



# The Vine Line

April 23, 2014

Dear Vine Liner,

Spring at The Memphis Botanic Garden is a very special place. Please come visit, become a member, and enjoy one of the Memphis' finest attractions and resources.

Thanks,  
Jim

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## Spring Thoughts by Chris Cosby

Spring is finally in full force, and the results of our hard winter are now in evidence.

The mophead Hydrangeas seem to have been particularly affected by the extended cold temperatures. Now is the time to prune them back to the easy to spot viable buds by simply pruning them back to just above a set of new leaves.

We may see a reduction in flower buds this spring due to the deep freeze, however. This year will serve as an excellent indicator of which varieties truly have the ability to bloom on new wood as well as old, and of which varieties are the most reliably winter hardy.

The panicle Hydrangeas like Limelight and Tardiva are also actively growing now. Be sure to remove last year's spent flowers so as not to interfere with the tidy appearance of the new growth and subsequent flower buds that will emerge later this summer.

Most varieties of Quince are close to finishing their blooms and you should prune away one third of the oldest canes and any rangy or crossing branches as soon as flowering ends.

Remove the spent flowers of Lenten Roses now, as well, if excessive seedlings aren't desirable. The flowers make great additions to spring bouquets. Simply immerse them up to just below the flowers in warm water for a few hours before using them in arrangements.

Enjoy your plants and treat them well.

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## Nick's Corner by Nick Estus

Nick's Corner is just that, a corner of the garden which I maintain in The Japanese Garden of Tranquility that includes Seijakuen, The Nature Photography Garden and The Asian Garden.

The Corner serves a refuge for me and provides me with a place to think about gardening. Spring is finally here!! This last winter was long, cold and wreaked havoc on our tender plants, especially in the newly planted Asian Garden. There are two specimens of *Gardenia*, *Gardenia jasminoides* 'Daisy' & *G. jasminoides* 'Radicans,' in the very front of the garden that were especially hard hit. The once shimmering emerald foliage now belongs to realm of death and their fragrant white flowers will grace us no more with their sweet embrace. It is a most depressing sight indeed.

But, in this gardener's brain, this untimely departing of such great plants lead to opportunities. Maybe I plant this part of the garden differently. Maybe I replant the *Gardenias*. Maybe I leave the space void to provide a different view of the garden. What is left is not a dead plant, but rather a living chance to create a new space, a new form, a new feeling in the garden, and this is at the heart of what gardening is all about. It is a prospect, not a problem.

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## Tree Thoughts by Chris O'Bryan



## Hosta advice from Larry Tucker



As you wander the botanic garden and admire spring beauty, you may also wonder why the Hosta Trail is filled with sunken pots. The reasons are twofold. When the Mid-South Hosta Society created these nationally acclaimed beds, members realized their favorite plants must be protected from hungry voles and thirsty tree roots.

Hostas love rich, moist, loose soil, but few thrive in competition with these subterranean foes. In the spring of 1999, MSHS members planted the first of seven beds with specimen hostas in wire cages. Around the perimeter, they planted common hostas without protection. A year later, all of the sacrificial common hostas had been devoured by voles. Like garden sharks, these creatures must keep eating to maintain their metabolism. The hosta society's caged hostas dodged the mouse-like "undertakers," but viability of the club's more desirable plants was diminished by invading tree roots.

Since those early days, Hosta Trail additions have been planted in 3-, 4- and 5-gallon black plastic nursery pots, which are raised a couple inches above ground to discourage voles from "dumpster-diving." Voles otherwise burrow no deeper than about 6 inches and are unable to penetrate the containers. Over time, tree roots can creep into these protective pots through

- Early spring and late fall are the perfect time of year to get out and plant new trees in the landscape. By planting during the cool moist seasons tree roots have to opportunity to establish themselves in their new soil without the hardships that come with planting during the hot dry summer months.
- While it is fine to prune trees at any time of year, it is important to consider what reaction could occur. In the spring the sap rises from the roots to the tips of the branches bringing with it growth hormones. Pruning now may cause accelerated growth in the latent buds of the tree resulting in suckers or water sprouts that grow straight and tall and will be weakly attached to the tree. Over time as these suckers grow in diameter they could prove dangerous.
- This is the time of year to mulch and fertilize as well. Apply your fertilizer of choice, I am fond of low dose organic fertilizers such as Plant Tone or Myco-spikes. After you have applied fertilizer put down a 2-3" layer of hardwood mulch from the base of the tree to just beyond the dripline. Do not cover any of the bark of the tree with mulch. This will open the door for rot causing moisture, insects, and disease.

drain holes, sap the hostas of moisture and strangle the plants. That can be averted by periodically lifting and twisting pots and breaking off a tree's tenacious tentacles.

During the off-season, hosta pots may be unsightly, but they're disguised by foliage once the growing season commences.

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## **Floral Design Tip by Rick Pudwell**

It is best to cut your flowers and foliage the day before you anticipate using them. Have a deep, clean container filled with about 6" of warm water and use a sharp pair of shears or knife to make a clean cut on each stem. Remove all foliage that will be below the water line and put each stem in water immediately to prevent the end from sealing over.

When finished, put your container of material indoors in a cool room, out of a draft.

Your cut materials will be conditioned and ready for your designs the following day.