the City of Saint Cloud website? Go to [ci.stcloud.mn.us](http://ci.stcloud.mn.us), then to Departments> Park and Recreation> Munsinger Clemens Gardens> Bloom Calendar. The backbone of the Gardens is the large collection of perennial plants, and inter-planted are thousands of annuals. The color never stops.

If you are visiting the Gardens in June, check out the clematis found near the Gift Shop and in the Treillage Garden. There should also be a good display of delphinium in the Rose, Perennial, and Treillage Gardens. Other perennials blooming at this time include allium, campanula, coreopsis, foxglove, blue salvia, penstemon, monarda, and veronica. And who could forget that the first flush of roses is usually around June 21—although it may be earlier this year due to the long spring.

If you are visiting the Gardens in July, you will see the lilies in bloom. Other plants include daylilies, cannas, coneflowers, gailardia, hollyhock, hydrangeas, liatris, and phlox, accented by ornamental grasses. Of course, the roses will still be blooming, since almost all the cultivars in the Rose Garden are everblooming or repeat blooming types.

Another enjoyable thing is to visit the "color" gardens in the Treillage area and the White Garden. Each of these gardens is dedicated to a single color and they feature a wide variety of plants used in interesting ways. It is fascinating to see how the gardens change throughout the season while still being the same color—it is never boring!

**Trellis** • Continued from page 3

that do better on a trellis with wire or bird netting added so they can cling. You can grow lots of cucumbers in a small space, and they will be straight because they hang down from the plant. One year, I had a pumpkin vine climb a trellis and the 12-inch wide pumpkin was firmly wedged in the trellis about four feet from the ground.

Most of you probably know that the typical tomato cages sold will not support a large tomato plant full of ripening fruit. The plant becomes top heavy as it grows and eventually will tip over in the wind. Small commercial tomato cages are the wrong shape (because they are narrow at the bottom and not strong enough). It is probably better to invest in a few very strong cages and grow large plants that will give you good yields.

You can also find smaller attractive trellises to use in containers to grow smaller vines or vegetables, such as patio tomatoes or peppers, on the porch or deck. Be sure the pot is large enough so when the fruit is on the plant the container is not top heavy.

General plant care for trellised perennial vines like clematis is to prune at the right time of year for the type of plant. Failure to prune at all will lead to a tall vine with flowers at the top. Prune some of the plant lower to the ground by cutting just above two strong buds. The plant will branch more and the flowers will start lower on the plant, where you can enjoy them. Roses should be pruned in spring to remove dead wood and unwanted branches, and you should periodically retie the canes to keep them growing where you want them. Annual vines should be trained as they grow to climb where you want them to go on the trellis.

Visit Munsinger Clemens Gardens and Virginia Clemens Rose Garden to see how impressive trellis-grown plants can be. Although the hardscaping in the Gardens is mostly on a larger scale than seen in most home gardens, many of the plants being used could be successfully grown on a smaller trellis or arbor in your garden.

**Summer** • Continued from page 1

weddings at the Gardens. For more information on a wedding in the Gardens, call the Parks Department at 320-257-5959. There are still some dates available for this summer.

The planning for 2012 continues. The week starts with "Maintenance Monday" when the garden staff concentrates on pinching and deadheading and otherwise making the Gardens look their best for visitors. Staff attend safety training for using equipment and chemicals to make sure everyone is doing things correctly to prevent accidents and injuries. Occasionally a supplier has a crop failure or there is a shortage of seed so a plant will not be available and a replacement is needed. Then Nia and the staff find a substitute or change the design a little to adjust for the missing plants.

Planting of tender plants began on May 23 in 2011 and starts around the same time in 2012, weather permitting. By the time you read this, all of the annual flowers will be growing. Let's hope for warm weather and gentle rain to help them grow fast so we can see the new design for 2012!

**Root** • Continued from page 5



eaten after about two months. For some reason, I have dreadful trouble getting beets to grow to any significant size, but good beets grow up to 2 inches across. The tops are also edible, and I always eat the greens when I thin beets (which is important, because each beet "seed" you plant has two seeds in it). Beets have a natural tendency to grow too thickly and not produce much root. Unlike radishes, beets don't bolt in mid-summer and can be planted successively to get multiple crops.

A different group of plants grown commonly for their underground parts includes a long list of species from the onion family, including onions and garlic. (Other relatives are grown mostly for their tops, such as chives, leeks, and scallions.) Botanically, alliums form a different root structure than beets, turnips, and carrots; onions form a "true" bulb defined by the famous layers. I am a big fan of alliums, and have at least eight or ten species in my garden. A number of onion species have a life cycle where they grow leaves and shoots actively in spring, grow their underground bulbs in early summer when the days are longest, and then go dormant in July. The main harvest season for many alliums is thus mid-summer. Some species then start growing leaves again in late summer and fall. This peculiar life history makes standard table onions tricky to grow to

grocery store size; there just isn't much time available for growth in Minnesota between early spring, when they are planted, and those long bulb-forming days. Additionally onions require consistent soil conditions to make large bulbs (thus mulch and regular irrigation are recommended). I haven't had luck growing onions from seed and then transplanting them in April, even starting them very early indoors, and the onion sets (grape-sized bulbs you can buy and then plant) don't reliably grow large. Given these challenges, I have decided to concentrate on growing perennial alliums such as Egyptian onions and perennial scallions, which can almost literally be harvested out of the garden any time the ground isn't frozen. You get substantially less root and more shoot, but they all have that good oniony taste.

A variety of other plants are thought of as root crops, including such varied species as potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes, horseradish, and others. In various of these the edible part is really not the root but an underground stem (this is the case with potatoes). There are also several "minor" root crops which are not widely grown commercially but are viable for backyard gardeners. Several of these are perennial plants! I have grown interested in these species in the last year or two, and am experimenting extensively. Space is short in this newsletter, but this may serve as fodder for future articles. Nevertheless, it will be June when you read this, and while the ideal planting time may have passed, you should still get out there and plant some beets and turnips.

# Bits and Pieces

## Music in the Gardens

June 10 • June 24 • July 15  
July 29 • August 12 • August 26  
Sundays at 3:00 pm

## Art Fair in the Gardens

Thursday, July 19 • 10:00 am - 8:00 pm

## Theater in the Gardens

Sunday, July 22 • 3:00 pm

## Evening in the Gardens

Tuesday, August 14 • 6:30 - 8:30 pm

## Photography in the Gardens

All season. Deadline October 19

## Exciting News

MCBS is in the process of building a new website! Website design has changed a lot in the last 12 years and it was decided it was time for an update.

If you have any suggestions about information you would like to see on the website, please send an email to: [Jill.Florek@rte-inc.com](mailto:Jill.Florek@rte-inc.com)

## I haven't seen that before!

Munsinger Clemens Gardens are full of surprises, so remember to bring your camera!

## Photography in the Gardens

—our photo contest—

*continues through October 19*

Information and entry forms are available in the Gardens Gift Shop and at

[www.munsingerclemens.com](http://www.munsingerclemens.com)

Any visitor to the Gardens is eligible to enter.

You have three more seasons to catch many beautiful moments and scenes of the Garden.

Now, I can see it again.



## Question:

What large hostas can tolerate heavy shade?

## Answer:

Abiqua Drinking Gourd  
Blue Angel  
Blue Ice  
Frances Williams  
(blue-green leaves with creamy yellow edges)  
Hadspen Blue  
Halcyon  
Love Pat

The hostas with blue leaves will tolerate a site where they receive less than four hours of sun per day.

## Do you have a garden question?

Email it to me and I'll pass it on to someone who knows the answer. ([dgorrell@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:dgorrell@stcloudstate.edu))

## Theater in the Gardens

presents

## "BROADWAY"

Sunday July 22, 3:00 pm

FREE PUBLIC EVENT

Looking for another reason to visit the Gardens? Plan to attend "Broadway in the Gardens"—a fun-filled musical revue featuring the songs from classic Broadway hits like "Mame," "42nd Street," and "My Fair Lady" plus today's most popular songs from "Wicked," "Les Miserables," and "Newsies." The show features over 20 performers and six musicians.

This show is free and will be staged near the gazebo at Munsinger Clemens Gardens, Kilian Boulevard and 13th Street SE, Saint Cloud MN. Get there early and bring your lawn chair to enjoy the show.

Theater in the Gardens is a new event sponsored by Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society (MCBS) and Great River Educational Arts Theatre (GREAT).

GREAT believes in honoring the imagination of children, sharing the wonder of live theater, encouraging artistic development, connecting artists and audiences with thought-provoking programming, and expanding the cultural landscape of our area. Through main stage Theatre Productions, the largest Summer Theatre Camp program in Minnesota and extensive community outreach, GREAT Theatre is the largest community theater in Minnesota, reaching audiences of more than 60,000 a year.

**For more information** see the MCBS website at [munsingerclemens.com](http://munsingerclemens.com) or the GREAT Theatre website at [www.GreatTheatre.org](http://www.GreatTheatre.org) or phone at 320-258-2787.



Many of us associate growing vegetables with large, sunny backyards where the edible crops are all grown together in neatly roto-tilled rows or in carefully arranged raised beds. Because many gardeners no longer have the luxury of a large backyard, we must consider some alternative ways of raising vegetables without sacrificing those areas set aside for ornamental plants in our landscapes. Why not combine edible plants with beds or borders of ornamentals?

Fortunately, there is a colorful and tasty palette of edible plants available that will not only blend with our ornamentals, but will actually enhance them. In fact, there are vegetables that will supply colors and textures to our landscapes that are not available among the ornamentals. With its ruby-red stalks supporting crinkled, red-veined, dark green leaves, 'Rhubarb' Swiss chard makes a bold and attractive foliage plant. Try combining 'Rhubarb' chard with 'Purple Ruffles' basil and burgundy or pink verbenas for an eye-catching combination. 'Bright Lights' Swiss chard, with its stalks of many colors, is a knockout even when planted alone. If Swiss chard plants become old and tattered looking in midsummer, simply cut off the leaves a few inches above the soil and let them regrow. Swiss chard is much more heat tolerant than spinach and more productive, providing a season of greens.

Flowering kale and flowering cabbage come in several combinations and textures. The cabbage-like plants have frilled, waved, and lacy leaves in shades of red, pink, and white that become more vibrant as the fall weather begins to cool. The plants are very frost tolerant and often can be seen in good condition after the first snows of the season. They can be planted in containers and used to add color to vacant spots in the border. Vegetable kale, with its coarse puckered leaves the color of blue spruce and impressive size, can be a strong focal point among foliage plants.

Most hot peppers have colorful fruit, glossy green leaves, and tidy forms that look good when massed in beds. There are some recent introductions that have attractively colored foliage. 'Pretty Purple' has purple over green leaves with bright purple flowers and small oval fruit that ripens from purple through yellow and orange to red. If you have a niche for variegated foliage in your flower border, consider 'Tri-fetti' or 'Varengata' peppers with their eye-catching white, purple, and green leaves, complemented by glossy purple fruit. Both of these varieties work well in containers.

Ornamental peppers have become very popular for both bedding and container culture. The ornamental peppers are

## Have Your Border & Eat It Too!

by Carl Hoffman

short plants that bear their brightly colored finger-like fruit at the top of the plant, looking like festive nosegays. 'Cilly Chili' is a 2002 All American Selection that bears fruit that is not only festively colored in shades of yellow, orange, and red, but is also mild flavored. Up until this time, the fruit of ornamental peppers has been either very hot or else bitter in taste, to the point of being toxic if eaten by children.

Eggplant comes in many shapes and colors and, although not on everyone's favorite vegetable list, certainly can be a beautiful addition to the flower border. There are long-skinny Japanese types; white cultivars, including the miniature Easter Egg Plant; lavender and striped Italian cultivars; and the traditional dark purple colored American cultivars. Search specialty seed catalogs for colorful varieties that make unusual, yet edible, additions to your flower border.

There are many types of leaf lettuces available that work great as early season edges on the flower border. 'Royal Red' with its broad wavy leaves of rich, intense wine-red, or 'Red Sails' with its attractive bronze-red leaves, make an eye-catching colored border. Curly leafed varieties like 'Crispy Frills' or the old favorite, 'Salad Bowl,' combine well with nearly every annual or perennial flower. By interplanting with annual flowers, you can remove lettuce which is past its prime without leaving open spaces in the border.

Many of the culinary herbs are very complementary additions to the flower border or container garden. The lavender flowers of chives are striking and make an attractive garnish on your culinary creations. Keep the chive plants deadheaded to prevent seedlings from taking over the flower garden. There are many varieties of basil that are very aromatic and very attractive when massed in beds or used as edging. 'Magical Michael' is a 2002 All American Selection that has the dark purple flowers and spicy aroma of 'Siam Queen,' but is shorter and has an orderly mound shape. 'Dark Opal' and 'Purple Ruffles' have attractive deep purple leaves and can be beautiful when combined with pink flowering plants and exciting when teamed with yellow. Try dwarf varieties like 'Minette' or 'Bush Basil' as a formal edging or as a ground cover in containers. Basils are easy to grow from seed and can be

started indoors.

Dill can be an asset to the flowerbed or border. Use a leafy variety, like 'Fernleaf,' planted in masses to eliminate the need for staking. For the best effect, avoid planting dill next to intensely yellow flowers or plants with bright green foliage.

Thyme is a very versatile herb in the flowerbed, border, or containers. The color of the foliage varies from deep emerald green to gold, and gold or silver variegated. Well-Sweep Herb Farm lists 104 different varieties of thyme in their 2002 catalog. They range in height from 12 inches down to the creeping varieties that are only one inch tall. Creeping thyme is an excellent low-growing plant for edging or rock gardens. It can be planted between paving stones in the garden path and will even tolerate mowing.

Pole beans and scarlet runner beans are low maintenance vining plants for trellis or arbor and make a fast growing screen. They can provide shade for a patio or porch while supplying a good supply of edible pods. Consider a bean tower as a focal point in your border. 'Malabar' spinach with its thick dark green leaves and dark red stems is a very attractive climber that provides tasty green throughout the summer. Unlike other types of spinach, 'Malabar' is heat loving and thrives all summer. Start this vining plant indoors and transplant outside in late spring.

Squash, gourds, and pumpkins have lush foliage and showy blossoms, as well as interestingly shaped and colored fruit, but they are a little course and demand considerable space. Bush-type varieties require less space and make nice specimen plants at the corner of a patio, yard, or building. If trained on a trellis or fence, the vining types make an excellent screen to hide an unsightly view.

This list includes just a few of the vegetables that can be tucked in with beds of ornamentals. Search through seed catalogs, books, and magazines to get the creative juices flowing. Of course, you should try to plant edibles that you enjoy eating.

When edible plants are grown among ornamentals, special care must be given to the selection and use of chemical pesticides. There are chemicals recommended for control of insects and diseases on ornamentals that are restricted from use on food plants. Be sure that the plant you wish to treat is listed on the label of the chemical. Systemic chemicals must never be used! Consider using organic and biological controls whenever possible. Even with organic pest control agents, plants can often be grown easily with fewer applications than recommended.

(originally published in Summer 2002 newsletter)

Message from the Park and Recreation Director

*Each spring, thousands of people begin to visit the  
Clemens and Munsinger Gardens to take in the green splendor.*

What helps to keep Clemens and Munsinger thriving?

I am not one for keeping secrets, so I'll share it with you:

our secret is the

### **Gardens Beautification Fund**

This fund, also known as the annual operating fund, is administered through the St. Cloud Park and Recreation Department. It is the mission of the Gardens Fund to plan, develop, and maintain safe and attractive flower gardens and facilities for the visitors to the Gardens. In pursuit of this mission, the revenue generated to support this Fund is organized into three different program areas:

1. The Gardens Fund programs supported by a private endowment established by the Clemens Family through the Central Minnesota Community Foundation.
2. Private donations by the Munsinger/Clemens Botanical Society ([www.munsingerclemens.com](http://www.munsingerclemens.com)), Friends of the Gardens, and visitors to the Gardens.
3. Revenue from the Hotel/Motel Tax and property taxes.

The Gardens annual operating budget is supported by **33% private funds** and **67% public funds**.

*We need your help!*

Please consider a donation toward this valuable community asset in Saint Cloud.

#### **Your donation would facilitate:**

- ❁ Day-to-day care to maintain attractive flower gardens for our residents and visitors of our community.
- ❁ Garden access to all persons.
- ❁ Volunteer programs that help the Gardens flourish, expand, and prosper.

I never could keep a secret! Please consider a donation to help fund the Gardens now and into the future.

Respectfully submitted, Scott D. Zlotnik

## **MCBS**

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