

GARDEN CALENDAR

Roses

The Community House Garden Club will present Insect and Disease Control for Roses, a program by Great Lakes Roses co-owner Nancy Lindley, 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 23, at The Community House, 380 S. Bates in downtown Birmingham. Guest fee \$5. For more information, call Pat Jerry at (248) 644-5832.

The program will consist of a one-hour presentation and a 15-minute question-and-answer period. Fall practices that help prevent insect and disease problems during the next growing season, and cultural and natural controls to use during the growing season, will be featured. Lindley will have rose books, felted pruners and rose care supplies available for purchase.

Hosta society

The Metro Detroit Hosta Society will meet 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 23, at Congregational Church of Birmingham, Cranbrook Road at Woodward in Bloomfield Hills. Guest speakers Brent and Becky Heath, hybridizers of daffodils on their farm in Gloucester, Va., will give a presentation on planting daffodils with hostas. Autographed copies of their book will be available, and a silent auction will take place. Guest fee \$3. For membership information, call (248) 399-8929.

School of Gardening

The Michigan School of Gardening offers a variety of classes. Advance registration is requested. Many classes are limited in size and some have pre-requisites. Call (248) 4-GARDEN for information.

The schedule includes the three-session All About Lawns, Thursdays, Sept. 19 to Oct. 3, at Goldner Walsh Nursery, 559 Orchard Lake Road in Pontiac, (924-50); Ornamental Grasses and Alternative Lawns, Saturday, Sept. 21, at the Historic Detroit Garden Center (Moross House), 1460 E. Jefferson in Detroit (562, bring your lunch); and Compost: Black Gold from Garden Waste, Thursday, Sept. 26, at Goldner Walsh Nursery (539-50).

Tollgate fair

The Tollgate Gardeners at the

Michigan State University Tollgate Education Center will have their sixth annual Fall Fair and Plant Sale 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 21, at 2815 Westwoodbrook in Novi. Admission to the fair is free. Free refreshments will be available.

Among the activities will be hayrides, line dancing, the MSU Bug House (a live bug display), and presentations on mammals and bat conservation. Children's activities will include kite making, face painting, pumpkin painting, and catch and release fishing. The plant sale will feature perennials, ornamental grasses, hostas and shrubs.

Tables provided by MSU Extension will present information on master gardener, food preparation, 4-H, and recycling and composting.

Tree, bulb sale

The Oakland Conservation District is offering a variety of spring-flowering bulbs and bare-root evergreen seedlings for sale at economical prices until Friday, Oct. 4. Choose from crocus, daffodil, tulip and hyacinth bulbs; and pine, spruce, fir and cedar trees. Tree pickup will be Friday and Saturday, Oct. 18 and 19. Pick up order blanks at the Oakland Conservation District, 3891 Blue Highway in Waterford, or have the order blanks mailed by calling the office at (248) 673-4496.

Rugosa roses

Congress has declared 2002 the Year of the Rose. Roger and Nancy Lindley, owners of Great Lakes Roses, are celebrating with a series of free programs that will enable Michigan gardeners to succeed with roses.

Each presentation lasts about an hour. Reservations aren't needed. Great Lakes Roses is at 49815 Willow Road, between Roseville and Sunlight (Belleview) roads in Sunlight Township, just south of Belleview, Call (734) 461-1230 or visit www.GreatLakesRoses.com. Wonderful Rugosa Roses, a slide lecture and garden tour by Nancy Lindley, will take place 1 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 22, or 11 a.m. Monday, Sept. 23.

Make tracks for railroad gardening fun

Railroad gardening is popular in the gardening world. It's a fascinating hobby that will appeal to the whole family.

What could be more fun than having your own train town in your own back yard? Little buildings, people and plants, and a train with track

the correct gauge, make it all seem real. You can make your train garden be anything you wish and have your own outdoor empire! The finished garden will need about 72 square feet of space.

Garden Spot

Marty Flegly

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Railroad gardening can be a lifelong hobby.

need to be raked.

If the foliage is dense, flowering plants won't bloom well, and if it's very dense, there won't be enough light for plants to grow.

To ensure safety, install a GFI (ground fault interrupter) in the electrical system. Be especially careful about the electricity and the power pack, which will control the speed and direction of the train.

TOOLS

Because the ground will freeze and thaw in the winter, you will need a sub rounded to allow the track to move.

The tools you'll need are: garden shovel, stakes, hammer, string, scissors, crushed stone, a short 2-by-4 piece of lumber, level, tamper, wire cutters, small paintbrush, garden hose or sprinkling can, screwdriver, tape measure and pencil.

Lay the track in place, to get an idea of where you want it to go. Lay the pieces close together and when you're sure, drive stakes in the ground around the outer edges of the track. Tie string around the

stakes so you'll have a guide to dig up the grass after you have taken up the track.

If you wish, apply an herbicide to kill any weeds; wait a few weeks before you put in any plants.

To assure good drainage, dig a shallow trench 5 to 6 inches wide and 3 inches deep. It doesn't have to be perfect.

Find a stone that looks real, such as crushed limestone, chicken grit or flintings. Don't use round stone or river rock - it's too light and will wash away. Pour the stones slowly and when the trench is half full, pack it firmly with a tamper. Repeat this process.

Put water in the trench to help pack the stone down and when it's all even, tamp again.

Now lay the track, being sure the connections are tight. Connect each piece firmly, being sure the train will run smoothly on the track.

To hold the track in place, use small stones between the ties. Make sure all is level, side by side and length. Adjust the stones as necessary.

Be careful to keep gravel out of the switch. Brush it out with the small brush, then water the track and stone bed to settle the rocks. When it is dry, check the level again.

Gently put the train on the track and test run it slowly at first until you get the feel of

running the train.

PLANTS

You'll want plants for the garden, so keep them in scale. Use dwarf plants or those that can be pruned to scale.

Boxwood and juniper are particularly good. Also, Alpine plants are fine - just be sure they get good drainage.

Start with shrubs and ground covers such as creeping thyme (there are many short ground cover plants), then add flowering plants. A hardwood mulch, finely chopped, is also a good cover. Several strategically placed rocks will make the landscape more realistic.

When you have everything in place, have a gold spike party! Wear a striped hat like the real railroaders wear and have a great time. Keep the track clean with a sanding block or a track-cleaner locomotive. Hobby shops are bursting with ideas and equipment. Do take advantage of their expertise.

For more information about the Garden Train Association, visit www.gardentrains.org or call toll-free (888) 733-2500.

Marty Flegly is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (248) 644-1314.

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