The Garden Spray

BULLETIN OF THE MEN'S GARDEN CLUB OF MINNEAPOLIS

Member--Men's Garden Clubs of America • Minnesota State Horticultural Society

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Director: Dale Durst Director: Al Nelson

A N N U A L P L A N T A U C T I O N

May 14, 1968

Minneapolis Park Board Greenhouse

Bryant Ave. S. & 38th St.

Toro System on Auction

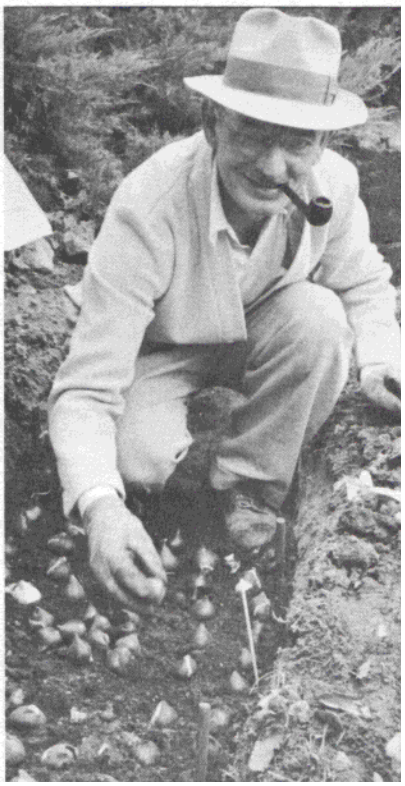
Azaleas on Auction

TIME: Country Store ... 5:30 (no sooner)

Dinner ... 6:00

Auction ... 7:45

GLORIOUS CHICKEN DINNER ... $2.00



A Special Salute to Glen Cerney .....

...who observes his 25th year in our club this year, having just missed being a Charter Member. (We call that category "Old Timers" but it isn't necessarily so.) Glen was our club's president in 1946. He was the Bronze Medal recipient in 1953 and has contributed much of himself to our club. An avid and expert perennial flower grower, Glen is shown here participating in a club project a few years ago - planting tulips. He was sponsored in our club by the late George Luxton. Glen has missed a few meetings recently because of illness, but we hope he'll be back with us for the May meeting.

OVER THE GARDEN GATE

by Bill Hull

Spring is here! And it's never been more beautiful. Fruit trees in bloom. Redbud and azaleas flow color everywhere. But that was in Arkansas. Here in Minnesota we have to wait, but by the time this reaches you - who knows?

It seemed to have been an easy winter. Lawns look good. Larry Bachman said he believed evergreens would come through the winter well (but probably dry, so water them). Our roses, completely buried this year, were brought up on April 12 (Good Friday) in splendid shape.

And the dandelion and crabgrass join the gopher and the mole in their assault on you!

URGE USE OF THE CELOSIA

Selected a few years ago as the Minneapolis flower, the celosia is a colorful and reliable annual which we could help promote to beautify our city. The plumed varieties are particularly fetching. They should be planted outside in warm weather, at zinnia planting time. Grown in full sun, they are relatively free of fungus and bugs. The blooms are long lasting; are dependable for beginning gardeners and always elicit much praise. An All-America this year is "Golden Triumph." "Forest Fire" is good. Among the one-footer dwarfs are the "Sunburst" series (red or gold) and the "Feather" series ("Fiery" or "Golden"). Let's promote this fine annual.

DIRTY DOINGS IN DES MOINES

Recently (April 7),I was in Des Moines briefly for the ground-breaking ceremony of our new MGCA national headquarters building. A thrilling forty-five minutes. And a filthy day. The wind gusted to 50 mph and Iowa lost tons of fine top soil. Our clothing was ruined or at least had to be cleaned. A light colored topcoat, just dry-cleaned, was unwearable. But, we turned the soil. Immediate Past-President, Joe Howland, was also there. Bids have been received, the contract let, and the new executive secretary, a young man, Guy Chichester, is temporarily officed in the Chamber of Commerce building.

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GARDEN TOUR AND PICNIC COMING THIS SUMMER

Dividing the North Star Region into two sections and featuring one area for 1968, then changing to the other area the subsequent year, would create shorter tours and thereby cover the North Star Region every two years. One area would embrace Minnetonka, Golden Valley, West Minneapolis. The other area to be South Minneapolis, Richfield, Sioux Valley. The Minnetonka-West Minneapolis-Golden Valley area are to be involved in the tour for this year, 1968. A total of 10 gardens (5 Mpls plus 5 Minnetonka) are on the itinerary. Tour dates will be either the last weekend in July or the first weekend in August. All North Star Region club members are invited to a picnic at the Arboretum following the end of the tour. Chuck King.

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

by Grant R. Christenson

A bargain, good food, excellent program, fellowship, and fun was what you missed if you were not at the meeting last month. It was good having many of our members back who for one reason or another cannot attend meetings during the winter months.

We are happy Tom Krum is off the sick list for all practical purposes and intends to be at the meeting this month.

Plans for the flower show are progressing and nearly finalized. However, the board needs your help in setting the date. At the next meeting, we'll ask for you to choose between a weekend in mid-August or the 2nd weekend in September.

July 8-11 are the dates of the national convention to be held in Pittsburgh. The club has budgeted $200 to help defray the cost of our delegates to the convention. If you plan to attend the convention, please notify me, preferably by post card, no later than May 30, in order for the board to act on the division of the $200 and appoint delegates and alternates to the convention.

I received a nice letter from Norm Christopherson, wherein he asked me to greet the club members, and advised he'd helped organize the Valley of the Sun Men's Garden Club, Sun City, Arizona. If my memory is correct, this is the fourth men's garden club, organized in the past two years with help from one or more of our members.

MGCA has available a Directory of Officers - directors, committees, honorary members, regions, and club presidents. A copy is available for 25¢ plus postage ($.18 - 1st class) from Guy D. Chichester, Executive Secretary, MGCA, P.O. Box 160, Johnston, Iowa 50131.

Anyone interested in an Azalea Special Interest Group? Dr. Robert Mullin, U of M, at our last meeting, requested our help by reporting the results we are having with the new azalea. A special interest group could provide this service, and have fun doing it. Please contact me if you are interested.

Dave Johnson promises a fun night at the auction, May 14, 1968, at the Minneapolis Park Board Greenhouse, 38th Street and Bryant Avenue South. If the bargain he and his committee had for us at the April meeting is an indication of what's to come, we can't afford to miss the auction. It appears the "open" winter has created a need to replace much plant material in the garden. Our auction is a swell place to obtain these replacements. Plan now to attend and bring a guest. Don't forget to bring the bargain you purchased at the April meeting. Dave has NO provision to replace these if you forget them.

If you didn't get the bargain in April, or don't know what it is, why not come and find out at the meetings. Dave will not repeat it, but he may have another.

NATE SIEGEL HEADS PUMPKIN-SUNFLOWER CONTESTS

(Dale Durst coordinates for North Star Region)

Who can grow the biggest pumpkin or the largest sunflower in Minnesota?

The North Star Region of the Men's Garden Clubs of America is sponsoring its third Minnesota Big Pumpkin and Giant Sunflower contest. A $50 savings bond will be awarded to the growers of the largest pumpkin and largest sunflower; $10 for the second largest; and $5 for the third largest in each category.

The Men's Garden Clubs of America is awarding a $100 savings bond for the heaviest pumpkin grown in the United States; plus $50 and $25 savings bonds for the second and third prizes. The Minnesota state winner will be entered in the national contest.

The rules are simple:

1. The grower of the sunflower or pumpkin (cucurbit) must be under 17 years of age on October 10, 1968, and a resident of Minnesota.

2. The diameter of the sunflower seed head in fractions of inches, or weight of pumpkin must be certified by a Men's Garden Club member, a 4H leader, County Agent, or a FFA leader.

3. A picture of the grower and the sunflower or pumpkin and certification must be received by North Star Region Youth Gardening Chairman Nathan Siegel, 5004 Newton Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55419, before October 8, 1968.

Free seeds - free Burpee Big Max pumpkin seed and Ferry-Morse mammouth sunflower seed may be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Nathan Siegel.

The winner of last year's pumpkin was Ricky Stark, 13, Princeton, Minnesota, 104½ pounds, $50 bond; and the winner of the sunflower contest was Glen Koopmans, 11, Faribault, Minnesota, seed head 21½ inches, $50 bond.

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Thanks to Chuck King for keeping us posted .....

1968 North Star Flower Show in the early planning stage. Here is how it will work. Each year one club will be responsible for arrangements other clubs participate on an invitational basis. Dates will be 1st weekend or 2nd weekend in September. Suggested facilities migh be Richfield State Bank, Minneapolis, Park Board Bldg., Hardware Mutual Bldg., or any suggestions you might care to make.

AZALEA AND RHODODENDRON CULTURE IN MINNESOTA

by Leon C. Snyder and C. Gustav Hard

Azaleas and rhododendrons are native to cool, moist climates of the northern hemisphere. Nearly 900 of the approximately 1,000 known species are native to the moist mountain regions of the Himalayas and adjoining Asian countries. In North America, there are 28 species native to the moist mountain regions near the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. Except for one isolated species in northern Colorado, and a few plants of Rhododendron lapponicum near the Dells in Wisconsin, no native species occur in the vast interior of the United States and Canada.

The climate of Minnesota is probably far from ideal for the successful culture of azaleas and rhododendrons. Site selection and soil modification can go a long way toward providing proper growing conditions for certain deciduous species and cultivars,such as the Mollis azalea, which is now readily available from many Minnesota nurseries.

Since a cool, moist site is essential, a site that is partially shaded is best. Light shade under large oak trees or a location on the north side of a garage or a ranch-style home is ideal. Avoid heavy shade, severe root competition, or a windy site.

The soil must be acid. A soil pH of between 4.0 and 5.5 is optimum, but we have experienced no difficulty in growing azaleas and rhododendrons at a pH of 6.0 at the arboretum. To play safe, an acidity test of the soil should be made. If the pH is above 6.0, a modification of the soil will be needed.

There are several ways in which the soil pH can be lowered. The liberal use of an acid form of organic matter such as acid peat-moss, aged sawdust, or composted oak leaves is the safest and best way to increase soil acidity.

In soils of high pH, it may be necessary to add ferrous sulphate to the soil. Approximately 10 pounds are needed for each 100 square feet of soil surface to lower the pH 1.0 point on an average medium loam soil. If the pH is 6.5 and you wish to lower it to 5.5, apply 10 pounds of the ferrous sulphate evenly over each 100 square-foot area to be planted and work thoroughly into the soil. Sandy soils will require slightly less, and heavy soils will require more ferrous sulphate to bring about the same change in pH.

Planting is best done in the early spring, although container stock or freshly dug plants moved with a ball of dirt can be planted as late as July with good results. Make the hole large enough to accommodate the root system and fill in with a specially composted soil high in organic matter. It is essential to plant at the same depth that the plant was growing in the container or nursery. Failure to become established and grow, often can be traced to planting too deep. Although azaleas must have moist soil, they must also have oxygen, which means good aeration is required.

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Azalea and Rhododendron Culture in Minnesota

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A good surface mulch to control weeds and conserve moisture is advised. The root system is shallow and does not like to be disturbed. Deep cultivation and hoeing remove needed roots and reduce growth. A good mulch also aids in keeping the soil cool. Acid peat, aged sawdust, or composted oak leaves are excellent for surface mulching. Replenish the mulch each year to keep it several inches deep.

Watering may be necessary during dry periods, although a highly organic soil and a surface mulch will go a long way toward keeping the soil moist. A fine mist during periods of extreme heat will prove beneficial in lowering the air temperature around the plants.

Avoid planting too closely to a concrete or stucco wall. The lime from the mortar will leach into the soil and cause trouble by increasing the pH. Space plants so mature plants will not be crowded. The Mollis azalea will grow from 5 to 6 feet. Other hardy species will be similar in spread but may vary in height.

The need for fertilizers will be indicated by plant growth and the color of the foliage. Generally, one application of an acid-producing fertilizer each year will be sufficient. Do not fertilize after the blooming period; late fertilizing will encourage late growth in the fall. The nitrogen used should be in the sulphate rather than the nitrate form. For a few plants, it is generally best to purchase an azalea fertilizer that is properly formulated for acid-loving plants. Follow the manufacturer's instructions as to amount and method of application.

A complicated spray program for azaleas is seldom needed. Keep watch for leaf-eating insects and spray as needed to keep them under control. A chlorotic condition of the foliage generally will indicate a high pH or an alkaline soil. Chelated iron will be helpful in correcting this condition.

Winter protection from the cold will not be needed if hardy varieties are selected and proper cultural practices followed. Rabbits are very fond of tender azalea shoots, and a protective screen against rabbits and mice may be needed. A cylinder of hardware cloth is excellent for this purpose. Evergreen rhododendrons will require protection from the winter sun. Burlap can be used for this purpose.

Growing azaleas and rhododendrons can be rewarding - and well worth the trouble it takes to grow them well.

(From the Agricultural Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, in connection with the University of Minnesota.)

USDA TELLS "HOW TO GROW A GOOD LAWN"

Preparing to Plant

Preparing the soil for a lawn on a new building site is a different matter from that of beginning to grow a good lawn where the topsoil is adequate but the lawn has bald spots and is otherwise ailing.

A new site requires the removal of all building debris, usually the installation of drainage tile in the subsoil, and replacement of topsoil. At this time, it is a money-saving procedure to do it right even at considerable cost, for it will save many future backaches and disappointments.

But let's assume, as is the case for most home-owners, that you cannot wholly rebuild the topsoil around your home and yet you want the best possible lawn.

Where the soil is bare or solidly weeded, you will have to dig.

Plowing, or spading by hand, followed by disking or hand-raking, are the only ways to prepare soil to receive grass seed. Do not count on the effectiveness of merely scratching the surface with a rake, or believe the old saying that seed scattered on snow will sink into the ground and root. You will waste expensive grass seed if you do.

After the soil has been broken to spade depth and harrowed, apply a complete inorganic fertilizer - one containing nitrogen, phosphorous, and potash - and rake it lightly into the soil. Apply the fertilizer at a rate that will provide two pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet -- unless a soil test has shown that it needs a larger or smaller amount.

Planting

Select high-quality seeds that are adapted to your soil and climate. For best results, plant cool-season grasses in the late summer or early fall, warm-season grasses in the late spring.

Grass seed may be planted successfully by hand or with a mechanical seeder. It is easier to distribute the seed uniformly if you mix it with a small amount of topsoil or sand. Divide the mix in half. Sow one part in one direction, the other crosswise to your first sowing.

Rake the seed in lightly and firm the seeded area, preferably by rolling with a light roller. To prevent the seed from washing away during watering or heavy rains, and to hold moisture, mulch with a thin covering of straw. One bale of straw will adequately cover 1,000 square feet.

Keep new seedlings moist until they are well established. Once seedlings have begun to emerge they must not be allowed to dry out or they will die. Avoid saturating the soil - excessive moisture makes seedlings more susceptible to fungus disease.

Sodding

Unless complete coverage is needed immediately and you can obtain good quality sod cheaply, the expense of sodding is seldom justified by the results - except on steep slopes where soil and seed would otherwise wash away.

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USDA Tells "How to Grow a Good Lawn"

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Sodding

After the sod is laid, tamp it lightly and dress it with a small amount of topsoil. Work the topdressing into cracks between the sod pieces with a broom or the back of a rake. Keep the sod moist until it is well established.

Maintenance

Maintaining a lawn requires periodic applications of fertilizers that contain organic and inorganic nitrogen. Organic nitrogen costs more, but it releases its nutrient more slowly and gives a more uniform stimulation to the grass over a longer period.

Fertlize cool-season grasses, such as bluegrass and fescue, in the early spring and early fall. Fertilizing in the summer does not help these grasses and may stimulate crabgrass and other weeds. Use 3 to 5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year.

Fertilize bermudagrass, zoysia, and other warm-season grasses during the summer months when they are most active. These grasses require 5 to 10 pounds of nitrogen per year, applied in 3 to 5 applications.

Do not fertilize your lawn while it is wet. After applying fertilizer, water the lawn to wash the fertilizer off the leaves and prevent burning.

Acid sandy soils generally require light applications of ground or pulverized agricultural limestone every 2 or 3 years. Clay soils require heavier applicatio every 5 or 6 years. Lime can be applied in any season,but fall and winter are the best times.

Watering

Sandy soils require frequent watering in small amounts because of their low moisture-retaining capacity. Clay soils require infrequent watering in large amounts. Do not water your lawn until the grass shows signs of wilt. Then apply enough water to wet the soil six inches deep or more. Watering a lawn lightly at frequent intervals causes shallow growth of grass roots and stimulates the growth of weeds. The deeper grass is rooted, the less often it requires watering.

Mowing

Mow cool-season grasses to a height of about 2 inches. Close mowing in hot weather will weaken or kill most cool-season grasses. Allowing grass to stand at a height of approximately 2 inches helps to keep down weeds. Crabgrass, in particular, can be kept in check by the shading effect of taller permanent grasses.

Warm-season grasses require close mowing. To maintain a fine quality turf, bermudagrass should be cut frequently to a height of 5/8 inch or less. Other warm-season grasses should be mowed to a height of about 1 inch.

Mow your lawn frequently even though you cut off very little of the top growth. Unless growth is excessive, clippings need not be raked after each mowing. But neither should they be allowed to accumulate for months. They invite insect pests and lawn diseases.

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USDA Tells "How to Grow a Good Lawn"

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Weeds

Maintaining a lawn properly and routinely is the best way to control weeds. A well-kept lawn will have fewer weeds than a poorly kept one, but all lawns in a neighborhood are seldom perfectly kept and weeds spread from lawn to lawn. To control weeds, the use of a herbicide is often necessary. Many herbicides on the market today will control broadleaf weeds as well as crabgrass and other weedy grasses. Use care in selecting the correct herbicide for the weed you wish to control. Follow explicitly the directions and precautions given on the container label.

Diseases

Like almost all despoilers of home lawns, diseases are most likely to take hold in carelessly maintained lawns. Inadequate soil aeration, poor drainage, overwatering, fertilizing too much or too little, and improper mowing may lead to disease problems. Some diseases can be controlled by using chemicals fungicides. Select a fungicide preferably upon the advise of an expert and, following directions, use it with extreme caution.

Insects

Many kinds of insects damage lawns. Some, such as the grubs of May beetles, Japanese beetles, Asiatic garden beetles, and oriental beetles, feed on grass roots and are not easily observed. Others -- sod webworms, armyworms, and cutworms are among these -- feed on leaves and stems. Still others, such as chinch bugs and leafhoppers, suck grass juices. You can control most insects commonly found in lawns with insecticides. Again - seek specific advice in selecting a pesticide and follow directions. Chemical pesticides should never be carelessly used or stored.

More Information

Single copies of the following list of publications may be obtained without charge from the Publications Division, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250: USDA Bulletin 51 "Better Lawns," USDA Bulletin 123, "Lawn Weed Control With Herbicides," USDA Bulletin 61, "Lawn Diseases," and USDA Bulletin 53, "Lawn Insects -- How to Control Them."