

DOWN AND DIRTY



Volume 1, Issue 2

MAY/JUNE 2014

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**PLANT SALE
MAY 17 & 18**

PRESIDENT'S SCOOP

Spring has sprung! Finally!

This is my favorite time of the year, when the Earth comes back to life, presenting us with bright colors and lots of green.

We made it through this record breaking winter. The 2014 New Members Class has finally finished, and I thank all of you for your patience as we canceled and rescheduled classes. I hope you enjoyed the

diversity and talents of all our presenters.

There are a lot of activities to keep us busy as summer approaches. Most of all, the plant sale May 17 & 18, is our fund raiser for the entire year's activities. We will be needing help setting up, selling, working the education table and cleaning up.

The Education Committee

is planning trips for the summer. More details to come later.

Enjoy your spring, weeds and all

Janet Cole

President, Seneca County
OSU Extension Master
Gardener Volunteers

Welcome Class Of 2014

We are pleased to have 17 energetic, enthusiastic, very intelligent people in the 2014 class of Master Gardeners! They have just completed their education hours and all did very well on their test! Because of the very harsh winter weather, we had lots of cancellations and rescheduling.

There are ten ladies in the class: Tami Andrews, Mickie Bloom, Mary Cripps, Marietta Estep, Ruth Friddle, Sue Hampshire, Beverly Martin, Connie Mizen, Cindy Scherger and Georgie Widmer. There are seven gentlemen: Jim Bailey, Joe Bloom, Pat

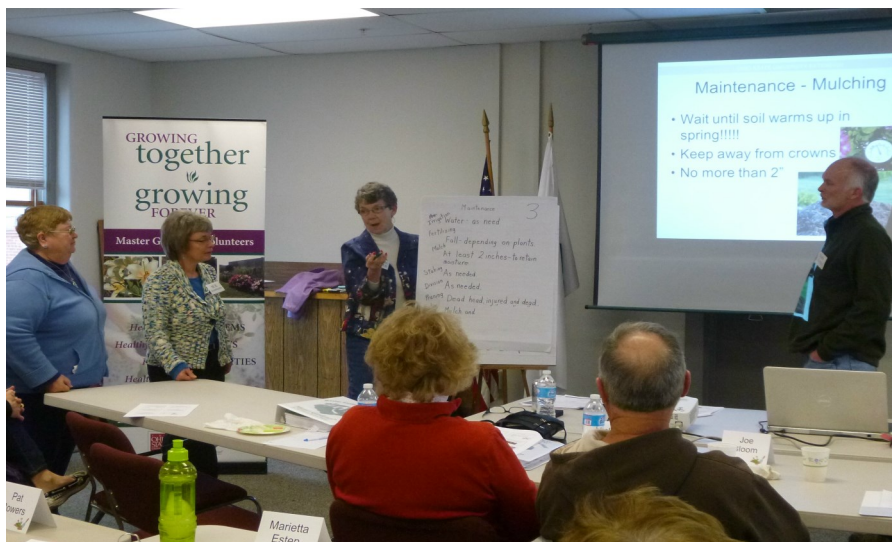


Bowers, Tim Mannas, Tom Nahm, Wilber Pine and Bob Scaife.

Thanks to all who have helped with the class! Thanks to Betty for contacting all of the speakers and Janet Cole for all the rescheduling of all the cancelled classes! A special thanks to Carol for making the coffee and set-up for each class. A big 'thank you' to all the members for bringing all the great snacks!

The interns are all anxious and willing to get started with service hours. They will be washing pots, digging plants, and potting them as they help get ready for the plant sale. We are all looking forward to their help!

Submitted by Jean Preston



2014 Class

How did I ever get into the dirt? By Vera Smith

Gardening Fun and Recreation

Having been born on a farm in Fairfield County I was always outside running or working with my parents and grandparents. My great grandfather was the head gardener for the king of Sweden so I guess gardening is in my veins.

My initial gardening skills in Tiffin started when I retired and learned there were classes to be a Master Gardener in Hancock County. I was planning to drive there when I heard that Seneca County was to have a class. Needless to say I was thrilled to be in the first class.

My first attempt in my yard was to landscape and plant many perennials and shrubs, But I had very hard soil. Because of the cost of that my husband and I Would load up buckets of NOBA Bedding and work it into the hard ground. Gradually it improved with backbreaking work.

My summer days were spent in the garden while my winter days were spent painting flowers and landscapes. One of my favorite plants is the hosta. At one time I had 50 different varieties. After my first husband died, I decided to move to a condo. Luckily I found one I could plant flowers and bulbs. Again amending soil and planting, but it was fun making the surroundings more beautiful.

Then I met and married my present husband. Not enough room prompted us to look for a house again. We found one with nothing but a pond, weeds, and grass, needless to say it was a clean slate. Where I had much shade in my other house I now had lots of sun, a fun challenge. Now we are constantly buying bags of soil and amendments, working them in and have had much success with vegetables and flowers. In my spare time this past winter I poured over catalogs figuring

out where I can squeeze in another plant. (I have an aversion to different plants!) I love to stop at nurseries and look for a poor little plant that needs a home. I found one a year ago last fall. It was a dead looking clematis with no tag. So I took it home and babied it. It was just gorgeous last summer. It starts out with layers of deep lavender and then turns a lighter shade almost white and it bloomed most of the summer. I have planted lots of daffodils and daylilies here. I have a beautiful daylily that is all white and it is called "Gentle Shepherd."

My favorite tool is a pruning shears, I seldom go out of the house without it in my hand. There is always some plant that needs shaped or some flower that needs deadheaded. This hobby has given me much pleasure and I have met many interesting friends. Even though I am slowing down, my garden and birds give me much pleasure. Stop in and see what can be done to a small yard in town.



RADIO INTERVIEWS

Don't forget about the radio interviews on the first Thursday of the month. The link to the station is:

<http://senecacountyradio.com/>

Keith, the host keeps podcasts for several months so people can listen at their leisure.

Rhubarb is a Heavy Feeder

by Vince Kirchner

One of the highlights of the Master Gardener plant sale every spring is the throng of people that parade in early on Saturday morning to get the first pick of fresh pulled rhubarb and rhubarb plants. Betty Kizer of the Seneca County Master Gardeners is definitely the queen of rhubarb in that area, masterfully handling the peoples questions on growing rhubarb and how to harvest the rhubarb, which she discourages for the first three years to allow the plants to generate enough strength in the root system to sustain repeated harvesting with restraint. Many people attending the sale learn that overharvesting and under feeding are the two main culprits to rhubarb plant failure. I can hear Betty talking, telling one after

another that you need to feed rhubarb, "it's a heavy feeder". But why is rhubarb different than most plants, I kept the question in the back of my head until I ran across the answer in wonderful book, *Roots Demystified* by Robert Kourick.

This book showed a section of the roots of a rhubarb plant in figure #30 on page 60 which I have included to you, it explains that rhubarb plants can generate a massive root system, as much as eight feet wide and eight feet deep in loamy soil. As many of you know we suffer from heavy clay soil, which impedes the growth of such massive root systems, but none the less there are a

few things we can do to help generate larger roots and healthier plants.

As with many plants, the older roots at the base of the stem are less important in absorption of nutrients as the young roots in other areas of the plant. As many plants do not reach the size of the behemoth shown in the illustration above, it does become critical to feed the roots in the area outside the foliage as that is where the majority of the nutrient absorption is taking place. You can create an optimum condition for root growth by feeding the ends of the roots system, helping them to explore new areas of growth, while keeping in mind that as the root system grows in size so does the nutrient requirements. So feed according, increasing the nitrogen rich fertilizer and manure compost as the total root size increases. A general rule of thumb, start from the root growth area and fertilize outward half again as large as foliage of the plant. As winter approaches, deeply mulch over the whole root system especially over the crown of the plant, this will help to protect the plant from freezing while also insulating the ground to give the root system a quicker start in the spring when the mulch is pulled away.

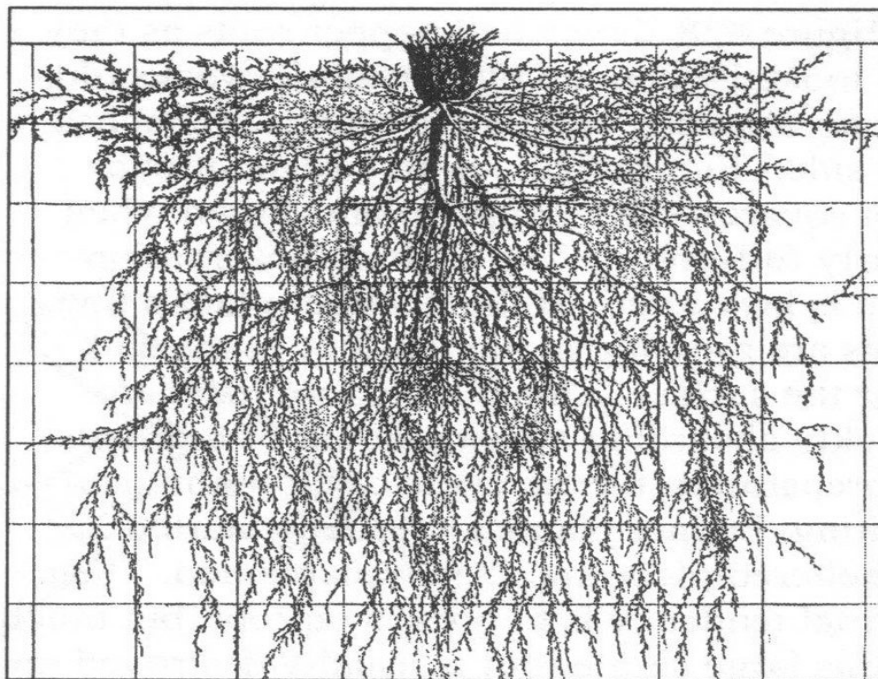


Figure #30: It takes a lot of roots to make rhubarb for one of my favorite pies!

From *Root Development of Vegetable Crops*, by John Weaver & William Bruner. 1927. Page 71. Grid equals one-square-foot boxes.

