



A New Book on the Gardens Is Forthcoming

by Stephen Fuller, Guest Writer

As one who has lived in Saint Cloud for 40 years and has been an ardent admirer of the Munsinger and Clemens Gardens, I was dismayed to walk into the Gardens Gift Shop in the summer of 2012 and learn that no one to date had written a book on the history of the Gardens. The time for such is long overdue.

The Munsinger Clemens Gardens are special and unique to the Saint Cloud community. A tremendous source of community pride, these Gardens not only are viewed by thousands of residents and visitors every year but also are incorporated into the fabric of the community.

I moved to Saint Cloud in 1975 to begin a long career as music professor at Saint Cloud State University. We had purchased a home on the southeast side just two blocks from Riverside Park.

One thing I enjoyed while living there was walking to and from school across the 10th Street bridge, even in the dead of winter. When the weather was nice, I would often stroll into Munsinger Gardens and become refreshed by this gem along the Mississippi.

When my children were young, we would sometimes stroll down Kilian Boulevard, and they would delight in rolling down the hill on the open grassy field before there were any Clemens Gardens. As they grew older, the kids would often go to ice skate on the hockey rink that was put there.

Then a big change started to happen. The Clemens Gardens began to come into existence in the 1980s. My former wife Beverly was always a morning person and loved to stroll over to the Gardens and check out their progress. She would come home and enthusiastically report on how those Gardens were taking shape. This is a

fascination that she had until her untimely death a few years ago. Her morning ritual was always to walk to the Gardens when the weather permitted, to both Munsinger and Clemens Gardens, and receive inspiration from them to guide her day.

Eventually I began to take a keen interest in the Gardens and delight in their progress as well. In the last few years, especially since my retirement, my interest in photography has compelled me to begin extensively photographing the Gardens.

And now the book. As more and more people have found out about this project, they have cheered me on and been very supportive of it. I initially asked Bill Morgan, local Saint Cloud historian (also retired from Saint Cloud State), if he would consider co-writing such a book with me. He declined

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Gardens Update

by Joan Andersen

The Gardens were lush and blooming during "Art Fair in the Gardens" on July 18. Despite the late spring cold and the following heat, plants grew well and were showing a lot of color during that event. Recently I visited the Gardens again and saw that the annual flowers were showing even more exuberant color.

Between the Rose Garden and the gift shop, you can see a fine display of pink "feather flower" (celosia), bright pink New Guinea impatiens, and pink and white penstemon. Near the rest area, I really enjoyed a planting of burgundy celosia and burgundy/red sun coleus

accented with pink, white, purple, and bicolor petunias.

In other places, the color scheme is completely different and includes more red and yellow, with a few other bright colors for accent. One area includes yellow osteospermum, blue ageratum, yellow snapdragons, and coral pink petunias, accented with a dwarf lime green sweet potato vine. Another place features deep chocolate and yellow sun coleus accented with red lantana and rich red sun coleus. Flowers are planted so that one area flows into another in a very harmonious way.

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I also enjoyed visiting the Treillage Gardens which showcase collections of annual and perennial plants based on single color schemes of yellow, blue, purple, and red. Each year the four color gardens look fresh because of new plants and designs that explore the color themes.

Most perennials have their special bloom time that lasts for several weeks to a month or more. When one perennial is finished blooming, another one is starting to bloom. Perennials are incorporated into the Gardens to blend into the plantings, and many have impressive structure and foliage for yearlong interest.

Munsinger Gardens received some tree damage from a storm in late June. The Gardens staff has worked to recover from the damage and it is not apparent, except for a few trees that will be removed later in the season. As you may know, the Gardens staff decided not to plant impatiens 'walleriana' this year because of a disease called downy mildew that infected and destroyed the plants last year. Shade loving plants chosen instead include New Guinea impatiens ('Devine' series), dragon wing begonias, and torenia. I walked through the Gardens and was impressed how well these plants were doing. The flowers are accented with many coleus grown for their leaf color only, plus a number of shade loving perennials, especially a large collection of hosta. The lost trees mean that there are sunny areas in a garden that used to be mostly shade, so there are places that feature sun loving annuals and perennials.

I really enjoyed how the Gardens are designed, and the staff has the plants looking happy and healthy. I brought my camera to take photos of the combinations I liked to get inspiration for next year for my own garden. One of the best things about the Gardens is that the flower display is constantly changing and each visit brings new surprises.



IT'S NOW !!

by Mary Margaret Bjorklun, Photography Chair

What's now? It's time to take many pictures of the beautiful Munsinger Clemens Gardens and enter your favorites in the MCBS photo contest. Take pictures from now until early November. Entries will be accepted November 4 from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm and November 5 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Lake George Municipal Complex (LGMC), 1101 7th Street South.

Two age groups are invited to participate: youth-18 and adult. Fees are \$5.00 and \$10.00 per entry, respectively. Photos will be judged as landscape (scenery) or hardscape (decorative features). Photos are allowed to be taken in all Gardens; not acceptable are pictures of people and close-ups of flowers.

All entries must be matted to fit a 16" x 20" frame. A digital copy of the photo must accompany each entry. Digital copies become the property of MCBS.

Winning entries will be announced at a public reception on Sunday November 10 at 3:00 pm in the Sun Room at the Municipal Complex. First-place prizes will be \$100 for adult entries in each category and \$50 for youth entries in each category, plus award certificates to all winners. After the awards ceremony the photos will move to a variety of Saint Cloud area locations to be enjoyed by the public. After a year of display, photos can be picked up at LGMC.

Photo contest information and entry forms are available at the Munsinger Clemens Gift Shop, the Municipal Complex, The Camera Shops, the Waite Park public library, and www.munsingerclemens.com.

The 2013 contest winning photos are currently on display at the Waite Park public library and will move to the Saint Cloud hospital in September.

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because he said he had too many "irons in the fire" already. But he assured me it was a worthy project. He told me of the Masters thesis that his student Ann Marie Johnson had written on the history of both Gardens. He gave me a "heads up" on how to begin my research and admonished me to begin digging.

And that's what I've been doing. Photographs go back to 2010, and the history has consumed me for the past 18 months. Many people have granted me interviews, given me information, and provided articles and photographs to assist me in my research.

The book will be titled *Munsinger Clemens Gardens: The Jewel of St. Cloud*. It is due to be published in the Spring of 2014 by North Star Press. A book like this one will not only provide a keepsake for those who come to view the Gardens and become enthralled with them as so many of us have but also provide a permanent legacy of the history and the rich development of the Munsinger Clemens Gardens that have taken place over the years.

Editor's note: In support of the book's publication, the MCBS Board of Directors is planning a public launch event for next spring, the date to be announced later.

Busting Common Gardening Myths?

by Diane Blazek

As diligent as you might be about heeding all the gardening tips you've heard over the years, are there some that you simply question their value? You wonder if maybe grandma's advice really was the best? Or maybe has become outdated? We did! So, we turned to our members and asked for their professional expertise on a few commonly cited garden tips to find out if they were still applicable in today's gardening world.



So, here goes:

Myth: Pinch the seed pod off if the onion goes to seed.

Busted!: Years ago that was a common practice because older (heirloom) varieties were prone to bolting. In today's world with newer hybrids, if you pinch the seed pod off immediately it will keep the center core of the onion from growing and the end result is a smaller onion that will not store well.

Myth: Knock the tops of onions over to make larger bulbs.

Busted!: Actually the opposite is true. If you knock the tops over prematurely, that will stop the bulbing process and thus will make the onion more likely to grow during storage.

Myth: To get sweeter tomatoes, add sugar to the planting hole.

Busted!: Sorry grandma, this is not true. Tomato plants can't absorb sugar in the soil, they produce it through photosynthesis. The sugar content of a variety is predetermined in the plant's genetics.

Myth: Perennials won't bloom the first year, especially bare-root.

Half Busted!: With modern breeding and growing techniques, this is no longer true. Go ahead and plant bare root and potted perennials now and enjoy those blooms the first year, assuming you don't plant them past the time they naturally would bloom. However, if you buy a potted perennial that requires over-wintering, then you will have to wait through the first winter to get the desired blooms. It's best to inquire from the seller to find out what to expect that first season after planting.

Myth: Plant peas and potatoes on St. Patrick's day.

Half Busted!: This can't possibly be true for all climate zones. It's much better to refer to the updated USDA hardiness zone map and plant according the local last-frost dates as recommended by local gardening experts. We assume grandma never moved far from where she was born so she must have lived her entire life in the same hardiness zone!

Myth: Pinch off all blooms of annuals before planting.

Busted!: In many cases pinching is no longer an absolute must because today's commonly available bedding plants are bred to be more compact with continuous blooms. So, you don't need the pinch to manage growth or promote another flush of blooms.

Myth: Planting tomatoes in a trench or up to the first true leaves promotes a sturdier plant.

Half-Busted!: This one is still true for

seed propagated heirlooms and hybrids. Planting deeply does help elongate the rooting area since any point on the stem that comes into contact with the soil will root. The exception is when planting grafted tomatoes because if the scion takes root it will negate the benefits of the grafted rootstock so never plant a grafted tomato too deeply.

Myth: Use tuna fish cans around transplant stems to thwart cut worm.

Not Busted!: Yes, Grandma was correct and frugal with this tip! When both ends of the can are removed and placed around the plant, it acts as a barrier to keep these natural soil surface crawlers from reaching the plant until the stem has thickened past the tender stage.

Myth: Add chalk or egg shells to the planting hole.

Not Busted!: Again, a good tip, as both of these items will help prevent blossom end rot in tomatoes since they provide calcium to the fruit (since egg shells take a while to decompose, crush or grind the shells to enable them to dissolve faster).

Myth: Putting egg shell flakes around the base of plants will prevent slug damage.

Not Busted!: Yes, Grandma was right, slugs do not like to crawl over the jagged surface of sharp eggshells so putting a barrier of crushed (not ground too finely) egg shells is a great deterrent.

Myth: Beer traps for slugs

Not Busted!: Yes, they really do work. And there is even research to show they prefer the light beers over the darker ales and lagers. But, if you get a rain or water the plants, you will need to refill the traps with fresh, undiluted beer as those little critters avoid the watered down stuff.

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Book Review

Elizabeth and Her German Garden,
by Elizabeth Von Arnim.

by Idella Moberg

If you've ever sought to escape to a garden, to read a book, to get away from maddening people and crazy days when everything seems to go wrong, or to make beauty flourish in your own back yard, then this is a good book for you to read.

The author, Elizabeth von Arnim, was born Mary Annette Beauchamp in Australia in 1866, the daughter of a merchant. She grew up in England, married a German count and later a German earl, and eventually fled to America and became a mistress of H. G. Wells. In 1899, while she was married to her first husband, she wrote *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*. The count had debts and was eventually sent to prison for fraud. The book is a semi-autobiographical memoir of Elizabeth's life in provincial Germany, filled with feminist protest and witty observations. It was so popular that it was reprinted twenty times in its first year.

In *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*, von Arnim gives us an intimate view of late 19th century German aristocracy, most particularly her own household. She gently mocks her husband, the Man of Wrath, and she refers to her children by the month each was born. She tells us how she funds the garden by depleting her clothing budget. With a satirical wit she writes about house guests that stay too long and deranged gardeners who leave too soon. She takes us on a train and gives us a tour of her childhood garden, secretly, but is found out, hilariously. We are guests in Elizabeth's garden throughout the year, as she chooses flowers to plant in the spring, as she and her family celebrate Christmas and New Year's.

I highly recommend this book. It gives us a glimpse of the role of aristocratic European women and their gardens. It is witty and satirical, and shows to us how important a garden can be in a person's daily life. It is available in various paperback and digital editions.

Settled

by Donna Gorrell

At 6:30 on a summer morning Munsinger Gardens is not so much a people place as a wildlife settlement. Occupants are mostly of the winged variety: ducks, geese, crows, and a variety of other birds. Nonwinged ones are mainly squirrels and chipmunks, though fish in the river should no doubt be counted too, and maybe even some uninvited members of the not-animal world.

Take your walk along the path starting from the steps at the north end. Ordinarily the crows would have a squawking fit as you attempt to share the park with them, but today a lone one is crouched on the grass, watching but silent, not attempting to fly away. It eyes you, but doesn't move. Injured probably, or sick. You look to your right, and along the river and edging the brush are the Creeping Bellflowers—bluish bell-shaped flowers drooping from stems two feet tall. Beautiful now, but they'll turn on you later with their thorny seedpods.

Okay, so you go on past the crow and then past a lone fisherman wetting a line in hopes of pulling in a catfish or two. Go a little farther and your attention is drawn to a young mallard in the river, struggling frantically to keep its head

above water, crying out in distress. It's going to drown, you think as you watch. What is the problem? Is it caught by a turtle? Finally you are relieved to see the little guy start swimming toward shore, no longer struggling. Yet you worry about its ability to survive with a possibly injured foot. At a distance, other mallards are swimming in a group as usual. There are also some on shore, pulling feathers from their fronts, scattering little puffs of down onto the grass. Another half dozen or so are in the cove, at the edge of the water.

You move on, watching where you step. About the time you leave the duck droppings behind, you come to the geese, two or three little flocks, parents and young ones. They watch you closely but don't yield their space. One adult hisses, and you keep an eye on it. You're past the gazebo now, hearing the peacock calling from his pen, and you start thinking of turning back. On the path up above are the aggressive crows, cawing at you to get out of their territory. Squirrels run as if they think you will try to catch them, and chipmunks slip under hostas.

As you leave Munsinger and step off the path, you see down the road three dozen mallards stopping a car while they cross back to their settlement beside the river.

Visit to Kaisaniemi Botanic Gardens

by Joan Andersen

I love visiting botanic gardens when I travel, and I recently enjoyed a short visit to the Kaisaniemi Botanic Gardens in Helsinki Finland. It is located very near the center of Helsinki and has been at this location since the 1760s.

This garden includes a large Palm House, display gardens, and a botanical natural history museum containing over 3 million specimens of plants (the museum itself is not open to the public). The Palm House was built in Victorian times (1889) when "glass houses" were very popular, and reminded me a little of the Como Park Conservatory in Saint Paul. Plants are arranged by type of climate, such as desert, rain forest, or water plants. Many of the plants in the building are the original species found in nature and used by plant breeders to develop our garden plants of today.

The display gardens are in the middle of a large park and have a nice view of the Palm House. Many plants were familiar to me, and many were labeled. It was a peaceful place to relax after a long day of being a tourist in Helsinki.

Underused Perennials to Make Your Labor Day Garden Sparkle

by Carl Hoffman

Recently a good friend was married carrying a beautiful bouquet made entirely of antique brooches with sparkling gemstones. I told my wife that it looked like a garden in springtime and she made a remark about everything I see looking like a garden. We do have many jewels in our perennial gardens in spring and summer, but as we near Labor Day they often lose much of their sparkle. The go-to plant for fall color is often the chrysanthemum, and while they do provide excellent fall color there are some other perennials that can become jewels in our fall gardens, giving sparkle until the killing frosts of October.

A beautiful fall blooming perennial is Japanese anemone (*Anemone x hybrida*). Unfortunately, most of them are hardy in zones 5 through 9 and may be challenging to overwinter in our region. But in zones 3 and 4 we have a beautiful lookalike, the Grapeleaf anemone (*Anemone tomentosa* 'Robustissima'). With its delicate shell-pink blooms on swaying stems, it looks like it is a spring flower blooming in the wrong season. It is definitely not a one-shot perennial, as its deep green grape-like leaves give good form and texture throughout the season and its taller stems with soft pink flowers not only add color but also movement when the willowy stems sway in the breeze. Grapeleaf anemone will do well in full sun, but it thrives where it gets some light afternoon shade. It does well in average garden soil but needs good drainage. It tolerates dry soil, but the flowers are larger and more abundant if they are given adequate water during dry periods. If there is a drawback with this perennial, it is its tendency to spread by underground rhizomes and it may need to be reined in occasionally. Be patient in the spring, as the anemone plants are slow to emerge. There is a planting of this beautiful perennial near the gift shop in Clemens Gardens.

Helenium (*Helenium spp.*) is a much under-rated hardy perennial plant that

can be a valuable addition to the autumn garden. Commonly called Helen's flower or sneezeweed, they are hardy and tolerate difficult growing conditions. Contrary to their name, they do not make you sneeze, because their pollen is carried by insects, not the wind. They are colorful with their daisy-like flowers ranging from lemon yellow to mahogany. A reason for their lack of popularity may be their tendency to produce tall growth and may require staking. Grow them in full sun, hold back on the fertilizer, and pinch stems once or twice in the spring to promote sturdy, compact growth. Plant breeders are producing varieties like 'Coppelia' that are more compact and less likely to require staking.

"Sneezeweed" brings to mind another underused fall perennial, the falsely maligned goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*). As with heleniums, the pollen of goldenrods is too heavy to be carried by the wind and does not produce "hayfever." Goldenrod is a reliable perennial that prefers full sun and blooms from September to October, producing rich yellow panicles of flowers. Avoid over-fertilizing goldenrods as it will cause the plants to grow tall and lanky. When I fertilized "Fireworks" along with all the other perennials, I got a plant that I could easily hide behind standing up. Plant breeders are producing cultivars that are shorter, more compact, and have showier panicles of yellow flowers. These cultivars include 'Crown of Rays,' a compact plant growing 12 to 18 inches tall. 'Sweety' and 'Little Lemon' are dwarf varieties growing a foot tall with lemon yellow flowers. 'Fireworks' is a favorite of mine with its airy panicles that resemble explosive fireworks on three- to four-foot stems. Goldenrod thrives on neglect and is a great choice for gardeners looking for an attractive but hassle-free perennial.

If you like airy clouds of white or mauve pink flowers in your Labor Day garden, you will love Boltonia (*Boltonia asteroides*) or "thousand flowered aster." Because it

produces its numerous half-inch aster-like flowers on stems that grow from three to five feet tall, it is an excellent choice for the back of the perennial garden. I have heard it called "Gypsophila on steroids" because of its resemblance to baby's breath with large flowers. Although I like the clouds of white flowers produced by the older *Boltonia asteroides*, it may grow up to six feet tall and may not be self-supporting and require staking. 'Pink Beauty' with pale pink flowers is somewhat shorter but more airy, and 'Snowbank' is a newer cultivar with a denser, more compact growth habit. Boltonia plants prefer full sun and well-drained soil.

A favorite fall-blooming plant of mine is turtle head (*Chelone spp.*). I like it for its white, pink, or rose-colored flowers that resemble the head of a turtle with its mouth open. These flowers are a welcome change from the dominant yellows and oranges of fall-blooming perennials. A second reason for its place on my favorite list is that it thrives in light shade while most of our fall-blooming perennials are sun lovers. *Chelone* is an excellent choice for moist or wet sites where it will quickly form a large clump of flowering stems. Its dense dark green foliage is very attractive throughout the entire season. Two hardy varieties for zones 3 and 4 are *Chelone glabra*, which produces white flowers, and *Chelone lyonii*, which produces showy pink turtlehead shaped flowers.

A second fall blooming perennial that will do well in partial shade or even full shade is Kamchataka bugbane (*Cimicifuga simplex* 'White Pearl'). The plants produce white bottlebrush-like flowers on three- to four-foot stems in late fall. In fact, a caveat with this plant is that it may actually bloom too late for our area if we get frosts before October—a probable explanation for its being an underused perennial. The name comes from the belief that the unpleasant odor emitted by the flowers may actually repel insects. Bugbanes give a strong
Labor Day Sparkle continued on back page

Eavesdropping

by Idella Moberg

I'm in the Garden. I've slipped off to be alone for a while with notebook and pen, to write. Found a nice spot all to myself on the deck outside the Gift Shop. I'm just going to write random thoughts today, about what I can see and hear on this fine summer day. Maybe I'll write deep thoughts full of insight. Maybe not.

It's 71 degrees outside, and breezy. Out of a pale blue cloudless sky the sun beams. Mothers and their young children are swarming like migrating butterflies, fluttering here, there, dressed in colors bright like the flowers. An old couple strolls, stopping to gaze at flowers in the bed. The woman bends over, trying to remember the name of a flower, while he stands by, holding her sweater. Cars are slowly driving by, people are looking for a place to park. People call to each other. And laugh. I hear laughter all around me.

Three young women and four children—a couple of toddler girls, a boy a little bigger, and an infant—invade my tranquil space. They sit at a table nearby. I try to be invisible. And give instructions to myself: *Don't look up from your notebook. Don't notice them dragging chairs across from other tables, or pulling two strollers up to a table, or all their bags which they stash under the strollers and sling over chair backs. Ignore how they spread out all over the deck, two toddlers and one kid a little bigger. Write about the Garden, not about them. Don't eavesdrop on them, or write down every word they say. And whatever you do, DO NOT let your imagination run wild about people you don't even know.*

They're having a picnic, chicken sandwiches and something left over from yesterday for the boy. His name is Ben.

"Get down, Ben," says one of the women. "Get off that railing, do you hear me?"

This is a pretty bouncy group. It takes a while for everyone to get settled down.

Crabby Patty, she's the baby, gets formula. Milk goes to the smaller girl, who falls off her green plastic chair—"One Princess down." Take a bite, say something funny, laugh a sandwichy laugh.

"Chips, anyone? Here, have some chips."

"I'll be a headless man," says Ben.

"Smile, Benjamin. A real smile. Crazy smile." Someone, one of the women, is taking pictures.

I sneak a peek at them. An elderly woman is with them. Where did she come from? She hasn't said a word since they sat down. She is dressed up in a pale green polyester pant outfit. She must be the grandmother. The young women talk in a livelong manner as though they've known each other their whole life, announcing things to each other the way sisters do. No effort is made to converse with the old woman. They are not ignoring her. They are here in the Gardens for her, that is plain to see. They all seem happy and comfortable, content to dispense with formalities, to be together without saying much of anything.

Old oak trees shade the deck where we are sitting. It is so lovely, with a nice breeze. Below us is a flower bed. Black-eyed Susans, roses, chrysanthemums are everywhere. Hibiscus in every color, as big as your face, loom from stalks as tall as I am. Petunias, begonias, and thousands of flowers I have no name for are bursting with color in their beds. A fragrance of Russian sage is carried on the breeze, and of hosta blooms, too. Ah, yes, hostas, hostas everywhere.

Across the street the fountain is spraying water out of a stone pillar adorned by bronze cow heads, each with a ring in its nose. Cherubim guarding a modern-day Ark of the Garden, our own sacred heritage. Lily pads and other water plants are growing in the water under the fountain. Banks of impatiens and marigolds surround it all. People sit on granite benches, enjoying the water and the garden.

"What should we fix for supper?" one of the young women says, as she pulls Rice Krispy Treats from her bag.

"Me, me, me," says Princess Number One.

"I want Chocolate Drizzle," says Princess Number Two.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know there was different ones," says the woman as she rummages deeper in her picnic bag.

Lots of babbling. One stands up holding a tiny baby a month or two old, give or take a month or two. Crabby Patty, dressed in a navy blue jumper with orange trim. Take a picture of Mom with her two kids, big sister too.

"What about me with all the kids?"

"Uh huh."

Lots of shuffling. Move the chairs. Now there are four kids in the photo. Grandma sits at the table, not saying anything.

"Make a crazy face." They all make crazy faces while the camera clicks.

Crabby Patty is back in the stroller, smiling and gurgling.

"I want chocolate," Princess Number Two persists. But there is no chocolate.

"I told you you have to put that under the stroller if you're not going to use it." Babbling.

"Hey, you guys, I have to get back to work," says Sister One.

"I'll bring down the car," says Sister Two.

"I'll walk the kids to the car," says Sister Three.

"I'll bring Grandma to where Natalie is bringing the car," says Sister One. And then they're gone.

A car alarm goes off. The deck smells like some kind of disinfectant now. Alone, I sit under the vaulted canopy of oak trees. Rustling leaves. Dappled sunlight. Soothing shade. Life is good. It doesn't get any better than this.

Bringing Plants in for the Winter

by William M. Cook

By the time you read this, it will be early autumn. [It is early August as I write, and feels like autumn already.] You may not have the 500 or so potted plants that need to come in for the winter that I do, but you probably have some that need to “migrate” indoors. This can be a tricky time for plants, because the transition from outside sun, wind, temperature, and humidity to indoor darkness and dry heated air can damage them. The following is my advice on how to handle this transition in the healthiest way possible for your plants.

Some tender plants are growing in the ground but can be saved from cold weather with cuttings. Most years I take cuttings of Coleus and sweet potato vines, and carry them indoors to root in water. Once rooted, which can be pretty fast, the cuttings can be planted in pots.

The fall migration season is a time to give your plants a careful looking over and repot them if they have outgrown their pots. If a plant has roots extending from the drainage hole or needs watering more than once a day, it probably needs to be potted up. To make sure the plant is hydrated before you begin surgery, be sure to soak the whole root ball by immersing the old pot in a bucket. Plants can also be pruned at this time, although ideally this is done earlier in the summer.

A key task is to make sure that you are not bringing any insect hitchhikers inside with your plants. It is very easy to inadvertently bring in mealybugs or aphids and not notice until weeks later when your plants are infested. Plants with bugs should be treated gently, because they are already stressed by the parasites. Insects can be washed off gently with a hose, picked off by hand, or treated with insecticidal soap. I try to head these problems off by treating all



my plants with a systemic insecticide a week or two BEFORE they come in. You want to use these chemicals outdoors according to directions, because they can be toxic to humans.

A common question is when should plants be brought in. You should be thinking about this before you turn your heat on, which in my house is in mid-September. At this point in the season the light levels indoors and out are quite different, but the temperature and humidity are fairly similar if you still have your windows open, so the transition is easier. A major factor to consider is outdoor temperatures. Most tropical foliage plants are damaged when night temperatures go below 50 degrees F, and should thus come indoors by early September. Many succulents, ivy, and other hardy but not Minnesota-hardy plants can survive light frosts and often have the option of staying out until early October. A select few species can stay outside until November if need be.

Many plants, particularly tropical plants, will probably lose a few leaves during the transition indoors. Minimal leaf loss is fairly normal. Expect early on to water plants less than you did when they were outside, but also keep in mind that pots dry out faster by mid-winter when your heat is coming on constantly. You can

give them a fertilizer boost, but don't get carried away, because many houseplants plan to go semi-dormant during the winter.

Another major question is where to put the plants once they are inside. Remember that you should match their new environment with their preferences as much as possible. Different windows in your house vary in light availability; south windows are usually the sunniest and warmest, west and east windows intermediate, and north windows cool and dark (particularly in winter). You may need to move your plants from one window to another during the winter as indoor light levels change along with those outside. There are very few species of plants that can survive indoors for the long term without being either very close to a window or under grow lights.

Finally, perhaps you are like me, busy in the summer and fall harvesting vegetables, dividing perennials, and getting the garden ready for the winter. In many cases I have not thought much about my potted plants since spring. By November all of that activity is over for the winter, and suddenly I have a “new” set of potted plants to care for and enjoy. So, hope for a pleasant and gradual autumn, think forward to the snow flying, and enjoy your “new” plants.



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Scott Zlotnik

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

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

Layout & Design
Jill Lucas Design • 743-4471
jill@jillucasdesign.com

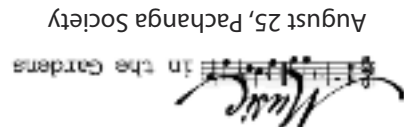
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vertical aspect to gardens and they are one of the few such plants that do well in the shade.

I have just barely scratched the surface on perennials that provide fall flowers and color during the cooler time of the year. I have concentrated on some underused and less familiar autumn-blooming perennials and have intentionally skipped over the chrysanthemums, New England asters, coneflowers, false sunflowers, sedums, and other perennials commonly grown in our fall gardens. We as gardeners are always looking for something new to grow, and I recommend that you try at least one or two of these jewels next year.

Photo Contest, January-November



August 25, Pachanga Society

MCBS Garden Events