

We want hear from you
 Send your submissions
 for newsletter to ymas-tergardener@gmail.com
 by September 15 for
 the next issue.

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YELLOWSTONE MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER



Volume 6 Issue 3

JULY, AUG., SEPT. 2017

Christine Smith ~ Master Gardeners ~ Maia Dickerson

A Level-Headed Gaze:

On a blustery day, Christine Smith
 (completed MG Level 3) and I met over



coffee. She serves as the Treasurer of Yellowstone County's MG Assn., and that role could not be in better hands, since accounting is what she

does professionally as a financial consultant for a national bank. What struck me the strongest about her is a no-nonsense approach to gardening and about anything else we discussed. With a steady, straightforward gaze, perhaps borne from flat Midwestern plains, Chris faces reality head-on, in blunt language. She consciously attempts to be objective in both her work and gardening.

"Don't be afraid to dig things up and move them around." Her theories include the notions that gardening is a path, a process, in which we never reach our goals. Having raised two boys, she neglected houseplants but "employed" her sons to garden when they were growing up, and they still garden on their own as adults. The practices keep filtering down from her grandmother, a pickler, who "picked all the baby ones." She finds pleasure in eating the products of her efforts, Chris's greatest joy in gardening. However her appreciation doesn't stop there. She loves teaching children basics about gardening at Riverstone's Healthy by Design Thursday afternoon markets in South Park during summer months. Chris helped develop the activities for that program, which is constantly being refined.

Chris waited until her boys were self-sufficient before taking MG classes in 2011, but her

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Maia Dickerson, Preventative Health Specialist, certainly keeps focused on healthy nutrition, whether it is for herself and gardening partner,

Nick, the children at the Care After School Program, low income adults or the children at the Gardeners Farmers Market. Maia has even started games, one called the



Power of Produce, whereby the kids can earn tokens. They can then use the tokens to buy their own choice of food at the market.

Maia spent the first part of her life with her older brother and family in Fairmount, Indiana. She fondly remembers her nearby grandparents' farm, garden and apple tree. Her grandmother made wonderful applesauce turned pink with cinnamon red hots. She continues the tradition each fall canning her own regular and pink applesauce (if she can find the cinnamon red hots) for the winter.

Nick and Maia met in Mexico while she was volunteering and he was on winter break from school in Reno. Maia was working in Arlington, VA and was in Mexico to assist researchers in their study of mangroves and crocodiles. Through friends she made in Mexico, she was able to get a job in Reno as a wildlife educator for the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Maia and Nick talked their landlord into letting them use the front yard of their apartment as a garden. They grew tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and strawberries. Eventually, it just became a beautiful strawberry bed. Actually it wasn't a bad thing because it allowed them to invite friends over for strawberry parties which included strawberry shortcake, chocolate dipped strawberries and margaritas.

When they moved to Billings seven years ago, they bought a house, raised beds

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CHRISTINE SMITH ~ INTERVIEW CONTINUED

training started long before that. Her knowledge was fleshed out by more than grandmothers and her father. She took horticulture in high school, and the description of the content struck me as sophisticated for any age group. Her teacher introduced the concept of public and private spaces, illustrated by having front yards as aesthetically pleasing while backyards are the zone for clichéd statues and personalized memorabilia. And Chris grafted in high school. An advanced program seems reasonable in an agriculturally based economy such as where she grew up in Minnesota. Her quest to take MG classes was to learn the truth, plus she values the social aspects.

She is moving towards hardy perennial xeriscaping. Her skill set defies our region; Chris grows grapes and modified her grape jam from a chokecherry recipe. Even though her marigolds were eaten last year, and she recalls 2016 as a bust due to grubs, she is far from burnt out. Her tomatoes were fine, so hope keeps springing eternal. "I like experimenting. Learn something every day. There are no guarantees." Working the Farmers Market booth gets tough when answers to questions are elusive, but she "only takes what I can do", but that is a lot!

Not only does Chris serve as the Association Treasurer and Healthy by Design Coordinator, she also organizes with Gail Tesinsky the courtyard planter by the Courthouse, in memory of veterans of Yellowstone County. Both of her sons serve in the U.S. Air Force, a fact that Chris quietly shares. Anemones are reseeding themselves there. Yellowstone County would look and feel quite different were it not for the modest wisdom and countless contributions of Chris Smith.

Submitted by Bess Lovec

MAIA DICKERSON ~ INTERVIEW CONTINUED

soon followed suit. They have five raised beds which contain tomatoes, peppers, herbs, tomatillos, bok choy, onions, beans and salad greens and maybe a flower or two.

Maia studied in suburban Philadelphia, Belize and Flagstaff, AZ to get her degree in environmental science. Maia originally took Master Gardener classes to learn more about plants that grow well in Montana. She was attracted to the Care After School Program volunteer activity because she enjoys teaching children about plants, animals and other things in and around their environment. From time to time she also has opportunities to teach kids about where food comes from, food miles and the importance of local healthy food.

What Maia didn't realize along with most of the public is how much our community relies on master gardeners for different projects all over town. She would like to take the class again just to learn more. The winter Care After School program and the summer Gardeners Market at South Park are two projects she thoroughly enjoys. Her advice to other gardeners is to have fun and experiment and get involved in community projects. Thank you for your service and teaching.

Submitted by Sheri Kisch

WITHOUT HARD WORK, NOTHING GROWS BUT WEEDS.

Gordon B. Hinckley

HERE'S THE DIRT

Have you tried to grow a hanging basket filled with petunias in hopes it will be a big ball of flowers like the nurseries grow but with little to no success? If so, I have a real easy method to share with you. You will need a 14" across hanging planter/basket with good drainage filled with potting soil, slow release fertilizer and five 4 1/2" "Supertunias". Why supertunias? They are self-cleaning and they can grow 3 1/2 feet in one season. When buying your plants make sure that each one has a bloom so that you are not surprised if you are going for a "one color basket". Pick plants that are a nice healthy green color. My personal favorite source for finding 4 1/2" supertunias is any ACE hardware. They have a local supplier who grows them and offers a variety of colors. Once you have your plants, add your fertilizer and plant one plant in the center of the basket and the other four around the edges. Water in the plants and hang. After a few days pinch back any blooms on the plants. This will force the plant to set strong roots and fill in quickly. Pinch back blooms a few more times depending on how big your plants are or how fast they are growing. The three most important things to growing this type of basket are sun, fertilizer and water. During really hot days you may have to water your baskets twice a day as water is essential to the health of your basket. Later in the season you may have to trim your basket if it gets a little leggy. You can trim the bottom flowers to meet the bottom of the planter. Even though supertunias are self-cleaning, I do clean mine up and may trim a little along the way. If you have no place for a hanging basket, you can use the same process for a small planter that sits on the deck. Happy Planting!

Submitted by Donna Canino

APRIL MASTER GARDENERS ON THE TOWN AT SPINNERS

Who would have thought on April 27th, a cold, rainy afternoon, that 20 Master Gardeners would show up for ice cream at Spinners. Guess that proves how many of us REALLY enjoy our ice cream, no matter how cold and windy it is outside! Had a lovely time getting to know each other a bit better, plus passed out a few timely MontGuides to top it off.

Compliments of Amy Grandpre



DELANE LANGTON IRIS TOUR



On May 23, a dozen Master Gardeners embarked on the grand adventure of finding the Delane Langton home to tour incredible iris beds he's cultivated. Last year we were about a week

too late...and this year probably a week too early, but there were still plenty of blooms to enjoy even though windy, it was a beautiful evening for a tour.

Delane has quite the location. His home is perched on a hill, with gardens cascading over the top and shoulders of the hill. Then he points out another acre over the side that more iris are nestled into. Delane (now retired), is expanding his hilltop garden even more. He explains that the different slope orientations provide for an extended blooming period, the south side blooming first and then the north side blooming later.

The colors and variations were quite impressive, complete with some heirloom varieties. He also has a Moss Mansion iris bed, cultivated when an iris bed at the Moss was removed because the tree's shade was too intense for iris growing. He took the pathetic looking rhizomes, planted them, gave them some TLC

and now has iris plants he proudly claims are Moss Mansion originals.

Also, we learned that when he divides his iris, he doesn't dig up the whole clump. He usually digs up the mother (or the one that bloomed last year), with the daughters that are on one side, leaving the other daughters in place. He's had the unfortunate experience of digging all, dividing, and losing all.

I know I'm planning to divide my iris differently than before...and am going to plant the extras on our dry, rocky hillside surrounding our property. I've always marveled at the iris growing on the rims going up to the airport. I now understand and appreciate even more how hardy and tough these beauties really are.



Pictures and article submitted by Amy Grandpre



On May 4th the city of Billings held their annual Arbor Day Celebration at Veterans Park. The day involved planting new trees, pruning and caring for established trees, a general clean-up of the area, and a day of educational activities for approximately 400 fourth graders from schools around town. Eleven Master Gardeners (Sharon Yazak, Sheri Kisch, Mary Davis, Sue Weinreis, Fay Danielson, Merrita Murdock, Sharon Wetch, Rosemary Power, Vonnie Bell, Tracy Livingston, and Elaine Allard) organized an educational booth and spent their day teaching 4th graders about the importance of pollinators and helping the students make their own seed bombs. The students were given instructions on how to disperse the seed bombs to help create better habitat for pollinators. All in all, it was a rewarding and wonderful day for all participants.

Article Submitted by Elaine Allard ~ Pictures by Tracy Livingston



MAY MASTER GARDENERS AT THE GREENHOUSE

On May 24, Master Gardeners on the Town was hosted by Amy at the Metra Greenhouse Ed Center. Mary Davis and Amy planned on having a crackling fire to welcome all with, but winds and rain made that option impossible. Lucky for us the greenhouse became the perfect location for serving up some refreshing root beer floats to about 14 takers.

Things are coming along out there, especially the disappearance of the weeds, thanks to Greg T, Sherry D, Mary D, Gloria E, Marilyn L, Joann and Corry G.

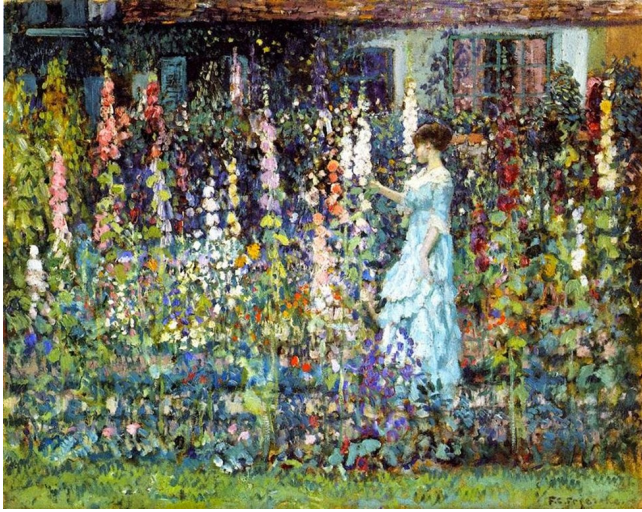
Inside the greenhouse the Tumbleweed Teens have planted up 5 4x4 square foot beds, which are coming along nicely. Still looking for volunteers to adopt a garden patch or two out there, so if you are interested, just let Amy know.



Article and pictures submitted by Amy Grandpre

"No bought potpourri is so pleasant as that made from ones own garden, for the petals of the flowers one has gathered at home hold the sunshine and memories of summer, and of past summers only the sunny days should be remembered."

- Eleanor Sinclair-Rhode



Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*) - Zones 3 to 9. These old-fashioned favorites unfurl richly colored single or double flowers on lanky stems that can reach 9 feet in height. They can tower above a garden, adding a lovely vertical element to your yard.

Hollyhock is a biennial, which means it grows foliage on short stems its first year but doesn't flower until the following year. Growing hollyhocks in the garden is the goal of many gardeners who remember these impressive flowers from their youth. It is a favorite 'cottage garden' choice in my yard.

Did you know, based on folklore, that hollyhocks were planted near outhouses so ladies wouldn't have to broach the unmentionable subject of outhouses in a Victorian household? They could simply look for the hollyhocks themselves.

Hollyhocks need full sun and moist, rich, well-drained soil. The mistake many novice hollyhock growers make is to plant this flower in soil that is too dry. If you are planting seeds, sow the seeds outside about a week before last frost. If you are planting seedlings, wait about two to three weeks after last frost. Hollyhock seeds only need to be planted right below the soil, no more than 1/4-inch deep. Hollyhock plants should be about 2 feet apart to grow well. You can also plant bare root hollyhocks.

Hollyhocks are a short lived perennial. This means that most varieties will only live two to three years. Their lifespan can be extended some by removing growing hollyhock flowers as soon as they fade. By living in a non-tropical region, cutting them back to the ground and mulching them will also help.

The one benefit that comes from growing hollyhock flowers is that they easily reseed themselves. While they may be short-lived, in their proper growing conditions they will continually grow more, which will keep the hollyhock flowers consistent in years to come.

Few diseases affect hollyhocks; however, hollyhock rust is a problem. Rust is a common and serious disease that is found in most hollyhock gardens and is spread by mallow, which is a weed that acts as a disease reservoir. The rust disease is a fungus that spreads by rain droplets splashing on leaves and through air transfer. If not treated, the disease intensifies through summer and will eventually kill the plant. Rust will overwinter and infect the crowns of sprouting plants in spring.

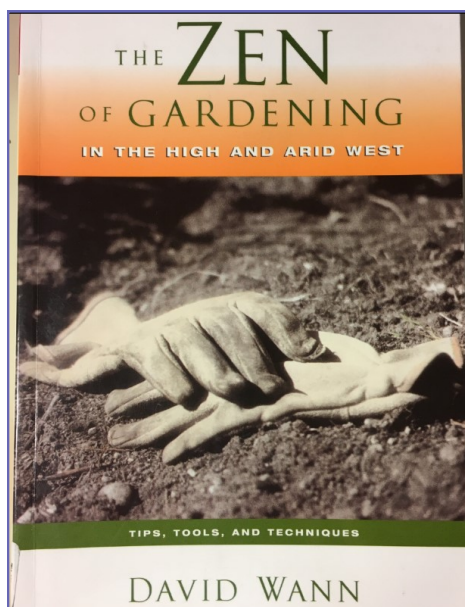
The rust disease in hollyhocks appears as rust-colored bumps on the underside of the leaves and stems of the plant. The disease starts as small rust flecks and grows into raised bumps or pustules that will spread to all parts of the plant greens. An infected plant will appear limp and ragged. Does hollyhock rust spread to other plants? Yes, it does! It only spreads to other members of the *Alcea* family, so most of your other garden plants are safe.

There are a few pests that affect hollyhocks: The Hollyhock weevil (*Apion longirostre*) is one of them. The hollyhock weevil is commonly responsible for damaged foliage and thinned-out stands of hollyhock. Another is the Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*) which feed on hollyhock leaves as adults, causing the foliage to turn brown from the top of the plant down. The Hollyhock Sawfly larvae (*Neoptilia malvacearum*) feed extensively on leaves, eventually skeletonizing hollyhock foliage. Spider mites such as the Two-Spotted spider mite (*Tetranychus urticae*) feed on hollyhocks. Spider mite feeding damage appears as stippling or flecking on leaves, leaf yellowing and premature leaf drop. Mites are small, barely visible to the naked eye, and they prefer hot, dry conditions; the presence of fine webbing indicates a severe infestation.

Some additional possible pests: multiple species of thrips including *gladiolius thrips* can affect hollyhocks. These small, flying insects pierce flowers, buds, leaves and stems, causing the appearance of silvery, necrotic lines and sometimes dieback. Avoid the use of broad-spectrum insecticides that could harm natural thrips predators. Leafhoppers and aphids may also occasionally act as hollyhock pests. Aphids are soft-bodied insects that tend to feed on vulnerable new growth. There are plenty of resources available to learn more about the various pests that can affect hollyhocks. I would encourage you to further your research if you

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The Zen of Gardening by David Wann



I marvel at the lush gardens I see on gardening shows and admit to a bit of “green” envy. Unfortunately, those shows and gardening books for the humid eastern U.S. do not help me much here in Montana. Instead I seek out advice from gardeners who create successful gardens in our challenging conditions out west.

David Wann is one such gardener. David began gardening at 7000 feet outside Denver in the early 1980s. He has faced the same drought, wind, heat, cold, hail, poor soils and short growing seasons that we cope with here in Montana. He has distilled decades of experimental gardening and many lessons from masterful gardeners that he has interviewed and worked with into this book.

Mr. Wann covers a very wide range of topics from mulching, choosing natives, starting seeds, growing garlic, producing food in the winter to planting trees, shrubs and perennial flowers. The novice and the seasoned gardener alike will find great information here. As I read the book, I started a list of useful tips that I plan to implement in my garden, such as mulching potato plants with pine needles, feeding my strawberries with compost and bone meal, using different methods of seed-starting to meet the varying needs of seeds, growing hairy vetch as a cover crop and companion plant to tomatoes, and trying the adage “When cot-

tonwoods bud, plant the spuds.”

This book is not a story that you can read through like a novel. It is more a reference book and can be read gradually or used as a go-to source for specific help. One philosophical approach I particularly like about Mr. Wann’s gardening is that there are lessons in failures—gardens are an experiment that we learn from every year. That is one of the things I love about gardening—there is always something new and useful to learn. And I definitely learned a lot reading The Zen of Gardening.

Reviewed by Ann Guthals

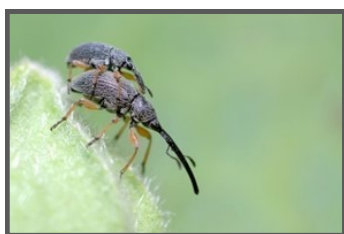
HOLLYHOCKS ~ CONTINUED

find you are having issues with your hollyhocks!

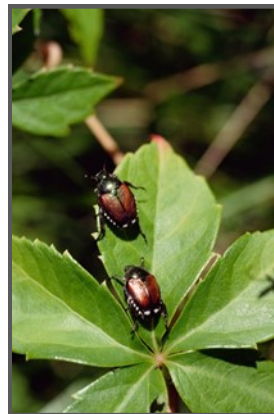
If anyone would like some seeds I have some single-flower black, white, red and Crème de Cassis seeds I’d love to share with fellow gardeners. I am looking for single-flower variety in a bright yellow, if anyone has them growing in their yards! I can leave some at Amy’s office if there is an interest.

Resources and further reading: <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/hollyhock/tips-on-hollyhocks-growing-hollyhocks-successfully.htm>
<http://thevermontgardener.blogspot.com/?spref=fb>
<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/hollyhock/tips-on-hollyhocks-growing-hollyhocks-successfully.htm>
<http://birdsandblooms.com/gardening/top-10-lists-for-gardeners/top-10-old-fashioned-flowers/?8>
<http://www.gardenguides.com/68352-hollyhock-diseases.html>
<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/hollyhock/controlling-hollyhock-weevils.htm>
<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/hollyhock-pests-22391.html>

Submitted by Tracy Livingston



HOLLYHOCK WEEVIL



JAPANESE BEETLE

There has been a lot of discussion about the NEW Roundup for lawns. What is the difference? The new product does not contain glyphosate, that kills most anything green. Be sure that you read all of the label and how to use any chemical. In reading some of the information on the internet (a most trusted source right?) it says it is safe for pets and edibles. Really??? A healthy way of getting rid of weeds in the garden is to hoe (my suggestion). According to the U of M extension, the herbicide active ingredients in Roundup for Lawns are regarded as more toxic than glyphosate (see [Toxicity of Pesticides](#)). The one advantage would be that it could get rid of nut grass and crabgrass if you missed it in the spring.

Extension specialist urges caution when making herbicide selection



"Traditional" Roundup Weed and Grass Killer (shown left) contains the active ingredient glyphosate, a nonselective herbicide that kills most plants. The new Roundup for Lawns (right) contains the active ingredients MPCA, quinclorac, dicamba and sulfentrazone to kill weeds but not the lawn. (Cheryl Alberts, Pesticide Safety Education Program)

Toby suggested a few websites that may help you make a good decision for you, the pets and your children.

<http://blog-yard-garden-news.extension.umn.edu/2017/04/what-is-roundup-for-lawns.html>

<http://iannews.unl.edu/extension-specialist-urges-caution-when-making-herbicide-selection>

<https://highlights.extension.umn.edu/content/what-roundup-lawns#.VWRobUbcKE70.facebook> S.K.

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER HOUR REWARDS

Congratulations to the following Master Gardeners for giving so much of your time to the Master Gardener program:

200 Hours – County pin reward

Jerry Dalton
Linda Brewer
Nan Grant

600 Hours - \$50 reward

Bob Short
Tom Kress
Vonnice Bell

400 Hours - \$25 reward

AnnaMarie Linneweber
Joyce Hendricks
Shelley Thurmond

1600 Hours - \$150 reward

Sharon Wetsch

2000 Hours - \$200 reward

Julie Halverson

Keep plugging those hours in on mtmastergardener.org and you too can be on this list.

If anyone is having trouble finding the right fit for volunteering, give me a call and we will work on it.

Submitted by Amy Grandpre -256-2821

GARDEN TIPS

- Be sure to water trees and shrubs more deeply than the lawn.
- Don't fertilize trees and shrubs after June, it will be too late for the tree to utilize before fall.
- Start a trench in the garden for kitchen scraps, no meat or fats. Cover with a little dirt and let decompose.
- Collect everyone else's bags of leaves to add to your trenches or compost pile.
- Clean, sand and oil all wooden handles (with BOILED LINSEED OIL) before putting away for winter.

CALENDAR

JULY 15 THRU OCTOBER 7 ~ 7:30 TO 12:00
SATURDAYS FARMERS MARKET

INTERNATIONAL MG CONFERENCE
JULY 10-14 PORTLAND, OR

HEALTHY BY DESIGN MARKET
JUNE 8 - OCT 5 4:30 TO 6:30 SOUTH PARK
NO TABLE FEE

GROWING & USING HERBS - BILLINGS
PUBLIC LIBRARY JULY 19th, 5pm COM. Room

AUG. 3 & 4th HORTICULTURAL TRAINING - FLATHEAD LAKE

AUGUST 12 TO 19TH MONTANAFAIR
CALL JOYCE 259-9610

AUGUST 25-26
BILLINGS ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW



The mission of the Yellowstone County Master Gardener Newsletter is to "educate and inform", not to advocate or persuade. The Newsletter Editorial Board takes no position endorsing or opposing, approving or disapproving, any of the assertions or arguments in the contributed information. Information submitted to the Newsletter is for your interest only.

It's mid-June and the spring planting rush is over. Thank heavens for all of the resources we have at our fingertips—from nurseries, seed catalogs, the library, and the internet to our own Master Gardeners' private cache and network.

Such a plethora begs the question of how people got their gardening information before the modern advantages we all enjoy. Plants and information moved much more slowly but I think you might be surprised at the variety available to people living in a four-mile-an-hour world in which most people seldom left their counties. Here are three examples.

William Faris, a silversmith, clockmaker and avid gardener, lived in Annapolis, MD across from the state capitol from 1728-1804. Because of his prime location, he had contact with everyone from local slaves to the governor and he discussed gardening and traded seeds with anyone he could. He was, in fact, the hub of a very democratic gardening network. In addition, because Annapolis was an international port, Faris had early information of which ships arrived from where and what plants, seeds and people they carried. He had access to seeds and plants from around the world. Luckily for us, Faris kept a careful diary of his gardening, including sketches of his garden layout and the plants he and his slave cultivated. You can read more about Faris in *Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake, 1700-1805* (Baltimore, 1998) by Barbara Wells Sarudy. Also, read her excellent blog about all things gardening in early America at this link:

<https://americangardenhistory.blogspot.com>.

Charles Carroll, Barrister, lived in Annapolis at the same time as William Faris and surely knew him. As a young man, Carroll decided to build a country house on the Patapsco River, in what is now Baltimore, on land he owned and on which was an iron mine. A wealthy bachelor, Carroll planned a showpiece plantation, Mount Clare, that included an extensive orchard, a kitchen garden and a greenhouse (in which he and his wife later grew pineapples.) If he got seeds from William Faris, he did not make note of it. Rather, many of the varieties of fruit trees and vegetables he grew at Mt. Clare came directly from England. It was a slow process but Carroll wanted to do everything according to the latest standards of the time.

The process began when Carroll shipped iron from his mine to London. He sent with the captain a very long shopping list of all the fruit trees, vegetable seeds and latest gardening manual he wanted the captain to bring with him on his return to Maryland. Dozens of varieties were available to him. Three months later when the captain arrived in London, he handed the list over to Carroll's agent in London who did the shopping and delivered the plants, seeds and book to the ship. That may have taken several months. It was at least a three-month journey back to Mt. Clare and the condition of the plants depended completely on the diligence of the captain in seeing that they were watered and protected from the sea weather. Many of the plants must have survived the trip because the grounds of Mount Clare were well-known once they were established. For pictures of Mount Clare, see <http://www.mountclare.org/>.

John Bartram (1699-1777), a Philadelphia Quaker and botanist, traveled up and down the eastern colonies collecting native American plant species in the early part of the eighteenth century. He took them back to Philadelphia and established a plant nursery. In addition, he began to collect seeds, plants and knowledge from correspondents, many of whom were in England. Bartram's Garden became the first plant nursery in the colonies and had customers from the colonies as well as England. In 1765, King George III named Bartram his "Royal Botanist". Bartram's son, William, also a naturalist and plant explorer, ran the family nursery after his father's passing. After 1810, John Bartram's granddaughter, Ann Bartram Carr and her husband, Robert, took over and expanded the gardens. At one point, they offered 1400 native species and over 1000 exotic plants to their customers. The gardens closed for business in 1850. Luckily for us, though, the gardens were preserved, first privately and now as a public historic site. You can learn more about Bartram's Gardens at <https://bartramsgarden.org/about/history/horticulture/>.

To my knowledge, no one has made a comparison of the species and varieties available to early Americans and those available to us today. I suspect that they would find that while we enjoy a wide number of genera native to many parts of the globe we have lost what people in the past had—a smaller number of genera and a larger number of species and varieties. It gives one pause.

Submitted by Trudy Eden

GARDEN FRESH SALSA

2-3 cups fresh fleshy tomatoes, seeded and coarsely chopped
 1/2 cup coarsely chopped onion (use a few green onion tops if desired)
 1/2 cup sweet bell peppers, seeded and coarsely chopped
 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
 1/4 cup hot peppers (habanero or jalapeno) seeded and finely chopped
 2 tsp lime juice
 salt and/or pepper to taste

Cut small tomatoes in half and gently squeeze to remove seeds and excess juice until you have 2 to 3 cups of fresh tomato flesh (between a dozen and twenty tomatoes). Place in processor and pulse six times, or coarsely chop by hand. Add onion, peppers, cilantro, and lime and pulse six more times (or coarsely chop by hand and combine in a large bowl). Add salt and pepper to taste. Eat fresh and store leftovers for 3-4 days. Adjust amounts of each ingredient to suit your taste and availability of vegetables. Best used fresh.

Submitted by Corinna Sinclair





<http://www.co.yellowstone.mt.gov/extension/horticulture/mastergard.asp>

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Extension - Yard and
Garden: [http://
gardenguide.montana.edu/](http://gardenguide.montana.edu/)

[http://www.facebook.com/
msuextension](http://www.facebook.com/msuextension)



Interview – Local Gardeners and Master Gardener Steve and Kelly Pottenger

Jim's Jungle has been a fixture in town for many years. Recently, as current owners, Steve and Kelly Pottenger, sat down with me at the end of a hot day in the fenced nursery location in front of the West Park Shopping Center, a shopper asked Kelly if they still had new plants coming in. With new plants coming in through the middle of June, I agree with the nice lady – even at the end of the planting season when the garden is stuffed full, it's still hard to stop coming here to buy plants.

The name of this place is actually Potager's Jungle, but it is hard to bend a great tradition to fit changing times. Potager is an Old English gardening term that these folks would like customers to become accustomed to as they settle in to the location they hope to make permanent. While Steve, Kelly, and their two kids Katie and Skyler bring years of knowledge to the colorful oasis among the pavement and cement along Grand, they are quick to explain that at home the environment is even more challenging to garden. I wanted to know more about that.

Steve told me right off the bat that at home "the water is not good, the soil is not good, the wind is nasty." Our place does not look like this, he said with a swoop of his hand. While I can relate to those challenges of rural Montana gardening, I couldn't imagine desolation where this kind of gardener lives.

Of course they garden successfully – they figure out what is most hardy for this area when they take the last of the crop home to plant in those rough conditions. The plants that survive there are the toughest, and prove to be what they recommend to folks next year that will take whatever the Montana summer can dish out. They have hanging baskets of colorful flowers and mix their own soil for pots full of vegetables, which last year they brought in to the sunny south window and enjoyed tomatoes in the living room all winter!

What are their favorite plants? That was hard for them to pin down, but Kelly's favorite is gaillardia. She did say when she gardened in the Kalispell area she loved the begonias and dahlias, too. They just aren't as well suited here. Steve enjoys all plants, but perennials in particular. He gardened in Reno for many years before returning to Billings.

Where did they get the willingness to experiment in these harsh Montana conditions? Both Steve and Kelly grew up with gardening dads and even while doing those unloved weeding chores never gave a second thought to the natural ebbs and flows of the backyard landscape. Kelly spoke of an activity at the local YMCA where she was able to introduce kids to their first experience with gardening. Realizing that there are so many kids who don't grow up with that kind of daily practice made her appreciate what she had learned from her folks. It makes Steve and Kelly happy to encourage people of all ages to get in the backyard and grow things, and they see many younger folks coming to buy plants to produce their own home-grown food.

They are teaching new generations side by side with their own kids. Katie and Skyler are learning all aspects of the nursery business and have integral parts in the family operation. Steve says Katie is great at the till, and Skyler is a very reliable 'yard' man, helping customers and keeping the area running smoothly. They are also learning to practice safety – Kelly and Steve make sure everyone that works in the nursery use good gardening habits: stay hydrated, have access to shade and takes breaks in a cool, protected environment, and be mindful of using good tools and proper clothing.

Steve told me that one of the things he wants his fellow Master Gardeners here to know is how grateful he and Kelly are for their help on Saturdays in May. Handing out the leaflets with gardening tips and taking the time to have conversations with beginning gardeners is a wonderful treat for their customers, and they love to see people become even more interested and confident with the insight from the Master Gardeners who help out there. I let them know that as a Master Gardener I appreciate their business and having access to vibrant healthy plant materials delivered with a smile and thanked them for a lively interview!

Submitted by Corinna Sinclair



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