

The Memphis Horticultural Society  
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# Clippings

March 2011

## Spring Fever? Learn about Old Standbys and New Favorites At March's Meeting

Always informative Ellen LeBlond will present March's program. Her topic will be: **Perennials: Old Standbys and New Favorites.**

Ellen currently works as a greenhouse volunteer at the Dixon where she is also the plant sale chairman and horticulture volunteer chairman.

Ellen will be using her experience at the Dixon as she discusses "some of the Dixon's favorite perennials." She will then "intro some of the new varieties on the market."

All the plants she will be discussing "are tested winners for the mid-south's market." She will help us decide on our new favorite plants by classifying them as sun or shade-loving.

For those that don't know Ellen, she has long been an impressive fixture in Memphis horticulture. Besides her work at the Dixon for more than a decade, Ellen has also worked as Plant Acquisition and Plant Sale director at the Botanic Garden, owned Griffin's Nursery for eighteen years and was the liason between Memphis Botanic Gardens and University of Tennessee Extension to bring Master Gardener Organization to Memphis. She served as the first facilitator for the Memphis Master Gardener class.

The time couldn't be better for the presentation. As we reach the planting season, everyone will start looking at the perennial plants for their gardens.

Join us Tuesday evening, March 1 at the Memphis Botanic Garden.



## Fabulous Ferns Highlight of February Meeting

Dr Eugene McKenzie presented a slide show of Hardy Ferns for the Mid-South. He presented information about growing ferns from spores and shared his techniques. He answered the question, "are there any Hardy Ferns for the Mid-South. He presented a slide photos showing different species growing now in his backyard and discussed which varieties handle the hot, humid summer weather and those which are winter hardy. The discussion and presentation was very informative, with an occasional and humorous story about his travels and growing up in the Mid-south.

## Windows

Did you ever have one of those mornings when every little thing just fell perfectly into place? No cars coming when you went to pull out of the driveway, every red light turned green before you got there, and all the cars flowing by you like they were all dancing in perfect sync to the same choreographed tune. A peaceful, uninterrupted, flowing from one destination to another, like the hand of some traffic god was going before you directing traffic and opening windows of opportunity for you to pass peacefully through.

That's what happened to me this morning. What a wonderful feeling to just go gliding through this simple everyday trial and tribulation of just getting to work. Smooth....like butter or *butta*, as my friends and I love to say.

So often it is the little things in life that drive us crazy, make us tense, and stress us out. It's not easy living, or even diving, in the fast lane of life. It's hard to ignore speed demons that use their cars as weapons of mass destruction instead of a mode of transportation.

When did we start rushing to do **everything**? When did the window of taking our time close in our life? Years ago **they** sold Americans a bill of goods, telling us that technology was going to improve our quality of life, free up more of our time to spend doing the things we love.

Well I say, "Liar, Liar!! Car, TV, VCR, Radio, Cell Phone, Computer, Washing Machine, and Dryer, on fire" to that !!!!

If these "things" in our life aren't making it better, then why don't we just revolt and go back to the way it used to be? I would love to go back to riding horses to work. Oh, you say, it would take **forever** to get there .....So what? If we knew that we would be enjoying the trip instead of dreading it, maybe we would be willing to sacrifice getting up and leaving earlier. Besides, I'm betting not having to stop for traffic lights or traffic jams, and being able to cut through a few fields would just about offset the time difference. Just think how easy it would be to find a parking space once you got to work – not to mention the benefit of having all those ugly, hot, parking lots converted into pastures.

Ready to Saddle up ,  
Kay Little



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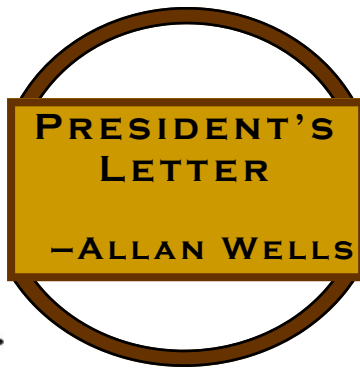
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For May Robert Mayer, Director Of Park Operations, Shelby Farms, will be joining us. He will be presenting a program about Shelby Farms and provide the existing status and future development plans. After seeing a documentary on the Shelby Farms Conservancy and the plans for the park, I share the excitement of many in our community. Shelby Farms may well be the Central Park of the 21st Century!

## Starting a Community Garden

*"Everything that slows us down and forces patience, everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature, is a help. Gardening is an instrument of grace." - May Sarton*

I am encouraged by multiple groups and individuals asking me recently about starting a garden. Some want a kitchen garden; some a community garden; some want to grow for charity; and some want to do all of that.

Just as most of the work in a garden is preparing the soil, most of the effort in starting a new garden is in the planning.

First you MUST resolve and know these things ahead of time:

- What is the purpose of the garden?
- What will you do with the produce?
- What produce will they take? e.g. our local Food Pantry clients will not eat zucchini.
- Does the site have access to water and at least 8 hours sunshine per day?
- What is your budget and how will you fund it?
- How will you keep out deer, rabbits, raccoons, mice, vandals, Huns, etc?
- Do you have tools and equipment and hoses and a place to store them?
- Do you want to be sustainable and/or organic or partially?
- Do you have a horticulture plan for raising what and when?
- Is liability insurance an issue?
- Are there any relevant town codes? They are heavy and legion here in Dragonville.
- Do you have the Extension Service hotline phone number handy? 901-752-1207

If this is a group garden, do you have enough committed (signed on the bottom line) volunteers for two teams working twice a week for 2-3 hours March thru November? We garden year round in the Victory Garden.

Second, prepare the soil far ahead of time:

Start working on the soil at least three months before you plant anything. The soil needs to be crumbly and live. If the soil is mostly sand or clay or you don't see earthworms, the soil is not ready. You need to remove existing grass by digging it up, or killing it with chemicals (yecch), or solarizing it with a plastic cover, or layers of newspaper or cardboard. Add organic material such as compost or shredded leaves or shredded newspaper or all of the above, and till it in to a depth of at least 4 to 6 inches. This is where you will spend most of your time and effort. It really is all about the soil. Consider being sustainable and not ever tilling it again. We do not till the Vicory Garden.

Joe Lamp'l, host of Fresh from the Garden on the DIY Network and GardenSMART on PBS, has an excellent short list: <http://www.scrippsnews.com/node/22603>

- Pick the right location.
- Soil is king.
- Water wisely.
- Use patience with pest control.
- Don't fertilize too heavily.

And finally, my personal recommendation is to remember gardening is all about experiments. You will make mistakes, have some spectacular successes, learn a lot, and meet some very nice people along the way who are more than willing to share their knowledge and plants. Before long you will be sharing with others. You will be enjoying a delicious sweet ripe tomato and sharing your excess with friends, neighbors, and the local food pantry for the needy.

You will wake up to Mother Nature: notice the weather patterns, see the insects, both good and bad, that you may never have noticed, and learn the habits of the birds and critters in your garden, and come to realize we are stewards of this planet. We need to leave it in at least as good a shape as we found it. Someone once said, if the earth were a rental property, we wouldn't get our deposit back. I'm afraid so. We can do our part to leave the soil in better condition than when we started using it.

The record of our doings can be found at: <http://www.colliervillevictorygarden.org/>

—Carl Wayne Hardeman  
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**Editor's Note:** See also *Grow Memphis* at <http://www.midsouthpeace.org/GrowMemphis/Gardens.html> for pictures of other community gardens making a difference in our community.

Mark your calendars early for MHS's coming event:

For April, we will enjoy Dean Kospell, of the Plant Sciences Department, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Dean is An Associate Professor of Vegetable Crop Physiology. His research interests include genetic and environmental effects on phytochemical concentrations within vegetable and specialty crops, metabolism of nutritionally beneficial macronutrients and micronutrients, and breeding strategies to improve vegetable phytochemical concentrations.

Dean has a B.S. degree in Agribusiness from Illinois State University, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Horticultural Science from the University of Georgia. He worked previously at the University of New Hampshire in the former Plant Biology Department. A native of Hebron, IL, he and his wife Jennifer currently reside in Knoxville, Tennessee with their two daughters, Allison and Caroline.

If we can glean just a little of his brain power, we can all look forward to our best vegetable gardens ever.

### Thank You!

Food was provided at our February meeting by:

Suzy Askew  
Barbara Bounds  
Judy Daffron  
Vicki Duggins  
Carolyn Evans  
Betty Griffith

Marylane Johnson  
Eugenia Levitch  
Paul Little  
Cheryl Lockhart  
Mary Clyde McKnight  
Kathy Sammons  
Marty Smith  
Glynda Whitlow



The book winner was Suzy Askew

The door prize arrangement was won by Carolyn Cooper. It was a Pave Square done by Donna Olswing.

## MHS Wizard Garden Design Completed – Magic Hands Needed to Bring It to Life

Our joint team of MHS members and MBG Education and Horticulture staff has been hard at work planning this year's Idea Garden theme in My Big Backyard. The Wizard's Garden will open in May and will enchant visitors young and old.

The garden will consist of a castle-like structure with interactive displays including a Herbology Lab, a Potions Classroom, and a Wand Workshop. A European influenced display garden will feature annuals with magically oriented names. There will also be a willow hut surrounded by a seasonally changing veggie patch and a broomcorn bed.

Now that the design is complete we are ready to make it all come to life. MHS and MBG staff will be doing the construction of the castle. We are in need of volunteers to paint, research information (this can be done from home), create signs, and help with installation. If you are interested in participating in this project please call Mary Helen Butler at 636-4116.

Thank You,  
Gina Harris

