

Help restore native plants in the area

The Michigan Chapter of The Nature Conservancy has set out guidelines to prevent the introduction or spread of invasive alien plants (those not native to the area) into our natural areas, and to help

GARDEN SPOT



MARTY FIGLEY

■ **For landscaping, use plants that are native to your local region as much as possible or those that aren't known to be invasive.**
 ■ **Know your plants.** If you are unsure of the identification of a plant, take a sample to a university, arboretum, department of agriculture office, local nature center, or native plant society for assistance.
 Find out if it is known or thought to have invasive tendencies. If the exotic plant is closely related to an invasive species, it is likely to have similar tendencies.

To be on the safe side, if you don't know it, don't grow it.

■ **Control exotic invasive plants in your landscape either by removing them entirely or by managing them to prevent their spread outside your property.**

This may include pruning to prevent flowering and seed dispersal or cutting, mowing or herbicide uses to prevent vegetative spread.

■ **Discuss your concerns about invasive exotic plants with nurseries and garden shops and ask them not to sell these species.** Provide them with printed material (such as this) explaining the problem to read later.

■ **Ask for non-invasive alternatives instead.**

■ **Notify land managers of invasive exotic plant occurrences.**

■ **Offer to assist in exotic plant removal projects.**

Work with your local government to encourage the use of native plants in urban and suburban landscapes. Provide lists of attractive, non-invasive, locally native alternatives that are naturally more hardy and pest-resistant and provide more nutritious food for wildlife than cultivated plants.

Here are some culprits:

■ **Perennials**
 Sulfur Cinquefoil, *Potentilla recta*, looks like a hairy marijuana plant before flowering. Leaves have toothed edges, pale-yellow flowers at top of stalks; very competitive in native grasslands. Light encourages growth.
 Baby's-Breath, *Gypsophila paniculata*, tiny white flowers in the summer; delicate-looking small, gray-green leaves. Is invading the habitat of dune thistle, *Cirsium pitcheri*.
 Vinca, *Periwinkle*, *Myrtle*, *Vinca minor*, *V. major*, trailing groundcovers, evergreen leaves, small, blue flowers often summer and fall. Various cultivars have a wide range of colors and leaf variegation.
V. major has larger blooms and leaves with rounded bases and tapered tips. Can persist in original sites for decades, crowding out all native herbaceous vegetation.

Please see FIGLEY, C2



MARTY FIGLEY

Vinca variety: Cultivars of vinca have a wide range of colors and leaf variegation.

Garden party

Gardening is family tradition for Hills woman

Gardening is a family tradition at the home of Farmington Hills resident Kitty Gitulli, who says she derives much of the inspiration for her sprawling country gardens and elaborate Koi pond from her German mother and 94-year-old Polish aunt.

Gitulli, who has been gardening for 30 years, continues to make her inherited passion for the outdoors a family affair.

Water wonderland



Sharing space: Little creatures like this frog have made their home in Kitty Gitulli's gardens.

She now employs the help of her husband Paul and 16-year-old son Dante to help maintain the lush landscape that is one of six garden sites to be featured in the Farmington Garden Walk on Saturday, June 22.

"I couldn't do this without my family," said Gitulli, gesturing to the colorful flower beds, unusual hanging plants and finely trimmed shrubs that accent the front of her home.

"That's why I don't work - this house is a job."

The Gitulli gardens feature a variety of flowering delights, from large purple rhododendrons and robust hostas, to elegant Boston ferns and sweet-smelling mountain laurel.

Many of the plants and flowers have special meaning to Gitulli because they have either been given to her by friends and family or she

has raised them herself from seeds. Gitulli said that the dramatic peonies blooming by the front porch "mean a lot to me" because they are from the original slip her aunt gave her many years ago.

Water from the pond flows over jagged stones and around an angel statue, emptying into a larger pond full of 9-foot-long Koi fish.

Dispersed throughout the water is an arrangement of iris and lotus plants, intermingled with small groupings of lily pads that sprinkle the pond surface. The flower beds' around the ponds create the illusion



Lady of the garden: Kitty Gitulli surveys her garden paradise from the deck of her Farmington Hills home.

of a sunset, featuring the deep purple of iris, the shocking orange of tiger lily and the soft yellow of sedum.

One of Gitulli's favorite plants in this area is the ornamental kale cabbage that rims the front of the pond.

"These plants hang onto life even after everything's gone," Gitulli said.

In between the kale Gitulli planted geraniums to keep the rabbits out, a trick she learned from her aunt. Pink and lavender wave petunias, another of Gitulli's favorites, spill over the sloping garden beds and mix with multi-colored ball florist aster and a variety of perennials.

A gardener's high

On warm summer nights Gitulli lays aside her watering can and heads to enjoy the natural retreat she and her family have created. The garden has become a wildlife sanctuary, says Gitulli, making reference to the many frogs, bugs and birds that have made the pond and surrounding flower beds their home.

"There's a bench out there and in the evening I sit there and have a

Please see TRADITION, C2



Angelic nature: Perched on the slate waterfall, an angel statue keeps watch over the peaceful pond in Kitty Gitulli's garden.



Getting ready: Betty Poole prunes roses in the gardens of the Governor Warner Mansion, one of the stops on the Farmington Garden Walk.

STORY BY CHRISTINE BRODA

PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER

'Flower city' home to wide population of plants

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
 SPECIAL WRITER

Gloria Hughes pours herself into her gardens, logging more than 80 hours weekly caring for perennials, planting 50 flats of annual blooms and nurturing her passion for flowers.

Her mother taught her to love plants at a tender age, but Hughes never worried herself with studying books to learn the names of the flowers.

She'd rather design landscapes or be elbow-deep in dirt taking care of the ones she has already planted in her 80-by-165-foot yard.

"This is flower city," Hughes said, referring to her yard. Her garden will be

one of seven on Livonia's 13th Annual Garden Walk, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, June 29.

Tickets are \$9 in advance and \$10 the day of the event, which is sponsored by the Friends of the Develop-

ment of Greenmead. Tickets are available at Greenmead (Eight Mile and Newburgh), Livonia City Hall (Five Mile and Farmington Road) and all Livonia libraries. The day of the walk tickets will be available at Greenmead and Civic Center Library.

"This is appreciated by a lot of people in the community and a lot of people like to get ideas for their own yards," said Rosemary Farabaugh, garden walk chairperson.

"It covers all areas of the city, so they aren't all in one spot and they're all maintained by the homeowners."

Many levels

Hughes has been adding to her garden beds for the 30 years she has lived in the home she and her husband, Michael, had built.

"We put everything in,"

Please see PLANTS, C3



Artistic touch: Gloria Hughes adjusts a raffia bow on one of the ceramic birds that grace her backyard pond.



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JAWORSKI

Beautiful entrance: Hughes relaxes on her front porch. The front entrance landscaping of her Livonia home features evergreens, rocks, annuals and special lighting.