



Signs of Spring

by William M. Cook

It's risky trying to write an article about spring. Yes, spring comes every year, but the onset, duration, and personality of spring are never the same. Sometimes spring feels like you blinked and missed it. Still, I would like to give you a few thoughts in celebration of my favorite season.

People try to define spring in several different ways. First may come to mind the astronomical definition of spring, which is the three months beginning with the spring equinox, from the day we reach equal hours of day and night to the longest day of the summer (from roughly March 21 to June 21). Meteorologists consider spring to be March through May, which seems to

work best if we want to assign three months to each of the four seasons. But for those of us attuned to natural history, there are a series of discrete events which happen more or less in order. Here are some of the ones I look for and enjoy.

The first couple of signs I look for are actually pre-signs—they happen before spring gets here but herald its eventual arrival. As early as late January, on a day that needs to be sunny but may be very cold, I hear a cardinal's whistle coming out of a bush for the first time since last summer. It's the increasing day length that stimulates this; their brains register increased sunlight, and mating hormones start firing. The second sign I enjoy is dependent on the severity of winter, because when a winter is mild (like this

recent one was) it doesn't register nearly as much. But when following an extended deep freeze in December, January, and February suddenly the temperature shoots up to 40, I revel in walking down the street with my hat off for the first time in months. On that day I always think I can barely imagine it getting any warmer. Somewhere around then I may see a flock of Canada or snow geese flying around, and it gets warm enough in my greenhouse for a few pesky weeds to sprout out of my perennial pots. Of course it usually goes back to the cold for a few weeks after that little tease, but the big turn is on its way.

I have to watch the forecast to figure out the threshold step to spring, since it doesn't trumpet itself like a bird. When the weatherman predicts a run of days above freezing in late February or early March, I know it is time to get out my maple syrup taps. That first slightly

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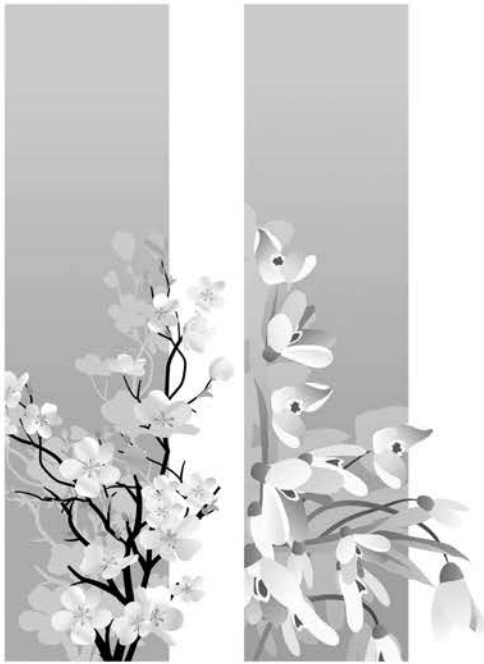


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sweet drop of clear sap is an early spring landmark. Around this time the main snowpack melts, usually sometime in March. It will probably snow again, but once I have seen bare ground I consider the next one a spring snow. Soon thereafter there is the first day I realize I have mud on my shoe again. The soil down below is still frozen hard, but the upper layers are becoming soft.

Snow cover and air temperature fluctuate, but I know winter is breathing its last when I see cracks in the Mississippi River ice next to Munsinger Gardens, followed by the opening of a large open water channel on one or another side of the River. Soon the ice breaks up and begins to spill over the dam. For a couple of days flat icebergs float down the river with ducks sitting on them, rendering the water clear, and I know it is very unlikely that the river's surface will freeze over again until November.

Now the maple trees have budded out, marking the end of the syrup season. The first grackles and red-winged

blackbirds squawk loudly from trees, indicating that migratory birds are starting to arrive. Perennial onions and day lilies seem to be the first plants that sprout in my backyard; they must have started developing under the snow and within a couple of weeks can be six inches tall. In my greenhouse I start planting tomato and broccoli seeds, not to be transplanted outside for two months.

Shortly thereafter I see little orange tips emerge from the Clemens Gardens flower bed east of the University bridge; the tulips are up. In my yard I see the first crocus shoots appear too, followed within a couple of weeks by the first flowers of spring. My son always says it's time to look for the baby plants, as I made an impression on him crawling up and down the front walk the year he was a toddler censusing the first bulbs. It can snow on those shoots prior to flowering, and they don't mind. If we have a late or gradual spring and those crocuses experience a run of days no warmer than the 40s, the flowers can stick around up to three weeks and into early May. This year looks like an abrupt spring, so they will probably come and go in three or four days.

For me, the Mississippi continues to contribute to the plot. The last bit of ice north and east of the bridge disappears, as do the last snow piles in my yard. Blue-winged teal, pied-billed grebes, and other water birds temporarily populate above and below the dam. Now we are into April, and if the spring is late I can spot a loon or two resting overnight above the dam. This requires the spring to be cold enough that open water is not available on area lakes, so I will be surprised to see loons there this year. A gusty south wind blows in eared

grebes, various other waterfowl, and a flock of pelicans may even ride thermals up the river. Within a few days they are all gone, and just the summer population of mallards and American coots remains. Some of those mallards are seen sneakily wandering around yards, casing bushes for a good spot to lay eggs.

Back in my yard daffodils bloom, assuming that I still have any following the horrible spring of 2015 when most of them didn't come up. I have cleared piles of leaves off much of my flowerbeds. Various other perennials emerge from between the blooms. I always look forward to the first red bud that indicates rhubarb is waking up, foretelling happy early summer adventures with jam, pies, smoothies, and wine. The beautiful apple trees down the street bloom briefly, then cover the ground with pink and white petals. I need to decide how overzealous I am going to be planting the first peas, carrots, and lettuce seeds outside, and start thinking about what greenhouse plants can go outside for the summer.

Around now, the phoebe that lives under the west end of the University bridge flies in, indicating that there are flying insects available to be eaten. Much to my chagrin I notice a few mosquitoes lurking around. The mid-spring bulbs like muscari are active, as are the first weeds I need to pull in the garden. Now is the time for wholesale digging and rearranging in the perennial garden; although not ideal for humans, a chilly and overcast day in the 40s is perfect for the plants. My favorite birds, white-throated sparrows, briefly call from my backyard while on their way north to the Iron Range and Canada.

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Book Review

by Idella Moberg



Buchmann, Stephen. *The Reason for Flowers: Their History, Culture, Biology, and How They Change Our Lives*. New York: Scribner, 2016.

The title of this book is a bit of a misnomer, because Stephen Buchmann gives us far more than one reason for flowers. He gives us hundreds of reasons. A more apt designation may be to call it an anthology, the word derived from Greek *anthos*, "flower," + *-logia*, "collection." I like thinking of this interesting book as a collection of flowers. It is, after all, all about flowers, and insects, and people too, and how they all depend on each other and help each other in countless ways.

The book is divided into five parts each of which explores a major reason for flowers. Dr. Buchmann demonstrates how flowers evolved in order to attract the attention of insects and other animals, including humans, who pollinate them for propagation.

Since ancient times flowers have been important for pleasure. Buchmann takes us through numerous pleasure gardens, ancient and modern. Humans have a great need for pleasure and beauty that can be filled by flowers and gardens. Today, the flower industry is huge. Countless flowers are grown and shipped worldwide to please people, to help them celebrate, to cheer them up when they are mourning.

Many flowers are edible, and we love their smell. Buchmann gives a historical account of the making of perfume as well as the growth and workings of the perfume industry.

Flowers have also been used historically to communicate nonverbal messages in the secret language of flowers. Ancient and more recent literature include flowers in epics and poems. Artists and photographers throughout history have used media to render flowers in art. Pop culture art like Warhol's flower paintings were mass-produced flowers, flower power that, though also unrealistic, represented a noble sentiment: "Make love, not war." Flowers are photographed from interesting angles and also scanned with scanners. Flowers appear on coins and stamps. The art of flower arranging dates back into ancient times. Flowers are beautifully depicted in medieval manuscripts, in tapestries and rugs, on porcelains and glass. Florilegia describe and illustrate species of plants.

Scientific study of flowers has changed the way we view the world. Carl Linnaeus, for example, examined and catalogued specimens according to sexual characters. Agriculture and horticulture changed because of hybridization. Darwin

believed that flower forms had specific functions that encouraged their survival. Buchmann himself conducted scent experiments trying to determine chemical mimicry between kinds of flowers that look alike. He also studies the behavior of bees. Medicinal benefits of flowers and herbs are countless. Flowers or a view of nature in a hospital room can help patients to heal faster. Flowers can elevate a sad person's mood.

Writing about Dutch still life floral paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries, Buchman notes how immense and spectacular they are, flowers crammed into vases that miraculously do not fall over from the top-heavy mass of blooms. The majority of these paintings "mix species from many lands and from all seasons," all blooming together. This is what Buchman has done with this book. He has collected reasons for flowers from ancient times to today, from near and far, and put them all together in his book, so that his readers can be bowled over by the immensity of his work, his thorough research, and, quite frankly, his unabashed enthusiasm for it all. For Stephen Buchmann, flowers and people enjoy a symbiotic relationship. They are dependent upon each other for mutual support.

Stephen Buchmann is an entomologist (he calls himself a pollination ecologist and bee biologist), an adjunct member of the entomology department at the University of Arizona in Tucson, and a Research Entomologist with the USDA Carl Hayden Bee Research Center. He travels all over the world studying bees, pollination, and international conservation and policies in order to protect the world's pollinators and their plants. He has authored and co-authored many scientific papers and books, including *The Bee Tree*, his first children's book. Dr. Buchmann is a founding member of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, and in 2007 he served on a National Academy of Sciences National Research Council committee which issued a report, "Status of Pollinators in North America." In the same year he was an advisor to the United States Postal service which created eight commemorative stamps on pollinators and wildflowers during National Pollinator Week. His research includes studies on such subjects as floral and bee chemical ecology, the biophysics of wind-pollinated plants, and the evolution of pollination specialization by solitary bees.

Visit our website: munsingerclomens.com



Check out our Facebook page at
Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society.

Getting Ready for Spring at the Gardens

by Joan Andersen

It is early March and when you read this it will be time to start the heavy work for the 2016 season in the Gardens. The planning is mostly done. Several small shipments of plants will arrive mid-March and the first large shipment will arrive the week of March 28. Experienced seasonal garden staff will return to work and their first job will be to transplant plugs. Repairs are needed to the Renaissance fountain. Bids have been requested and it is hoped that the work can be completed this spring so that the fountain is ready for visitors this summer.

Nia Primus, Gardens Supervisor, orders from a plant broker who represents many vendors. This year she is using more vendors to find sources for more varieties of plants. The planting design changes a lot from year to year so new varieties and colors are needed. Also, Nia likes to do research and use plants that are new to the market so visitors can enjoy plants they have never seen before.

The Rest Area Garden is in full sun and will feature lots of texture and colors of pink, purple, and burgundy. Colorful foliage will be provided by the large red-pink leaves of coleus "Mariposa" and "Valentine." Purple will be showcased by butterfly bush "Midnight Blue" with deep purple flower spikes. Other flowers include petunia "Grape Ice," zinnia "Magellan Pink," and *pentas* "Northern Lights Lavender." Dianthus "Rosy Cheeks" has pink flowers that resemble miniature roses above grayish foliage. A salvia, "Wendy's Wish," has 24-36" pink flower spires. As you can see, these flowers will attract butterflies and other pollinators. The flowers will be planted with several ornamental grasses: *pennisetum* "Regal Princess" that has deep purple foliage and *miscanthus* "Zebrinus" which has green leaves with yellow bands. Also included is *juncus* "Javelin," which has very long thin leaves.

The Formal Garden will have a bright design of lime green, orange, and purple. Staff member and rose specialist Deb Keiser saw this color combination in a container designed by P. Allen Smith, well-known plants person. Another inspiration was the availability of many new plants in pleasing shades of orange. Lime plants will include sun coleus grown for their



colorful leaves. Cultivars include "Lime" and "Pineapple" and "Yellowfin Tuna." Another plant will be *alternanthera* "True Yellow," which Deb says is really more green. There are even lime green flowers including crazytunia "Twilight Lime," "Benary's Giant" lime zinnia and *lisianthus* "Mariachi Lime." Orange will be shown in many forms by using sun coleus with orange leaves, and lots of orange flowers: petunias, dahlias, geraniums, sunpatiens, *geum* "Totally Tangerine" and *gompfhrena* "Outrageous Orange." As you probably know, many plants sold with the color "blue" in their name are actually more purple than blue. Plants used for purple in this design include crazytunia "Twilight Blue," *lisianthus* "Mariachi Blue," ornamental pepper "Purple Flash" and sweet potato vine "Midnight Lace" which has very dark leaves.

Some other plants to watch for:

- *Anchusa capensis* is an annual with intense blue flowers that resemble "forget-me-nots." It will go in the blue garden in the Treillage area on top of the hill in Clemens Gardens.
- Aster "Alma Potschke" is a cultivar of our native New England aster known for hot pink flowers in fall. It is highly attractive to butterflies and pollinators. It is an old favorite and will be planted in several places where bright color is needed.



Photography in the Gardens

November 15, 2015 — November 4, 2016

> Prizes

\$100 Best of Show

\$50 1st place **Adult** winner in each category

\$20 2nd place **Adult** winner in each category

\$10 3rd place **Adult** winner in each category

\$50 1st place **Youth-18** winner in each category

\$20 2nd place **Youth-18** winner in each category

\$10 3rd place **Youth-18** winner in each category

All winners will receive Award Certificates.

> Categories

Landscapes (garden scenery)

Hardscapes (decorative features in the Gardens)

1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will be chosen from both age groups and each category.

Any visitor to the Gardens is eligible to enter.

> Submission Fee

\$10 for adults per photo

\$5 for youth-18 per photo

Maximum of 3 entries per photographer.

> Rules

• Tripods may be used.

• Photos will be returned to photographer.

• Photographer retains copyright of photo.

• Use of the photo is granted to MCBS and credit will be given to photographer.

• Contest allows for only normal manipulation of an image.

> Entries Due

November 4, 2015 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

November 5, 2015 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

at the **Lake George Municipal Complex**

1101 7th Street South, St. Cloud, MN

Winners will be notified.

Download the entry form from our website
www.munsingerclemens.com

Awards

November 19, 2016, 3:00 p.m., public reception at the **Saint Cloud Public Library** to present awards. Gallery will open at 2:30 p.m.

Photography Displays

April-May — Whitney Center, 1527 Northway Drive

June — US Bank, 1015 West Saint Germain

- Chelone "Black Ace" is a cultivar of our native chelone that has dark leaves and is topped with white snapdragon-like flowers in late summer and early fall.
- Coleus series "Under the Sea" has leaves that are deeply lobed and very colorful. "Yellowfin Tuna" will be in the Formal garden and several other cultivars will be in containers.
- Digitalis "Illumination Flame" is a cross between the common foxglove and *isoplexis*, a foxglove relative native to the Canary Islands. It produces spires of pink tubular flowers with creamy yellow throats. It has a longer bloom period than the common foxglove and is not supposed to produce seed.
- *Evolvulus* "Blue Daze" was used in 2015. It was a low maintenance plant that did well in wet soil so it is being used again in 2016. In fact it grew so well that the roots were huge and it was hard to remove in the fall.
- *Gomphrena* "Pinball" series is vegetatively propagated instead of being grown from seed. It is compact and long blooming.
- *Maurandya barclayana* is a climber with purple trumpet shaped flowers. Look for it in the urns in the Rest Area Garden.
- *Vigna caracalla* is a climber, also called the corkscrew vine. You can see why if you look at the exotic spiral-shaped flowers.

Deb Keiser also reports that there were 210 new roses and 125 mini roses ordered this year. Most will be shipped in late March as bare root plants so staff will also be potting them to grow in the greenhouse for a while before going outside.

With the popularity of the PBS series "Downton Abbey," new roses have been released in honor of characters on the show. "Pretty Lady Rose" is a hybrid tea with large dark pink blossoms and a spicy fragrance. "Anna's Promise" is a fragrant tall upright grandiflora and the color is described as bicolor golden tan and pink blush with a copper reverse. "Edith's Darling" is an English style shrub rose with clusters of fragrant soft gold heavily petaled flowers. "Violet's Pride" is a floribunda with clusters of lavender blue flowers and a spicy scent. Be sure to watch for these plants when you visit—remember that the roses are labeled so you can find them if you look.

in the Gardens

Alternating Summer Sundays, 3:00 pm

"Music in the Gardens" is a Sunday afternoon concert series in Saint Cloud's Munsinger Gardens, Riverside Drive SE & 13th Street SE. Concerts are arranged by Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society. MCBS also sells rootbeer floats for \$1.00. Bring a lawn chair and meet at the gazebo down by the Mississippi River to enjoy live music by favorite local musical groups. A special event will be a Butterfly Release by Quiet Oaks Hospice House and Respite Care at 2:00 pm on July 24 preceding the concert.

Check our website at munsingerclemens.com or our Facebook page, Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society, for directions and other information about this event or the Gardens.

June 12—Charlie Roth

June 26—Monday Night Jazz

July 10—Harper's Chord

July 24—Dennis Warner (and Butterfly Release)

August 7—Woodwind Trio

August 21—Pachanga Society

Music in the Gardens Players

Charlie Roth, June 12. Americana, Folk, Blues, Country, Celtic—Charlie Roth is a blend of all these genres. He is best at telling a story with his rich baritone vocal, acoustic guitar, rack harmonica, and foot percussion. His fifth album "Broken Ground" reached #6 on the Euro Americana charts and continues to get air play all over the world. A consummate showman, an entertainer with countless gigs under his belt, Charlie has mastered the art of playing and singing from his heart, exuding the sheer joy of making great music.

Muggsy Lauer and Monday Night Jazz, June 26. They started out as a bunch of guys getting together every week to let loose and play music they love. They all began playing jazz at a young age. The group formed in 2004 when they started playing at the former Tavern Bar in downtown Saint Cloud. In 2005 the Tavern closed down and they moved to Pioneer Place. The group is led by Jeff Engholm and Muggsy Lauer.

Harper's Chord, July 10. Drawing from their love of folk, blues, roots, Americana, and country music, Harper's Chord captivates audiences with strong, three- and four-part

harmonies and easy-listening acoustic songs. Lead vocalist Jill Moore and musicians Paul Drinkwine, Roger Fink, and Micah Barrett are busy gracing the stages at Pioneer Place, Great River Arts Center, and Summertime by George. The music of Harper's Chord has a grass-roots, back porch, organic feel, offering an eclectic mix of songs that tell stories of personal journeys and give these diverse musicians the opportunity to showcase their formidable talent.

Dennis Warner, July 24. Recognized for his crafty wit and skillful musicianship, Folk/Americana musician Dennis Warner captivates audiences in over 100 cities each year with his smooth vocals and six- and twelve-string guitars. In addition to being a gifted musician, he is an outstanding entertainer, cleverly blending up-tempo songs, ballads, audience participation, and humor into a memorable concert. He is noted for his warm stage presence and ability to connect with his audience. For his songwriting talents, Warner was honored with an invitation to perform in concert at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC.

Brendon Bushman Woodwind Trio, August 7. Saint Cloud Symphony Orchestra principal oboe Brendon Bushman and his woodwind trio (oboe, clarinet, bassoon) will perform an eclectic mix of old and new music for this uncommon instrumentation.

Pachanga Society, August 21. The Stearns County Pachanga Society (SCPS) combines the participatory musical spirit of Cuban Cabildos, Brazilian Samba clubs, and Spanish Charangas, with danceable rhythms from all over the globe and a certain psychedelic rock-n-roll ethos. The Saint Cloud Times has called the Pachanga Society the "hottest gig in town," and KVSC-FM's Minnesota Music expert John Drake chose the group as 2002 "Rookie of the Year" on the Minnesota music scene.

Call for Volunteers

Want to help serve rootbeer floats at one or more of our 2016 summer concerts in Munsinger Garden?

Contact Elaine Carter at (320) 253-6143 or efcarter@stcloudstate.edu to be added to our volunteer list.



Signs of Spring continued from page 2

About this time my dogs rediscover that the soil is no longer frozen, and it can be fun to re-dig last year's holes in the newly green lawn.

Now we transition to May, and I can harvest the first perennial greens from my garden. Cool season vegetables think about being transplanted, but it's still too early for the tomatoes. The house wren starts calling from the nest box in the alley, and loud, clear whistles tell that the orioles are here. A few hardy butterflies flit around the early season flowers. Baby ducklings appear on the Mississippi, and I have to cut my grass for the first time.

Now in mid- to late May, I try to figure if tomorrow morning's low in the 30s is the last for the season. If I am at all organized, my cool-season vegetables are planted, as are the too many perennial flowers I bought again this year. A couple of flowers tell me that spring is transitioning to summer, as do the first actual hot days of the year. When daffodils and the other spring bulbs go by and are overtaken by taller summer perennials, spring is over for me. Farther south peonies are considered spring flowers, but I think of them and the irises as a transition to summer. Even the birds in my backyard have settled down,

changing from territorial singing to quieter but no less active egg-laying and baby feeding. Eventually I notice that the workers in Clemens Gardens have planted annuals, and I know summer is here to stay.

As I write this in early March, only the first few of these signs of spring have made themselves known, and it's an early spring so far even yet. Every year I tell myself I am going to enjoy the fast-moving rituals of spring, and this year I may just do that. Hopefully a few of my favorite signs resonate with you, too, and you will have much to look forward to.

Are you looking for an intimate setting for your wedding or event?

The beauty of Saint Cloud's Munsinger Gardens provides the ideal setting for ceremonies and professional photography sessions. Ceremonies are held in the Special Events Area of the Gardens. This "botanical room" provides a private setting within the beauty of the Gardens. Posing photography sessions, including wedding, family, or senior photos, are allowed by permit in designated photography sites throughout Munsinger Gardens.

Ceremony Fees

Ceremony reservations are scheduled for two-hour time blocks; this includes the ceremony and photography sessions.

Residents of Saint Cloud—\$250

Non-Residents of Saint Cloud—\$300

Photography Fees

Photography groups over 12 people

Residents of Saint Cloud—\$70 per session

Non-Residents of Saint Cloud—\$90 per session

Photography groups under 12 people

Residents of Saint Cloud—\$35 per session

Non-Residents of Saint Cloud—\$45 per session

Please call 320-257-5959 to book your event or for more information.

Tenth Annual ART FAIR IN THE GARDENS Thursday July 21, 2016

Sponsored by Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society

Plan to attend the 10th Annual Art Fair in the Gardens on Thursday July 21 from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. Shop for high quality artwork for your home and garden as well as jewelry, weaving, pottery, painting, sculpture, and more. Artist booths are arranged throughout the Munsinger and Clemens Gardens so you can enjoy the flowers while you shop. Food and beverages are available on site. Music will be performed by Pushing Chain, Cristina Seaborn, Cathie English, and Carlos Quinche. For more information go to the website at www.munsingerclemens.com or our Facebook page Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society.

To give additional support to Music, ArtFair, or the Gardens,
complete the form below and mail to:

MCBS, PO Box 7594, St Cloud MN 56302

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Event supported _____ Amount \$ _____

Or visit our website to give at www.munsingerclemens.com

Founder of Clemens Gardens Dies

Virginia Clemens Rose Garden was founded by Bill Clemens for his wife to enjoy. In the 1980s they purchased land across the street from their home and adjacent to Munsinger Gardens. Not only did they protect the land from development, they later used it to establish Clemens Gardens and the Virginia Rose Clemens Rose Gardens. The couple enjoyed seeing the roses in the wonderful gardens so close to their home and knowing that the Gardens are also treasured by area residents. Until very recently, Mr. Clemens visited the Gardens every day, taking time to talk to the gardeners and enjoy the flowers. Preceded in death by his wife, he died March 2, 2016. He truly was a very special person.



We've Gone Social!

LIKE our Facebook page Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society

Are you looking for more photos and up-to-date information on the Gardens and our events? We are making it easy by posting all the news on Facebook so you can find out what is happening and share that information with your friends. We hope you will help us—tell everyone how great our Gardens are!

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MCBS newsletter is published four times a year. The next issue will be in June.

Articles and comments are welcomed.

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