



The Vine Line

Greetings and thoughts about Spring Weather to all!

As I am writing this, it is about 50 degrees outside and raining pretty heavily. The past month as has been a really rough stretch of weather for the Mid-South. I am hopeful the intense cold weather is behind us, and that the forecast for the end of March will be warmer and dryer.

Cold weather late in the winter is one of those things we can do nothing about. Its effect on our gardens really depends on what we are growing and at what stage plant material was in its growing cycle when the temperature dropped. Here are some observations from around the Garden.

The temperature really dropped and we had our first of three bouts of sleet and ice on February 15th. Fortunately, it was the day after our Winter Plant Sale, so that event was not impacted.

A large planting of Winter Jasmine was in full bloom in the parking lot, and the flowers froze, turning brown, but the plants themselves seem fine and should bloom again next year.

Hyacinths near the Visitors Center were starting to show some color. Unfortunately, the cold and ice caused the centers of the bloom spikes to rot, but they don't look all that bad unless you look very closely. Tulips, on the other hand, were not far enough along to be hurt.



Early daffodils that were flowering did suffer some damage, but it looks like the mid-season and later-blooming varieties will be fine. We should have many in bloom for Daffodil Dash on March 21st.

Japanese cherries and deciduous magnolias were also not far enough to be damaged, so when they come into bloom over the next couple of weeks, the display should be as nice as ever.

No two seasons are ever alike, so, in gardening, it is helpful if you have a laid-back attitude and realize that we have very little control.

Up until the past two winters, we have had many mild winter seasons, and many of us have planted camellias, gardenias, figs, palms, and other species that have done well for us for decades. Learning to deal with colder winters like the past two will be a learning process. We will find out through experience which varieties of these species and others can take the cold

temperatures. In many cases, the plants themselves will be fine, but the flowers displayed will be effected.

There are thousands of plant species in the nursery trade, so if something fails for you more than once, you have many options for a replacement. Trying something new can be an adventure and a whole lot of fun.

While putting dates on you gardening calendar, don't forget the Master Gardeners' Spring Fling will be at the Agricenter this Friday and Saturday, March 20th and 21st. We will have a booth so stop by and say hello.

Also, our Spring Plant Sale will be April 17th and 18th. It will be bigger and better than ever, with probably the most local garden knowledge and the widest array of plants in one place on one weekend in the Mid-South.

See you there,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rick".

Rick Pudwell, Director of Horticulture at the Memphis Botanic Garden, is now heading up The Vine Line. Be on the lookout for more issues!

Seed Planting



“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.” — Robert Louis Stevenson

Hmmm...

Judge me herbally! It is seed planting time: 6-8 weeks prior to projected planting date (April 15 = our last average frost date) is generally when perennial seeds should be sown; 4-6 weeks prior to the planting date is the guideline for annuals.

We have sown over 54 different types of seed for the Herb Garden. Why? Because we have had a couple of tough winters and have lost plants to the cold, some plants went through their life cycles and died, some were annuals, and I just down right killed a few...Hey, if you haven't killed a few plants, you just haven't planted much (or you are extremely lucky!)

Instead of bemoaning the herbs' death, I look at it as a learning experience (remember the garden journal from the last Vine Line?) – and a chance to try new plants and places (sometimes it is the location that is not the best for a plant.)

Some folks see the word “perennial” and think that means the plant will live forever. Not!

Perennial plants may have lives that are only 4 seasons. Most are longer, but there is an end. Humans would be considered perennial if we were plants. Some perennials are listed as “tender”

The Rose Garden

As many you may have noticed, our Rose Garden is undergoing a major renovation. Disease pressure, fertility problems, poor drainage, and a lack of suitable hardscape for the large numbers of weddings that take place annually in and around the garden necessitated a redesign that would address all of these issues. We received a generous donation from an anonymous donor to get the project started in earnest and sat down to put pencil to paper. Our idea is create a more intimate, romantic setting for visitors and events, and to showcase as many of the various classes and forms of roses as possible.

In effect, the new design will create concentric, European-style double borders punctuated by benches in intimate nooks around the garden. We would like to provide as many possible opportunities for garden visitors to “sit a spell” and enjoy the heady scents and diverse forms and textures in the garden.

To provide a functional and aesthetically pleasing venue for weddings and parties, we eliminated an eighth of the original planting wedges and are paving them with a conventional concrete formulation created by Baltz Concrete. This micro-limestone paving is heel-friendly and is five to seven degrees cooler than traditional washed pea gravel paving, an important consideration given the June wedding phenomenon. The entry path is being widened to facilitate the various needs of weddings and events and to provide more suitable access for setup and maintenance. We have contracted with Metal Museum staff to design and build custom steel arbors for the east, west, and north entrances. These new arbors will be set on brick columns and will feature a selection of

perennials. Tender means just what it says: the plant may or may not make it as a perennial due to cold, drought, etc. Look at those as if they are annuals and be surprised and happy if they make it to the next year.

Go! The days have been nice recently: groom your garden, sow your seeds per their individual requirements, and wait for the greening.

By Sherri McCalla, Herb Garden Curator

Join the Pruning Club



The Memphis Botanic Garden is interested in starting a pruning club and we want you! At appropriate times of year and in different areas of the garden, club members will work with horticulture staff, aesthetically pruning trees and shrubs to maintain size and vigor.

We will occasionally have speakers and demonstrations from MBG staff and local professionals regarding pruning. Participation will count as volunteer hours.

We ask that club members provide their own pruning tools including bypass pruners, hand saws, loppers, pole pruners etc., and be willing to walk to the worksite in varying weather conditions.

Casual observers are absolutely welcome and invited to join us. We are in the planning stages of the club and we would like some information from you.

Please send an email to Horticulture Staff member Chris O'Bryan at

climbing roses.



You may ask how we intend to keep the roses looking good given the challenges of growing good roses here in the Mid-south. Rose Rosette disease, an incurable virus transmitted by mites, is currently wreaking havoc in rose gardens across the eastern US. Here at MBG, we have removed over two hundred infected roses from the Rose Garden over the past two seasons. Coupled with the drainage and runoff issues resulting from changes to the hydrology of the surrounding area, many additional roses were in poor health or died outright as a result of over-saturated soils, back-to-back cold winters, and accumulation of phosphates in the root zone. Our strategy for these conditions is two-fold: address the drainage and runoff through the use of pervious and conventional concrete paving with an integrated drain system, and to remove and replace the old soil with a custom loam blend amended with beneficial microbes, fungi, humates, and a suite of trace minerals to boost soil fertility and plant health. After extensive research, we were able to put together a list of roses that have been shown to tolerate the hot, humid climate and heavy soils of the Mid-south and do not require the heavy chemical applications commonly applied to garden roses these days.

Research has shown that healthy plants are more resistant to insects and diseases, so our goal is to provide the

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with “MBG Pruning Club” as the subject
line.

Please provide this information:

- What is your name and age?
- What organization are you with?
- What is your availability?
- What tools can you provide?
- What are your specific horticultural interests?
- What are you interested in learning more about?
- What is your past pruning experience?
- Are you comfortable working on ladders and/or climbing into the canopy of ornamental trees?

Thank you, we are looking forward to working with you.

best possible growing conditions for the new rose plantings. The new maintenance program will focus on the use of environmentally-friendly horticultural techniques to control the most common rose problems, chiefly black spot, thrips, and aphids. We will be trialing a variety of products with low to zero toxicity to bees, beneficial insects, and soil organisms, as well as planting supporting annual, perennial, and woody plants with the roses to create a more balanced garden ecology. These plants have been selected to enhance the roses when in bloom and provide additional interest throughout the season. Interpretive signage will provide historical and horticultural information for visitors to peruse. Now that the cold and wet has passed, we can get back to work. We still have a long way to go yet.

By Chris Cosby, Senior Manager of Gardens

