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## Looking Back on the Season

by Joan Andersen

What a wonderful season in the Gardens even though the weather was a challenge! Early in the summer there was cool rainy weather, followed by many weeks of hot dry weather. This was one of the best seasons ever—the flowers grew well in the heat because they were watered regularly.

I recently visited with Nia Primus, Garden Supervisor, about the successes of the season. First and most importantly, the Gardens thrived in the drought. But the lack of rain meant that the staff gardeners spent many hours moving hoses to areas that usually can rely on rainfall. Rain is better because its water has a neutral pH. The higher pH found in City water means that the nutrient uptake by the plants is reduced, so the staff had to spend time adding fertilizer to the beds. Nia also focused on adding more color to the Munsinger Gardens area in 2012. Traditionally, this area features a large collection of hostas and other perennials. This year, the cabin area was decorated with some colorful new containers, and more aquatic plants were added to the pond.

There were also some challenges in 2012. During the summer, chipmunks tried to feast on the tulips. Even though the tulips were in their dormant season and were over-planted with annuals, the chippers knew where the bulbs are and

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## Patio Garden in the City

by Idella Moberg

We met her the day we moved into our condo. We walked out onto our deck to look around, and through the tree that stood between our deck and hers we heard her. “Yoo-Hoo,” she said through the branches. And we could just barely see her leaning over her railing, moving from side to side straining to get a look at us.

This marked the beginning of our patio friendship with Linda B., friendly chats over the railing and through the tree branches. Across the fifteen feet or so between our decks we learned that Linda is a “newly person”: newly retired, newly divorced. She’d moved to downtown Saint Paul from the northern exurbs, out of her big life, big house, busy family, big yard full of gardens, and into her 1250-square-foot condo. She had crammed all she could of her old life into the newly acquired space and proceeded to graft a new life. She built a photograph wall and filled it with pictures of her loved ones. She made new friends. She started taking jazz piano lessons. And she became a master gardener. A real urbanite.

“It’s kind of funny that you never became a master gardener until you had no yard,” I said one day as we sat on our respective decks tending our potted plants.

“Well,” she said, “I’ve always loved gardening, but never had the time to be master gardener until now.”

“What do you do as a master gardener?” I said.

“I work with people in downtown Saint Paul who want to learn about urban gardening,” she said. She began spraying her flowers with a hose.

“What are you watering your plants with?” I asked. “Do you have an outdoor faucet over there?”

“Yes,” she said. “I had them install it when they were building the place, because I knew I’d want to water my flowers. I could even water your flowers. Look.” And she aimed the hose at me and shot water across to my thirsty petunias.



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## A Friend of the Gardens



# Gifts for Gardeners

by William M. Cook

It's shopping time for the Christmas season again, and you may be looking for a few ideas for gifts for the gardener in your life. Here are

some suggestions, with the caveat that these are things that appeal to me, or are items I already have and like.

**1** For the environmentally minded gardener who grows heirloom vegetables and other plants from seed, how about a membership to Seed Savers Exchange? Based in Iowa, they sell seed of all sorts of heirloom plants, and part of their mission is to preserve genetically traditional varieties of flowers and vegetables. Visit [www.seed-savers.org](http://www.seed-savers.org) on the web.

**2** I'm always looking for practical how-to books about gardening, describing the experiences of people to do it themselves. Since I have ramped my fruit and vegetable production up to the point where I am saving produce for the winter, ideas on how to store produce safely and easily are forever welcome. One of my favorite books, which I come back to year after year, is "Root cellaring: Natural cold storage of fruits and vegetables" by Mike and Nancy Bubel. It is relatively old now (updated 1979) but is full of practical suggestions for the self-sufficient food grower.

**3** For the indoor gardener in your life, how about a grow light? For just giving a leg up to your light-starved winter houseplants a simple shop light with fluorescent tubes will do, but for starting seedlings or growing flowers or succulents you may need heavier-duty equipment. Beware, these can get pricey fairly fast.

**4** You can acquire a book or other gift with local ties from the Minnesota Horticultural Society shop. You can shop their online bookstore (see [www.northerngardener.org](http://www.northerngardener.org)) or drop into their store in Roseville if you are in the Twin Cities.

**5** While you are there at the site, definitely look into a subscription to Northern Gardener magazine, the most relevant gardening magazine for our area.

**6** Your special gardener might need a new pair of gardening gloves. Forget the old-fashioned cotton ones or leather work gloves—the best gloves these days are thin, stretchy, and with gripping fingers and palms.

**7** If your friend works with shrubs and large perennials, a pair of Felco pruners is recommended by many tree and shrub specialists.

**8** For the ergonomically challenged or just slightly creaky gardener, a nice gift might be a garden kneeler to protect the knees. Some of these also convert to a low seat, so you don't always have to sit flat on the ground.

**9** No water-wise garden is complete without a well-placed rain barrel. Please be aware that roof runoff may not be the best for watering your vegetables, depending on your roof composition.

**10** If your gardener likes to make homemade jams, tomato sauce, or applesauce, a strainer is awfully handy to remove all the little seeds. I have a Victorio hand-crank strainer which is sturdy and efficient.

*Happy shopping and Merry Christmas!*

# Lone Goose

by Donna Gorrell

It was standing beside the path in Munsinger, facing the river but watching me as I approached on that November morning. A lone Canada goose. It took a couple of steps forward but didn't seem particularly disturbed. I walked on and it continued to look at the river.

The next day, I was walking on Riverside Drive alongside Munsinger. Up ahead, the goose stepped out of a front yard and walked onto the road. Then, as I watched, it just sat down in the middle of the road! What's wrong with it, I thought. Is it injured? But apparently no, because when a car came along, it got up and, wings flapping a little, padded out of danger. On another morning I saw it flying—alone of course.

It's not as if there weren't any other geese around for it to join up with. Flocks were flying around all the time. In fact, one morning as I passed that loner on the Munsinger path, I saw half a dozen Canada geese land in the water near the



shoreline where the goose stood. I thought, Good, here's a group it can join up with.

To see if it would join the crowd, I changed my routine a little and, after making my circle through the Gardens, I went back on the same path. But nothing doing.

The six geese were still out on the water and the loner was still standing on the shore—looking toward the water. Would it eventually join them?

I wondered, because the next day it wasn't in its usual spot. But as I was passing the little landing cove just off the path, I saw the goose offshore on the water—amidst a dozen mallards! Yesterday it was flying overhead. Alone. Today it was standing beside the path.

A lone goose is not a rare phenomenon. Munsinger has one almost every autumn. And the term is familiarly used to name bars, restaurants, a printing press, and who knows what else. Any website remotely connected to wildlife gets reports of sightings. So, even though these lone birds are not uncommon, one still wonders why they apparently choose the solitary life.

The usual explanation is that their mate is gone, by gunshot or otherwise. Canada geese are said to be monogamous, and some people say for life, so it may take some time before they adjust to the situation and maybe take on another mate. An alternate cause may be injury, though that doesn't seem to apply to the goose I've been seeing this year. Maybe the loners just don't get along with other geese.

Well anyway, whatever the cause, it's kind of sad to watch a lone goose. On the other hand, it's better to have one goose in Munsinger than a flock of one or two dozen.

# The Language of Flowers: Book Review by Idella Moberg

## The Language of Flowers:

**A Novel**, by Vanessa Diffenbaugh.  
New York: Ballantine Books, 2011.  
eISBN: 978-0-345-52556-7

It seems somewhat disjunctive to write a book that connects modern-day foster care in America with the Victorian pastime of giving flowers with meanings, unspoken messages. Vanessa Diffenbaugh does just this in her novel *The Language of Flowers*. Her heroine, Victoria Jones—homeless, disconnected, violent at times—does not seem a likely person to become accomplished at an activity originally enjoyed by leisured nineteenth-century English gentry. That having been said, I am somewhat surprised how much I enjoyed this book.

My book group read the book, and we had an animated discussion of the issues that arose. That's usually a sign of a good book. Some issues include foster homes, homelessness, detachment disorder, adoption, single motherhood. The dissonance of these themes with the more benign occupations of flower arrangement and making a dictionary of the language of flowers doesn't prevent this reader from just going with the flow of Diffenbaugh's story telling.

Vanessa Diffenbaugh tells Victoria's story by alternating her narrative between two periods of Victoria's life: her childhood shuttled in and out of foster homes, and her young womanhood as she struggled to make and maintain meaningful relationships with loved ones.

Young Victoria, abandoned at birth by her mother, had no real experience of being mothered by any one. When she was nine years old she went to her last foster home, to Elizabeth, a vineyard owner who introduced Victoria to the meanings of flowers and wanted to adopt her. On the day Victoria arrived, Elizabeth welcomed her with flowers: "These flowers are starwort," she said. "Starwort means welcome. By giving you a bouquet of starwort, I'm welcoming you to my home, to my life." Victoria hoped to be adopted by Elizabeth, but disaster ruined

the hopes of both Victoria and Elizabeth, and the girl was moved to a group home.

On the day she left her group home—her eighteenth birthday—Victoria gave each of the other girls a dahlia: "an ambiguous statement of encouragement" (dignity). She said of her life,

For most of a decade I'd spent every spare moment memorizing the meanings and scientific descriptions of individual flowers, but the knowledge went mostly unutilized. I used the same flowers again and again: a bouquet of marigold, grief; a bucket of thistle, misanthropy; a pinch of dried basil, hate. Only occasionally did my communication vary: a pocketful of red carnations [my heart breaks] for the judge when I realized I would never go back to the vineyard, and peony [anger] for Meredith, as often as I could find it. (p. 5f.)

him. The cluster of purple blossoms was not yet open, and the buds pointed in his direction, tightly coiled and toxic. Beware" (p. 47).

Victoria learned to use her understanding of the meanings of flowers to navigate her way through the labyrinth of interpersonal relationships rather than resorting to her old modes of violence or withdrawal. She realized, when Grant handed her a box of jonquils denoting desire, that her feelings for him had deepened. A deeper understanding of the power of flowers to convey meaning came to her in that moment: "Maybe," she said, "the essence of each flower's meaning really was contained somewhere within its sturdy stem, its soft gathering of petals" (p. 158).

This understanding gave Victoria maternal hope as she lined a basket with moss and placed her baby inside:

If it was true that moss did not have roots, and maternal love could grow spontaneously, as if from nothing, perhaps I had been wrong to believe myself unfit to raise my daughter. Perhaps the unattached, the unwanted, the unloved, could grow to give love as lushly as anyone else. . . . Over time, we would learn each other, and I would learn to love her like a mother loves a daughter, imperfectly and without roots. (p. 310)

This is a story about how Victoria, despite her personal difficulties of making and keeping emotional ties, finds love. She is disconnected, prone to fits of violence, out of control, but through her love and knowledge of flowers she is able to find a path to friendship and love. This is a story of forgiveness and second chances, and of hope for people who have had pretty hopeless lives. I recommend you read it. Then go find someone who has also read it and have a good talk.

Extra features of the book include Victoria's Dictionary of Flowers and an Author's Note that explains how

Diffenbaugh compiled the dictionary. In addition, Diffenbaugh launches the Camillia Network, a nationwide network to support youth who are making the transition from foster care to independence. Discussion Questions for *The Language of Flowers* are also included.

<i>Daffodil</i> . . . . .	<i>New beginnings</i>
<i>Ivy</i> . . . . .	<i>Fidelity</i>
<i>Clematis</i> . . . . .	<i>Poverty</i>
<i>Carnation, red</i> . . . . .	<i>My Heart Breaks</i>
<i>Carnation, white</i> . . . . .	<i>Sweet and Lovely</i>
<i>Carnation, yellow</i> . . . . .	<i>Disdain</i>
<i>Pansy</i> . . . . .	<i>Think of Me</i>
<i>Rose, pale peach</i> . . . . .	<i>Modesty</i>
<i>Rose, red</i> . . . . .	<i>Love</i>
<i>Rose, yellow</i> . . . . .	<i>Infidelity</i>
<i>Rose, purple</i> . . . . .	<i>Enchantment</i>
<i>Sunflower</i> . . . . .	<i>False Riches</i>
<i>Tulip</i> . . . . .	<i>Declaration of Love</i>
<i>Violet</i> . . . . .	<i>Modest Worth</i>
<i>Wisteria</i> . . . . .	<i>Welcome</i>
<i>Zinnia</i> . . . . .	<i>I Mourn Your Absence</i>

After her emancipation from the foster system, Victoria became involved with Grant, Elizabeth's nephew. She and Grant wooed each other with flowers. She met his tiger lily (majesty) with rhododendron: "'Rhododendron,' I said, placing the clipping on the plywood counter before

**Season • Continued from page 1**

the staff was always trying to chase them away. Fortunately the chipmunks will hibernate soon so we can hope that there are lots of tulips left for spring. When replacement bulbs are needed, daffodils and alliums (a member of the onion family) will be planted because they don't attract hungry chipmunks.

The Gardens usually don't have any major insect problems, but this year there was an oversupply of grasshoppers. The hot dry weather was perfect for a larger than normal grasshopper hatch and the Gardens were the best place for food. The pests also hopped through the open greenhouse windows. Most of the chewing was on ornamental grasses and spikes so the overall damage was not too bad.

Many of you who planted impatiens in your home gardens may know about a disease called downy mildew (*plasmopara obducens*) that is causing major problems with this plant. Plantings of impatiens affected by this disease turned yellow and died, leaving areas needing replacement plants. The disease appears to spread rapidly by the wind and has been a big problem in the nursery trade. (I had this happen in my own garden, even though I grew my own impatiens from seed.) At the Gardens, staff removed the plants and replaced them with other shade-loving plants. This is such a serious problem that in 2013 the Gardens will use coleus, torenia, and several cultivars of begonia instead of impatiens. New Guinea impatiens (Divine Series) will also be used because they are highly tolerant of this disease.

Winter preparations in the Gardens start earlier than perhaps in your own gardens. This is necessary because most of the

staff is seasonal and all the work must be done before the staff is done for the year. After frost, gardeners pull all annuals and cut back some perennials. Grasses, sedum, rudbeckia, and coneflowers are left up for winter interest. In recent years, more perennials have been added to Clemens Gardens so that all areas are not bare in fall and to save money by having plants that come back every year. At the very end of the season, newly planted and the more tender perennials are covered with straw for the winter. Well established hardy plantings are not covered.

Perennial plants that cannot withstand a Minnesota winter are moved into the greenhouse. This includes a large collection of succulents that are planted in containers around the Gardens. In the past these would be stored in the old root cellar, where they would sometimes be damaged. The new greenhouse is a much better place to overwinter valuable plants. Nia mentioned that the potted Japanese Maples that have been part of the Treillage garden "red" area for years did poorly this year and will be replaced with something else next year.

If you visit the Gardens in winter, look for winter containers. They have been filled with branches and other dried material instead of being left bare for the winter. Areas to see include the cabin window boxes, three large urns in Munsinger, two urns in front of the Rose Garden, two in the Formal Garden, eight urns by the banister in Treillage and two large containers on Kilian Boulevard. Be sure to check out the four urns in front of the Rest Area Garden—they contain peacock feathers.

See you at the Gardens soon—it's not necessary to wait until next season to visit!



## Virginia Clemens Rose Garden

### End of Season Activities

by Joan Andersen

Deb Keiser, Rose Specialist at the Gardens, reports that some of the hybrid tea roses were a little shorter this year as a result of the hot dry weather, but they bloomed very well. The dry weather meant that late summer blackspot was not much of a problem. Fortunately, the Rose Gardens are watered by soaker hoses that are used about once a week when it does not rain. Cooler weather toward fall meant that the roses grew and bloomed well.

Lots of labor is needed to put tender roses to bed at the end of the season. The process starts in mid-September when the plants are fed liquid potassium (no nitrogen or phosphorus). This encourages them to stop blooming and begin to

harden off and go dormant for the winter. To prevent insects and diseases from overwintering on the plants, roses are sprayed with insecticide and fungicide. The tender roses (hardiness less than zone 4) are cut back to 8" in height. Then each rosebush is covered with two scoops of finished compost that looks just like black dirt. It is necessary to cover the crown/graft of the plant and have some compost over the roots out to the drip line. To prevent damage from mice, rats, and voles, bait is put inside tin cans and placed around the Garden. Finally, construction blankets are placed over the beds to insulate them. Bricks secure the edges so they can't be moved by the wind. The work of covering the tender roses was completed

on November 7 and 8 this year.

Even though this is a lot of effort, it is very successful to keep the more tender roses alive through our harsh winters. The covering also works to prevent the roses from breaking dormancy during a winter thaw. Hardy shrub roses did not receive extra protection unless they were newly planted this season. New plantings are covered at the crown with finished compost. They are not cut back in the fall, and won't be pruned until they break dormancy in early May.

Now we hope for a good snowfall after the ground begins to freeze. Snow is nature's insulator and provides welcome protection to roses and all the other perennial plants in the Gardens.



# All-America Selections for 2013

by Carl Hoffman

Tuesday November 13 was a great day for the gardener in me: my mailbox contained two of my favorite seed and nursery catalogs and I received an email announcing four more 2013 All-America Selection (AAS) winners. This makes a total of six AAS winners for 2013, three of which are flowers and the remaining three are in the vegetable category. I am always excited about the announcement of the AAS winners because I try to incorporate the flowers in my annual border and containers while I test many of the new vegetables in the garden. The AAS winners have been grown and have proven superior performance in neutral trial gardens throughout North America. This testing began and the first All-American Selections were announced in 1933 (that's even before I was born). Hundreds of varieties of vegetables and flowers have been tested since then.

The 2013 AAS flower winner that I am most excited about is canna 'South Pacific Scarlet.' It is described as having "showy, four-inch flowers that bloom all summer long in a delicious shade of scarlet." I have grown canna 'Tropical Rose' (1992 AAS winner) for several years and am very happy with its performance. This year about fifty of them lent their beautiful rose-pink colored flowers to my annual border until killed by frost. While I had plants that had grown to about four feet tall by September, the normal height is two to three feet. 'South Pacific Scarlet' grows four to five feet, which means they will serve best as specimen plants or focal points for back of the border. 'South Pacific' boasts six to seven stems per plant and produces larger flowers than other seed cannas. A caveat of canna 'Tropical Rose' is lower seed germination, which is listed on the packages as 70%. (I planted 100 seeds this past spring and got exactly 70 plants.) 'South Pacific Scarlet' is a F1 hybrid seed canna and, therefore, I am expecting that it will have a higher rate of germination. This canna tolerates wet conditions and can be used on the edges of ponds or in pots in pools. Although it is listed as a seed canna, the rhizomes it produces can be dug in the fall and stored over winter.

Echinacea 'Cheyenne Spirit' is actually a perennial coneflower that produces flowers the first year from seed. It is described as producing a "delightful mix of colors from rich purple, pink, red, and orange tones to lighter yellows, creams, and white." Many of us have purchased coneflowers boasting colors similar to this list only to see them bloom in muted

pastel shades. Although we may be a bit skeptical, the fact that 'Cheyenne Spirit' has undergone the rugged testing to become a 2013 AAS winner should mean reliability. In addition to the attractiveness of the flowers, the judges were impressed with the plant's drought tolerance and its sturdiness that prevented wind and rain damage. An added bonus is that this coneflower is maintenance free in that it doesn't need deadheading. Now, if only it were resistant to aster yellows!

The third AAS 2013 flower winner is geranium 'Pinto Premium White to Rose.' The flowers of this geranium are as unique as its name in that the color changes from white to rose. I envision a full, dense, well-branched geranium plant filled with five-inch blooms in colors of white, white and rose, and rose. Such a geranium will put on quite a show as a



container or bedding plant. In the 2012 trials, 'Pinto Premium White to Rose' performed well in the extreme heat that often causes geraniums to perform poorly. If this geranium is available locally next spring, I am looking forward to trying at least a container full of this intriguing plant.

As a sign of the continuing demand, at least two of the vegetables that have won an All-America Selection award can be grown in containers or small spaces. The first of these is watermelon 'Harvest Moon.' Although there have been several varieties of watermelons that have won the AAS award through the years, this is the first hybrid, triploid watermelon to win this award. It is similar to the heirloom variety 'Moon and Stars' but is an improvement in that it features healthy, shorter vines that produce medium-sized fruits with sweet, crisp, pinkish-red flesh. 'Harvest Moon' retains the dark green rind with yellow spots of 'Moon and Stars' but is seedless, earlier to ripen, and higher yielding.

Those of us who have grown 'Moon and Stars' and have found that it often ripens too late for this area may find 'Harvest Moon' a desirable alternative.

A dessert melon, 'Melemon,' is a second vegetable that has won the AAS award for 2013. Those of you who have grown 'Lambkin,' a dessert melon that won an AAS award in 2009, are familiar with the characteristics of dessert melons. The judges describe the taste of this melon as honeydew with a delicious tanginess. This melon is a F1 hybrid that boasts earliness, high yield, and strong plants that produce uniform, personal-sized fruits. I have grown 'Lambkin' and like it because of its flavor and size. Cut in two, they make ideal desserts, either as the melon itself or filled with other fruit or ice cream. 'Melemon' sounds like it will be even better than 'Lambkin' and is on my "going to try" list.

A third vegetable AAS winner is cherry tomato 'Jasper' (now there must be 1,001 varieties of cherry tomatoes). Judges selected this variety of cherry tomatoes because of its excellent texture and sweetness and long harvest window. 'Jasper' is a high yielding variety that produces uniform fruits on vigorous, healthy plants that require little fertilization. Its accolades as a strong, healthy-vined plant with fruit that holds up well on the vine as well as post-harvest would hopefully indicate that its fruit is resistant to cracking, a fault found in many cherry tomato varieties. I have not seen this plant grow, but its growth characteristics indicate that it is probably not a good choice for container culture. A bonus is that this tomato exhibits high resistance to Late Blight, Fusarium races 1 and 2, and Early Blight, the leaf spot disease that is the nemesis of all of us that grow tomatoes. This tomato was developed by Johnny's Selected Seeds, the same company that gave us 'Tomatoberry,' which is the best cherry tomato I have ever grown.

The 2013 All-America Selection winners have something for everyone. For the flower enthusiast, there are three exciting new plants to try, each with very different growth habits. Likewise, the vegetable gardeners will find at least one new winner that will find a place in their 2013 gardens. As for me, if I have room to grow them (my place is for sale) I will grow all six of the 2013 winners.

For more information on All-America Selections and colored pictures of the 2013 winners, go to [www.all-americaelections.org](http://www.all-americaelections.org).

# MCBS Events • 2012 • MCBS Events

## Enjoy the Reciprocal Gardens Program (RAP)

by Joan Andersen

There are many benefits to belonging to the Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society, but one of the best is the Reciprocal Admissions Program (RAP) of the American Horticulture Society (AHS). All you have to do is show your MCBS card and you will receive free or reduced admission to many gardens, arboreta, and conservatories all over North America.



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Here are a few tips for enjoying garden visits. Be sure to check the AHS website at [www.ahs.org/rap](http://www.ahs.org/rap) to look for gardens in the area you plan to visit. Then check the gardens' website or call them to verify hours and confirm their admission policy or find out about any other rules or special events that might affect your visit. Some gardens do not charge admission (such as our Munsinger Clemens Gardens) but may charge for parking (free at Munsinger

Clemens!). Your MCBS card will usually cover admission or parking, but it varies by garden. Finally, ARS reminds us that all the gardens rely on admissions and donations to support their work. Try to support them with a donation after you have enjoyed your visit.

When renewing your membership to MCBS, be sure to list both spouses or household members on the membership form. Many gardens will allow two free admissions if the names are on the membership card.

I recently enjoyed a visit to Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, Maine. These Gardens are located close to the ocean and we visited on a day in June, so the weather was warm but not too hot. It was a fascinating opportunity to see plants we can't grow here. I had a major case of zone envy looking at all the cultivars of Mountain Laurel and dogwood that we cannot grow in Minnesota! We were too late to see the azaleas and rhododendrons, but just in time to see the roses in their prime.

These Gardens opened in 2008, but they looked as if they had been there for years. Land was acquired in 1991, and the garden was in the planning stages long before construction started in 2007. A large part of the land is conserved pine forest that looks like the Great North Woods (or Northeastern Minnesota). There are well-developed garden areas, many beautiful containers, water features, sculptures, and an extensive children's garden area with places for kids to play and do activities. My favorite feature in the children's area was the "Big Leaf Garden" that featured a collection of giant plants. I took a photo of my sister's hand in front of a Chinese rhubarb leaf that must have been at least 24 inches wide.

Next time I go to Maine, my sister and I will visit again—maybe later in the season to see different plants in bloom. I also noticed that there is another AHS garden to visit—the Meryspring Nature Center in Camden—and I am sure we will go there too!

## Saint Cloud Garden Club Events

**Tuesday January 22** at 7:00 pm, Whitney Senior Center, Saint Cloud. "New Annuals for 2013" by Debbie Lonnee, Manager of Planning and Administration at Bailey Nurseries, where she is involved in new plant introductions.

**Tuesday February 19** at 7:00 pm, Whitney Senior Center, Saint Cloud. "Eagles" by Stan Tekiela, nationally recognized naturalist, author, and wildlife photographer.

**Monday March 18** at 7:00 pm, Whitney Senior Center, Saint Cloud. "Attracting Hummingbirds to Your Garden" by Don Mitchell, federally permitted hummingbird bander and Goodhue County Master Gardener.

All meetings are free and open to the public.  
The Whitney address is 1527 Northway Drive.



Mark these dates in  
**2013!**

### **Music in the Gardens**

June 9      July 14      August 11  
June 23      July 28      August 25

### **Art Fair in the Gardens**

July 18, 2013

### **Theater in the Gardens**

To be determined

### **Evening in the Gardens**

To be determined

### **Photography in the Gardens**

Deadline: November 4, 2013

Linda B.'s deck looked like a jungle. She had something blooming all summer long. Vertical plants climbed the wall, and drapy vines spilled out of pots and over the railing. Herbs grew in bunches in big pots. Exotic spikes soared out of tall self-irrigating tower pots. Morning Glories and green beans climbed up trellises. In the middle of it all was a table with a large golden umbrella rising out of it like morning sunshine, and chairs.

I decided I needed to do something about our deck. Our condo is rather small, and the deck is rather large, 12 by 12 feet. A deck like ours is premium real estate in the city, right up there with indoor parking stalls. We were going to need the deck for living and for gardening, or we were going to go nuts trying to cram our big-space psyches into our new small-space condo.

The previous owners had left their water fountain. "We had it made for the deck," they'd said, "and the twinkle lights we'll leave, too."

As a bonus they also left three rather large Lake Superior rocks, round and smooth and gray, two self-watering trays of petunias, and a couple of wrought-iron plant hangers. It turned out that the fountain was broken, so we gave it away. Still, a fountain is a good idea for a small place like a deck or patio. It helps create a sense of privacy. The twinkle lights, too, had to go, so we took them up from the outer edges of the deck and pitched them. Then we went right out and bought new twinkle lights to wrap around the border of our deck. We haven't gotten around to putting them out there yet. We piled the lake rocks in a corner, where they have been ever since. We weren't really sure how we'd be using the deck or what we'd need out there. We needed ideas.

I started looking around at what the neighbors in our building had on their decks. Karen next door has nothing living on her deck. She has two Adirondack chairs and a small table that her dad made. That's it. Friends brought her some red, white, and blue petunias for the Fourth of July. She set them on her table and kept them until they died of thirst, then she threw them out. Apparently thirst is a huge issue for potted patio plants. Karen likes to read her Kindle on the deck, mornings and evenings, and really doesn't want to be bothered by anything. Cookie, right above us, has one large pot made of shiny glazed crockery. Some leafy bunches of various shades of green and red hang over the edge. When she waters it she just throws a pitcher of water at the pot. If anyone happens to be standing underneath, a splash of water will hit. Cookie doesn't live in her condo. She lives in Rochester and just comes on weekends. She needs to keep things simple and easy. Further down, Tim and Julie have done a zen thing with their deck. Tall blue-glazed self-watering pots hold big leaves. White plastic arm chairs and a free-standing white umbrella give the deck a tasteful minimalist look.

Our deck faces south. We planted geraniums in the planters. These love the sun and produce big gaudy blooms. We moved out a wrought-iron baker's shelf and filled it with potted herbs, as many as would fit. This gave height. I potted a cherry tomato plant. The pot was too small, but it still produced a lot of fruit. Next year I'm going to get a big plastic tub and plant

some kind of vegetable. We also put out a round table and an umbrella and chairs. The deck is still roomy. If you want to create the illusion of spaciousness, keep the place a little empty. I like that.

We have no privacy on our deck. I fear even a gurgling fountain won't help create the illusion of private space. Everyone on our side of the building can come out on their deck and look at us. There is a courtesy we find ourselves using. Talk softly. Don't gawk or get nosy with neighbors. Don't go out there in your skivvies. Don't barge in on them when they're with visitors on their deck. Respect their privacy. But seeing neighbors out on their deck is a nice way to greet them and get caught up in an easy-going way.

Now that it is autumn and winter is approaching, I am planning a winter garden on our deck. Pretty soon we'll get our new twinkle lights up. I'm pretty sure we will, but maybe not. My husband and I don't agree whether to hang them on the railing or lay them on the floor. I'll strew some spruce tips around somehow. When the temperature drops, I'll make ice lanterns and light them in the cold still night. We will miss our outdoor room and I'm a little worried that we'll get a little crazy trying to make do in our super-small condo. We may just get on each other's nerves. I want to ask Linda B. for advice. She's a gardening gold mine. But she's a little elusive. Three times I made an appointment with her, to ask her to teach me about the ins and outs of urban gardening in small spaces, and how to make the deck into a comfortable additional room to our condo. Three times she forgot, or double booked, or came over when we had company. Another time she came really late, when I was already in bed. Once she actually came over to talk gardening, but the presidential debates were on that night, and we ended up watching them together. Most of what I learned from Linda B. was in five-minute increments out on the deck.

I'm doing research, reading articles on the internet that give me good advice. Fern Richardson has a blog that is quite helpful: "Life on the Balcony: Container Garden Ideas & Inspiration," [www.lifeonthebalcony.com](http://www.lifeonthebalcony.com). Another web site has given me some really good ideas: "Gardening Without a Garden: 10 Ideas for Your Patio or Balcony," [www.apartmenttherapy.com](http://www.apartmenttherapy.com). The ideas use ordinary materials and are easy to do. A site on Pinterest, "Patio Gardening," displays photos of innovative ideas used by small-space gardeners.

Books are helpful. Linda Yang's *The City Gardener's Handbook: The Definitive Guide to Small Space Gardening* gives practical advice for gardeners who face the challenge of growing plants in limited urban spaces. Fern Richardson, in addition to her blog, has written a book, *Small-Space Container Gardens: Transform Your Balcony, Porch, or Patio with Fruits, Flowers, Foliage, and Herbs*. In her book Fern joins practical fundamentals with creative solutions for gardening in small spaces, and encourages gardeners to think "outside the pot." Another book that would be useful for a prospective patio gardener is *Rooftop and Terrace Gardens: A Step-by-step Guide to Creating a Modern and Stylish Space*, by Caroline Tilston. Her book describes aspects of urban gardening such as design for roofs, screening and framing, gardening without soil, container gardening, furniture, decorations, and special effects. Finally, John Brookes' *Small Garden: Ideas for Balconies, Terraces & Backyards* is a how-to book about creating a garden in a small space as an extension of your home.

"Apparently thirst is a huge issue for potted patio plants."



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## *Thank You: MCBS Thanks 2012 Root-Beer Float Donors and Volunteers*

As in past years, local businesses were again very generous in donating supplies for root-beer floats to be served at this year's summer Music in the Gardens concerts. The floats were also served at a new event this year, Broadway in the Gardens. We are very thankful to the following companies for their generous donations: Kemps, Bernick's, Coborn's, Dairy Queen on 25th, Mr. Twisty, Michael Fossum--Thrivent Financial, and Strategic Equipment.

*We are also grateful to the following volunteers who made and served the root-beer floats.*

Joan Andersen

Gene Bjorklun

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Mary Ann Phelps

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Special thanks to Committee

Chair Elaine Carter

and committee members Mary

Margaret Bjorklun

and Jill Florek.

Many, many thanks to all who helped provide these additional treats to accompany the music enjoyed by so many members of the Saint Cloud community and surrounding area. Proceeds are destined to support "extra" needs of the Gardens. We couldn't do it without you!

MCBS newsletter is published four times a year. The next issue will be in March. Articles, comments, suggestions, or address corrections are welcomed.

Coordinator & Editor  
Donna Gorrell • 252-8834  
dgorrell@stcloudstate.edu

Layout & Design  
Karen Frohrip • 251-9290  
karenfroh@charter.net

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

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