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St. Cloud, MN 56302
www.munsingerclemens.com

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Volume XIV | No 4

Winter 2013



Some Ducks Don't Fly

by Donna Gorell

Duck Harbor when Ken and I first encountered it many summers ago was gray water and a chill wind blowing over hostile sand. Looking out from the dune as we walked barefoot down to the beach, we could not remember ever having seen a place so cheerless and uninviting. The years, however, and a certain magnetic charm kept drawing us back to this location on Cape Cod Bay and made Duck Harbor our favored haven.

Not to be discounted as a catalyst in working this transformed attitude was an agreeable change in the weather. On the day of our arrival a strong Nor'easter had blown in from the Atlantic bringing persistent rain, cold winds, pervading fog; high tides, a raging and thundering surf, and gray seas. We learned firsthand about the predictable duration of this East Coast turbulence as we endured it resignedly for four days. On the fifth we gratefully stepped out to worship the sun.



Duck Harbor now glowed in reflected sunlight, the sand was bright and the water a brilliant blue as it lapped gently on the rocky shoreline. I sat against the sand bank acquiring a magnificent (and later, exceedingly painful) sunburn and studying the vast intensity of the sweeping view. Idly, I looked for ducks. I was still looking with no success when I came to realize that the shoreline in no way resembled my idea of a harbor. It was a curved line from Wellfleet to Provincetown, as far as one could see in either direction. There was no harbor. There were no ducks.

Our friend Doctor B, an annual vacationer on the Cape, explained the name. Sailing ships, he said, had once found shelter at this shore, but that was many years ago, and with the ships must have gone the ducks. Wind and waves over the centuries had wrought many changes to the shoreline, an ongoing action at once creative and

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It's a Bargain!

by Anne Przybilla

Munsinger and Clemens Gardens have become must-see destinations for visitors to Central Minnesota. All summer long, car-loads of tourists and bus-loads of gardening enthusiasts visit the Gardens in all their fragrant and colorful glory. People come from all over the United States and Canada as well as several foreign countries. They write letters to the *Saint Cloud Times* praising the friendliness of the Gardens staff and extolling the beauty and accessibility of the Gardens. Those letters are unanimous in stating how lucky we are to have such a feature in our community and amazement that there is no charge

or entrance fee for this attraction. While the majority of public and private gardens in the U.S. charge sometimes hefty fees for the privilege of strolling their garden paths, there is no charge to visit and enjoy what Munsinger and Clemens Gardens have to offer.

Why am I telling you all of this? Because it's annual membership time again for the Munsinger/Clemens Botanical Society (MCBS), and becoming a member—or giving a gift membership to a gardening friend or family member—is a great way to show your support for the Gardens. As a member you will become the

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2013 Photo Contest Winners



LANDSCAPE, Youth to 18
1st prize, Miranda Jean Bastien
2nd prize, Ellie Terhaar
3rd prize, Isaiyah Mahlstedt

HARDSCAPE, Youth to 18
1st prize, Gunnar Marquard
2nd prize, Isaiyah Mahlstedt
3rd prize, Miranda Jean Bastien

LANDSCAPE, Adult
1st prize, Nicole Keskey
2nd prize, Faye Lange
3rd prize, Ruthie Myers-Schleitf

HARDSCAPE, Adult
1st prize, Don Kempf
2nd prize, James Schreder
3rd prize, John Roscoe

Honorable Mention, Jodi Hilbert
Honorable Mention, Martin Gilchrist

Winning photos will be on display at these locations:
December and January — River's Edge Convention Center
February 24th-March 15 — Paramount Theatre
April — Quiet Oakes
May — Saint Cloud Public Library
June and July — Whitney Senior Center
August — Saint Cloud Medical Group
September — Waite Park Public Library

www.MunsingerClemens.com

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 Gorell • 252-8834

dgorell@stcloudstate.edu

Layout & Design

Jill Lucas Design • 743-4471

jill@jilucasdesign.com

Co-Chairs

Joan Andersen
Jill Florek

Mary Margaret Bjorkun

Sam Calvert

Elaine Carter

William Cook

Chris Felsch

Donna Gorell

Jack Kelly

Pamm Minden

Lorna Nestel

Mary Ann Phelps

Anne Przybilla

Scott Zlotnik

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Some Ducks Don't Fly continued from page 1

destructive. High winter storm tides still cut chunks of sand from the banks and spread them out in ebb, continually washing and shaping, shaping and displacing.

This entire strip of sandy protrusion called Cape Cod is still geologically young, continued Doc, its having been formed by glacial action late in the Pleistocene Epoch. The last ice sheet began to recede only about twelve thousand years ago, leaving a moraine that through succeeding ages would be formed by wind and water into roughly the shape of a flexed arm extending into the Atlantic. At the fist is Provincetown and Race Point, at the elbow Chatham, and in between, Duck Harbor.

The waters of Cape Cod Bay at most times lap gently on Duck Harbor's shores, rolling rocks and shifting sand, bringing in a profusion of small shells—scallops and clams, oysters, mussels, jingle shells. A walk along the shore reveals scurrying hermit crabs, moon snails clinging to rocks, and strangely shaped egg cases—the black "mermaid's purses" belonging to skates and the perfectly formed "sand collars" of the moon snails. Beautiful wet pebbles carried home in a pocket become, when they are dry, not gems but ordinary stones.

A beach-buggy track extends from the path across the dune and along the beach, enabling anglers to set up their poles at prime locations. Beside the buggy track is a line of dried eelgrass, kelp, and other assorted debris—silvered driftwood riddled by teredo-bored tunnels, cork and nets from fishing boats, perhaps the shell of a horseshoe crab. This wrack line separates the upper beach from the lower and marks the last high tide. Above it stands the beachgrass-covered sand bank, and beyond that the salt marshes.

We walked along the beach, admiring the wonders at our feet. Looking across the Bay, about ten miles distant, we saw Pilgrim Monument, which commemorates the signing of the Mayflower Compact in Provincetown Harbor on November 11, 1620. Where we stood we were within sight of Corn Hill, where, we were told, the upright Pilgrims, grateful for God's providence in bringing them finally to land, dug up and sailed off with the seed corn of the Pamat Indians.

Our sight drifted across the water to the fishing boats trolling by, and we wondered if the catch was any better out there than it was here in the surf where Ken had been casting unsuccessfully. Where were the stripers today? The tautog? The flounder? Eelgrass was floating in, evidence of the recent storm.

One year, Ken and Doctor B were watching their taut fishing lines when Doc gave us a bit of Cape lore. The legend, he said, was about a pirate ship that was grounded near here. The ship had entered the Bay in a heavy fog after commandeering three ships. But the pirate captain was not familiar with these waters and agreed that the captain of one of the prizes should lead the way through the gloom, towing a burning keg to light the path. All went well until the enterprising captive took advantage of the fog and the dark, cutting loose the beacon and setting sail for P'town. The unsuspecting pirate followed the floating keg into the treacherous shoals of Billingsgate Island. Numerous graves in Wellfleet bear mute testimony to the truth of such stories.

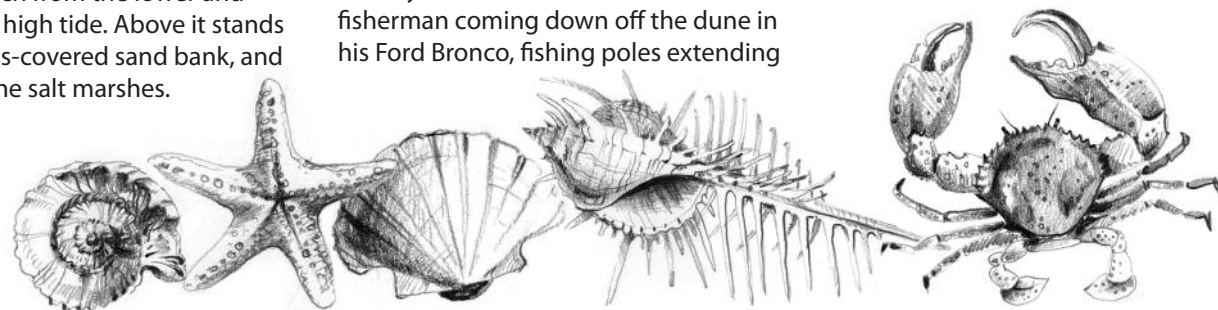
Doc made a kind of history himself one day. Ken had his fishing lines out already when we saw the veteran fisherman coming down off the dune in his Ford Bronco, fishing poles extending

out the rear window, attempting to steer into the beach-buggy tracks in the loose sand. The Bronco was rocking and bouncing as it slipped into and out of the tracks. A few seconds later, as we watched with disbelief, the rear window dropped and snapped off every one of the rods, all four. The doctor jumped out, roaring a few choice words as he ran around to the rear. He snatched out eight pieces of fishing rod, and the air could have been as blue as the Bay with the rapid succession of his expletives. These rods were his pals, his buddies, his trusty fishing tools, now beyond repair.

But a good fisherman never gives up, and the primary concern at the moment was the fish in the Bay just waiting to be caught. So, while Ken cast his lines and caught his fish and the high tide ebbed, Doctor B returned to his summer cottage for another rod. Trouble was, he didn't have another one. He'd taken his entire cache with him that morning. But, he realized, his dad had one, a Garcia-Mitchell, much treasured, and it was there in the cottage.

You can guess what happened. He took the Garcia-Mitchell out to the Bronco, extended it out the rear window, and returned to Duck Harbor. He bounced into the buggy tracks again, the rear window dropped again, and the prize rod was fractured into two neat pieces. We've never heard Doc tell this story, but we wonder what he told his dad. Ken has shared this fish story many times.

Our first Cape Cod vacation inevitably came to an end. We took home a few shells and other beach trinkets, plus memories of water and sand and sky. We would be returning to Duck Harbor.



A Bleak Future?

by William M. Cook

There are approximately 1 billion ash trees in Minnesota, making up 7% of trees in the state's forests and 15% in cities and towns. Sadly, all of these (there are three different species of ash trees here) are in severe danger of being wiped out in the next few decades by the emerald ash borer, an introduced species of beetle from Asia.

In 2002, scientists in southeastern Michigan discovered large numbers of ½" long shiny metallic beetles dispersing from dying ash trees. These beetles had probably travelled (accidentally) to Michigan during the 1990s in a shipment of lumber, and then spent several years spreading around the region. Since then the beetles have been found in most states in the northeastern quarter of the United States (plus Canada) and have killed tens of millions of ash trees, mostly in a strip from eastern Iowa and Wisconsin across to New York, Maryland, and Virginia. The adult beetles by themselves are not a major problem, but beetle larvae tunnel around underneath ash tree bark and disrupt the trees' circulatory system, eventually killing it. Infested trees generally die within 1-3 years, and there is currently no known cure.

Here in Minnesota, the beetles have been found at several locations in the Twin Cities, along the Mississippi River in southeastern Minnesota, and in western Wisconsin near Duluth. This means, unfortunately, that sooner or later ash trees in Central Minnesota, including the one in my front yard, are no longer going to be there. So, what can we do to slow down the apparently inexorable spread of the emerald ash borer? First, the beetles apparently do not travel very far by themselves; perhaps only a few hundred yards a year. However, they travel very readily in untreated ash lumber and firewood, and this is likely how they have mainly spread around the country. The state has made it against the law to move trees, lumber, and firewood out of quarantined areas, and to bring unapproved firewood onto state land.

The best way to slow the insects down is to avoid carrying wood (particularly ash, obviously) from one location to another.

If you do not live within 15 miles of a known beetle infestation (which should be the case for most readers), there is not much else to do beyond keeping a look out and educating other people interested in trees and forests. You can watch for small D-shaped holes in sickly or dead ash trees, and watch for the beetles. There are several native species of insects that can be confused with the emerald ash borer, so you should show samples to an expert whenever possible. There is an expensive preventative chemical treatment that must be regularly reapplied to individual trees, but it is impractical to do this unless you are in an area where the beetles have been documented.

The future looks bleak for Minnesota's ash trees. Scientists have identified three species of stingless wasps from Asia (which kill ash borers, but are completely harmless to humans) and are working to propagate these as a form of biological control. When it works, biological control (fighting invasive species by careful introductions of their natural enemies) is self-perpetuating and effective. Unfortunately, it is also slow and currently unclear whether these wasps will do the job in time. So, in the meantime if you have ash trees, be careful with wood, watch for new populations of emerald ash borers, and cross your fingers.

If you need additional information about the emerald ash borer, there is good information available from the state at www.mda.state.mn.us/eab.



Thank You Root Beer Float Donors and Volunteers!

We are grateful to the following businesses for their generous donations of supplies for the root beer floats served at the 2013 summer Music in the Gardens concerts:

Kemps
Bernick
Coborn's

Dairy Queen on 25th
Mr. Twisty
Michael Fossum, Thrivent Financial
Strategic Equipment

We also greatly appreciate the contributions of the numerous volunteers who made and served root beer floats at this year's concerts:

Mary Margaret & Gene Bjorklund
Renae & Al Bjorklund
Sam Calvert
Ginny Cendenin
Anne Fields
Guy Florek
Karen Frohrip
Lorene Hark
Jack Kelly
Carol Kottelson-Hill
Beverly & Norman Koeppe
LaDonna & Ray Merritt
Joyce Pohl

Nikki Rajala
Mary & Dan Rethmeier
Judy Rossel
Patsy Schelske
Lois Sjobeck
Susan Smith
Jan & Tom Stavros
Charlotte & Lowell Stephens
Marcia Summers
Janelle Van Pinnon
Bill Vossler
Haidako Wolfer
Joann & Frank Zezoney

Our sincere thanks to all of you for helping us provide these treats to accompany the music enjoyed by so many members of the Saint Cloud community and surrounding area. We couldn't do it without you!



Gifts for Gardeners

by William M. Cook

It's shopping time for the Christmas season yet again, so here are a few more suggestions of gifts for the gardener in your life. As with last year, note that these are things that appeal to me or are items I already have and like.

1. For trimming dead leaves off of houseplants or for deadheading flowers next spring, a pair of small-tipped pruners is very handy. I have several pairs (stationed strategically in my greenhouse and garage) of Fiskars brand pruners I bought inexpensively at Fleet Farm, and I am very happy with them.
2. For the houseplant enthusiast with a compulsive streak, how about a box or roll of plastic labels? Someone in my house (ahem) with hundreds of plants uses them to keep track of identifications as well as acquisition and propagation dates. You can buy fancy metal ones, but a simple pencil and plastic labels are cheap and easy to use.
3. If you have a vegetable gardener who is interested in longterm projects and garden stories, I would recommend *Perennial Vegetables* or *Paradise Lot* by permaculture authority Eric Toensmeier. I reviewed the latter in this past summer's MCBS newsletter.
4. For the recycling enthusiast, I would recommend a good compost bin for the backyard. Although stationary ones are cheaper and easier to find, one of the models that you can rotate (compost tumbler) is preferable, as the key to successful composting is regular mixing of the decomposing materials.
5. If you are stuck with weak and bendy trowels, how about a new one? My favorite ones have rubber grips on a thick, sturdy handle, and a curved blade with a good point.
6. If you know a canner or flour grinder, there are few things more useful than a good stainless steel funnel. A stainless steel one is safest for hot materials, and my favorite one has an opening about 1¼ inches across as it will fit in small-mouthed jars but viscous materials (for instance, newly cooked jam) will easily fit through.
7. I never have enough large ceramic or terracotta pots. These are useful for houseplants, patios, and front stoops, and you can even grow vegetables in them!
8. For home fruit enthusiasts, a steam juicer is very useful. While you're at it, you can also pick up some ½-gallon canning jars for the juice.

Happy holidays!

It's a Bargain continued from page 1

member—is a great way to show your support for the Gardens. As a member you will become the recipient of a quarterly newsletter with informative articles about the Gardens and gardening in general as well as notices of local gardening happenings and activities. You will also receive exclusive invitations to members-only events and a 15% discount at the Gardens Village Gift Shop. That's quite a bargain for a basic membership of just \$35.00.

And here's where I'd like to put in a plug for my favorite MCBS membership benefit: the Reciprocal Admissions Program (RAP). It is offered in conjunction with the American Horticultural Society and entitles MCBS members to special admission privileges and discounts at nearly 300 RAP member gardens, arboreta and conservatories across the country including Hawaii and the Virgin Islands. What a deal! "Special admissions" usually translates as free daily admission and parking plus free or greatly reduced fees for special events at all participating gardens. Discounts of as much as 10% will also be granted if your MCBS card is presented when making purchases at plant sales and gift shops at these reciprocating locations.

I like this perk because we use it often and it saves us money. Our children and their families are scattered around the country and it is our good fortune that they have chosen communities with wonderful gardens where we can use our MCBS card to cover the cost of admission fees.

I've been visiting the Atlanta Botanical Gardens on a regular basis for the past 25 years. The daily admission fee there is now \$18.95. (It was just \$8.00 the first time we visited.) Our daughter lives within easy walking distance or we would pay an additional parking fee of \$2.00 for the first hour and \$1.00 for each additional hour. Since our MCBS card names both my husband and me as members, we both get in for free, a total savings of \$37.90 each time we visit. It's an even better bargain for those needing a place to park because it covers the parking fee as well.

We also have a daughter in Denver, so the Denver Botanic Gardens, another of our country's top-ranked botanic destinations, are also on my list of frequently visited garden sites. Adult admission there is \$12.50 with a senior citizen rate of \$9.50. Because we both now qualify for the senior rate and parking there is free, our savings total \$19.00 per visit. That's a bit less than Atlanta, but still a nice bargain when we present our MCBS card.

Our son lives in New York and my to-do list for visits to him includes the botanical gardens in Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island as well as the Central Park Conservatory and The Cloisters. Admission fees to these attractions range from free to \$25.00 per visit. Interestingly enough, some of these sights are administered by the National Park Service.

Since we visit each of these cities at least once a year, the MCBS card more than pays for itself each year and we still have enough change left over with which to buy lunch. And that doesn't count the other garden hot spots I've been able to route us by in our travels. In fact, it has become a goal of mine to include an RAP garden of one sort or another on all of our long-distance road trips because I just can't pass up a good bargain. Enroll in MCBS and start saving money today.

Editor's note: To find the list of gardens for the Reciprocal Admissions Program, go to the American Horticulture Society website <http://www.ahs.org> and scroll to the bottom of the page. On the lower left is a link called Garden Directory (RAP). Click the link and there you are.

Nia's Picks and Pans

by Joan Andersen

When I walk through the Gardens admiring the sheer size of the place and the thousands of plants, I marvel at the talent it takes to plan and execute such a large garden. The process starts early: many annual plants must be ordered in August for the next growing season. Each garden area must be planned to have its own special impact and still fit into the garden as a whole. It is a challenge to look at a garden in full bloom in August and visualize how it will look next year using completely different plants in a different color scheme! Team members Deb, Cathie, Barb, Tracy, Rosie, Mary Lou, Sharon, and Ralph plan the individual garden areas and work with Nia Primus, Gardens Supervisor, to finalize the plans and order the needed plants.

One important thing Nia does to help plan for the next season is to do a thorough evaluation of the plants grown in the current season. There are so many new plants available on the market and some may be fantastic and some may not do well in our Gardens. Records and photos are kept so that good plants are reordered and underperformers are discontinued. The staff looks for beautiful flowers, color, and vigorous growth. If a plant does not need pinching or deadheading, that is a plus. Resistance to disease and not attracting insects that munch on the plants is also desirable.

Nia shared her list of plants with me and it contained 501 different annuals and perennials! Plants for 2013 were ordered in August 2012, and, to make things interesting, some items were crop failures at the growers or not available so substitutions were required. To keep this process organized, all plants are listed on a spread sheet, with color and size plus their location in the Gardens. In August Nia and her team evaluate each area to determine if the plants are successful enough to be planted again in the future. Here are some observations:

Munsinger Gardens are mostly shade with a few pockets of sun. This was the

first year that impatiens 'walleriana' were not used, because they were infected with downy mildew in 2012. This meant that the shady areas of the Gardens would need to be planted with different flowers resistant to this disease. Star performers included New Guinea impatiens—both the 'Divine' and 'Super Sonic' series are available in a range of colors and did very well. Several kinds of torenia were also planted. The 'Summer Wave' and 'Catalina' series did well, but the 'Kauai' series did not and will not be planted again. Coleus is grown for its colorful foliage and 'Giant Chocolate' and 'Rustic Orange' were standouts. An annual hibiscus grown for its foliage called 'Haight Ashbury' did so well that it is being overwintered in the greenhouse for next season. 'Lana' was the best of the tuberous begonias but all the tuberous begonias and wax begonias did well.

The *Rest Area Garden* is sunny, and Nia had some favorites here as well. Agastache 'Summer Love' had pink flowers that attracted sphinx moths. Canna 'Tropical Rose' is only 24-36" high and it rebloomed. Nia also loved pennisetum grass 'Karley Rose' because it bloomed from July to frost. Petunias are used throughout the Gardens and Nia reported that they were all good because they grow well and bloom all season. Her favorite was a Crazytunia 'Mandeville' that grew in a container. In a succulent garden area a favorite was Rhoeco 'Tricolor'—Nia says everyone noticed it. Other plants that did well in this sunny area were verbena 'Buenos Aires'—it attracted Monarch Butterflies—and vinca 'Cora Mix,' 'Cora Punch,' and 'Pacifica.' In the Rest Area Garden, 'Salsa Burgundy' did not seem to want to grow outside (it did fine in the greenhouse).

The *White Garden* is sunny and showcases white flowers and foliage of green and grey. Artemisia 'Perfum de Ethiopia' and gaura 'Belleza White' did very well. Euphorbia 'White Manaus' was excellent and 'Stardust White Flash' was not so good.



The *Trellage Gardens* feature four gardens in yellow, purple, red, and blue. Argyanthemums were planted; the yellow varieties were good and the pink were not. The yellow garden featured an interesting cassia plant called 'Yellow Popcorn' that everyone liked. The red garden featured a Sunpatien 'Vigorous Red' that grew very well. Salvia 'Hot Lips' (red) and 'Golden Girl' (yellow) were standouts.

The *Formal Gardens* included two dahlia Dalinovas. 'Hypnotica Red' was excellent but 'Hypnotica Yellow' did poorly and would not be grown again. Gazania Sunbather 'Sunset' and 'Gold Coast' were good growers. A particularly nice plant was leucanthemum 'Banana Cream' because it was a lovely pale yellow. Marigold 'Moonstruck Yellow' grew to a bush of flowers during the season.

The *Perennial Gardens* are very sunny and are updated as interesting new plants become available. Two beautiful new sedums were added this year. 'Chocolate Drop' is upright with dark brown leaves and pink flowers and 'SunSparkler Lime Zinger' is a groundcover type with lime green leaves with red edges and bright pink flowers.

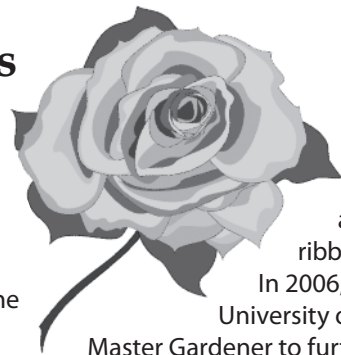
Of course, many more varieties are grown all throughout the Gardens and in the many containers. Lots of plants are repeated from past years because they are reliable growers and because the gardeners and visitors to the Gardens like them. The Garden was stunning this year, and when you visit next year, it will have a new look and be just as beautiful with a mix of old favorites and new stars.

A Passion for Roses

by Joan Andersen

On a very cold misty November day I visited with Deb Keiser, the Rose Specialist at Virginia Clemens Rose Garden. I've known Deb for a number of years and never really knew how she got to be such an expert on roses. After graduating from Saint Cloud State University with a major in accounting, she worked in that field and also at Stearns County and Benton County Human Services. When her son was born, Deb received her first roses as a gift from her husband. To keep those hybrid tea roses alive, Deb started educating herself on the care of roses. At that time, it was recommended that roses be protected during winter using rose cones—an idea that has been completely debunked! These roses survived a few winters, but one year a January thaw complete with freezing rain proved fatal to Deb's first roses.

She decided to get serious about roses and joined the Granite City Rose Society, Twin Cities Rose Club, and, some years, the Lake Superior Rose Society in Duluth. Rose club meetings feature presentations on roses and the opportunity to learn from successful and enthusiastic rose gardeners. At one meeting, Deb met Steve Gessell, the rose gardener taking care of Virginia Clemens Garden at that time, and from him she learned a lot about roses by visiting the gardens and asking questions. Societies also sponsor



rose shows, where Deb enjoys showing and earning ribbons for her roses. In 2006, she became a University of Minnesota

Master Gardener to further increase her knowledge of growing roses and other plants. Then in 2008 she completed the coursework and passed the test to have the designation of American Rose Society Consulting Rosarian.

On April 19, 2004, Deb began her job at Virginia Clemens Rose Gardens. It was the beginning of the growing season. At that time roses were protected by the "Minnesota Tip" method for the winter, so it was a big job for Deb and her assistant Helen and other team members to uncover and get them growing. During the season the plants must be pruned and deadheaded, fertilized, and monitored for disease or insect problems. Plants are sprayed with fungicide or insecticide only as needed—it varies from year to year based on the weather. Adding plants during the season, Deb has expanded the collection to include mini roses and a large collection of hardy small shrub roses. Around five years ago, the method used for winter protection was changed from tipping the tender roses to covering them with construction blankets. This method has proved to be less labor intensive and the roses

survive the winter in good shape ready to grow in the spring.

During Deb's tenure, the rose garden has been expanded to include test gardens. In 2005, the Virginia Clemens Rose Garden was accepted as a test site for AARS roses. Several years later the garden also became a test site for "Earth Kind" shrub roses. Testing is valuable for bringing good roses to market but also gives Deb a look at new roses before they even have a name. It also means she can make good choices when buying new roses for our Gardens with an emphasis on showy flowers and disease resistance. Deb is committed to making sure that the roses are labeled—though she seems to know the name of them all! This is very nice for visitors to the Gardens. Even if every plant is not labeled, there is usually more than one of each and one of them will have a name. If you see one you like you can shop for it or put a label on your photo of a favorite rose.

Deb's success with roses shows that you can start with a love of roses and learn about them by getting to know experts in the field and taking classes to increase your knowledge. She enjoys working with the roses—especially when they are blooming on a fine summer day. If you stop by, ask her about roses you admire or the care of the plants—she's always willing to share her passion for roses.

U Pick Too

by Idella Moberg

It's spring break. And since our grandkids are all out of school for a week, my husband and I take our annual vacation with our son and his family. This year we planted ourselves in Laguna Beach, California, for a week in March.

Upon arrival we gather in the pool area, under swaying palm trees, and plan our agenda for the week. We decide what to do democratically, a method that works well since we are a mixed group, three generations, ranging from teenagers to grandparents. Each person chooses a main event for the day. That way everybody gets to do what he or she wants at least once or twice during the week. One picks surfing lessons. One takes us to the Top of the World, a wildlife preserve with miles of trails along the ridge overlooking Laguna Beach. There's a morning walk around over-populated Balboa Island and an afternoon on the wild unpopulated beach in Crystal Cove. There are meanders through Laguna Beach drinking coffee and chatting with shopkeepers and gallery personnel. We take another hike, this time on the Laurel Canyon Trail in Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, where we binge our eyes on big vistas overlooking the Laguna Canyon and surrounding mountains. Someone also chooses a trip to the old mission at San Juan Capistrano, where 900 school children were darting about in an

incessant clamor, in and out of the old buildings and church. Toward the end of our vacation, I have my pick: we'll break from our frenetic pace of trying to do everything and linger awhile at Sherman Library and Gardens in Corona del Mar.

The Library and Gardens are located on 2.2 acres on Pacific Coast Highway. The building that houses the Library was originally a home. The Library acquires, organizes, and preserves materials that pertain to the history of the Pacific Southwest. The focus is upon the dramatic growth and transformation of the Pacific Southwest over the past 150 years. Users of the Library include school children who are writing a report, graduate students, historians, environmental consultants, and fiction and nonfiction writers.

Before touring the Gardens we eat at Cafe Jardin, on the patio, which is adjacent to the central flower gardens. This garden, displaying seasonal colors, is used for private events and weddings. There, at a table set with white dishes and crystal clear glassware upon a snowy white cloth, we eat delicious and beautifully presented "coastal garden" cuisine with a French accent.

After lunch we wander through the gardens. There's a rose garden with 27 rose varieties and a bromeliad garden. We linger awhile looking at the orchid collection. Next to the orchids is the Koi Fish Pond, where we are charmed by

greedy Koi who snatch bananas and oranges out of our hands for an afternoon snack. They suck our fingers and we squeal with delight. We're slowing down. Thoughts of everything else to do evaporate. We stroll through the Fern Grotto and the Perennial Garden and its showy plants native to Mediterranean climates of the world, plants that thrive in a climate like California, with its dry summers and wet winters. The Tea Garden, with blooms of fuchsias, begonias, and impatiens, is a patio garden popular for weddings. In the Specimen Shade Garden, a lath shade house, we sit down among tropical specimens and shade plants such as a collection of over 80 begonias. Clearly, we've entered a no-time zone. We're downright leisurely.

Each garden in Sherman Gardens is aesthetically arranged and impeccably maintained, but it is the Succulent Garden that draws us in and keeps us for the longest time. Succulents and cacti are laid out in detailed designs. One by one we walk into the garden and fall under its spell. We simply must sit down to take it all in. It is so quiet and still and sunny too.

It was a good pick for us to visit Sherman Library and Gardens. We needed a break from the pressure to go, go, go, to see it all, to do it all. I recommend, when you're in the area, this exquisite Garden as a place that you'll pick too.

Drive By's

by Idella Moberg

I'm driving by the Gardens. I stop, wishing I had my camera with me. It's late morning. Everything is in a flurry of activity. Carts and trucks and gardeners are everywhere. People are energized, moving quickly. Winter is coming. Never seen so many people working all at once. Everything has to be cleaned up and gotten ready. In Munsinger Garden I pass a flower bed that is being emptied. Beside the bed lie newly dug up lilies, laid out like a row of trophy geese. I stand for a moment watching the gardener arrange them on the ground.

"It's sad to see them go," I said. "Callas," he said. "They're Callas."

I'm on my way home, trying to decide whether to go to the grocery store first or to take a chance that I can thaw something out in time for supper. The annual gardens are being cleaned out. Fountains have been turned off. What about the roses, I wonder.



Coming home from the gym. The gardens are rather empty today. It's raining. Workers move slowly, digging, putting something into wheelbarrows.

They're putting the roses to bed today. Covering them before the winter blast. The Gardens look empty. Empty of flowers. Empty of people. It reminds me of another time I drove by. Long ago. My little grandson and I watched. "What are they doing," he said. "They're putting the roses to bed for the winter," I said. "Will they sleep all winter?" he said. "Yes," I said. "Sweet

dreams," he said. "Yes," I said, "sweet dreams."

It's snowing today. What's wrong with me that I don't ever have my camera when it's unexpectedly beautiful in the Gardens? No footprints. Just snow-covered trees and shrubs and a nice white covering the grass and flowerbeds. How can I get in there without making footprints, I wonder.

What's this? Holiday greens strewn about in pots, on gates. Are those red Santa hats hanging on the arbor vitae? Oh m'gosh. Some kind of work in progress. It's too soon to think about the holidays. I think I need to start making a list.