Member--Mens Garden Clubs of America. Minnesota State Horticultural Society

November 1984, Volume 42, Number 11

What with election, garden club, Thanksgiving, decoration making, signing up for the Christmas party and paying dues for 1985 November is a full month.

First, one week after general election, there's our REGULAR monthly dinner Meeting at the LAKE HARRIET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 49th and Chowen South, on TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13th. The chance to rub elbows and hob-nob with the fellows over a good dinner at 6 o'clock still costs only 5 dollars. We will also elect MGCM officers for 1985.

If you've wondered --

"HOW DOES YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE GROW?" your question will be answered at the November 13 MGCM meeting. Our speaker will be Tom Wolcyn of Wolcyn Christmas Tree Farms near Cambridge. He's also President of the Minnesota Christmas Tree Growers Association and comes highly recommended as a speaker by Glenn Ray. Tom will talk about Christmas tree culture, special problems in growing a tree whose shape must be "just so" in order to sell, and what must be done to get the trees to market looking fresh and green. Plan on hearing Tom before you venture forth to buy your tree this year.

GET YOUR RESERVATION CARD BACK PROMPTLY!

Then there's Thanksgiving and a surfeit of food and the very next evening, November 23rd, Howard Klier invites us to gather at his nursery, 5901 Nicollet Avenue, for an informal evening. Come any time after 6 P.M. Wives and friends are included in the invitation. This affair originated in the Richfield MGC. Eleven years ago when the Richfield club disbanded Howard joined MGCM and decided to continue the tradition with his new gardening friends.

We will spend the evening making Christmas wreaths, centerpieces, etc. for our own use. (Russ Backes hopes to borrow some of our handiwork for the Christmas party.) To top it off "there will be the usual buffet", says Howard. Help will be available for neophytes so inexperience need not keep you away. Bring your own materials or purchase there as needed.

If by Thanksgiving you haven't decided whom you are going to invite to attend the Christmas party (details in this issue) get busy. You will have only 8 days left to write your check and get it into the mail. It must be received by Saturday, December 1st not just in the mail. You wouldn't want to be among those Bill Hull excoriates in his letter in this issue, would you?

AN OPEN LETTER TO A GUY WHO HASN'T GROWN UP

by Bill Hull

For many years I've attended board meetings and so frequently hear one lament from our officers that, as an old curmudgeon, I'm writing to the very few guys in our club who sometimes act as if they haven't grown up, even though they may be well along in years. I hope you aren't one of those fellows.

In two instances within a year you have had to be babied and given so much attention that some of us wonder why you drag your feet so much. Why you make others cater so much to you. I wonder if you even realize you are a problem?

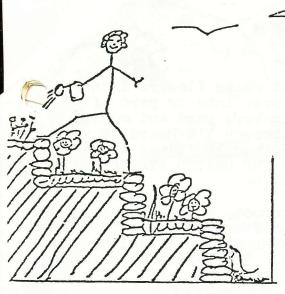
The meek will say "Don't ruffle his feathers, Bill" while I say no, it's about time we do ruffle a few. "They" will also say "He doesn't do it too often" and I again say "repeatedly is too often."

Example 1: When the deadline came for our Christmas party reservations, you hadn't responded. A special committee had to be put together to call you. Oh, yes, you planned to attend but hadn't bothered to make reservations. Did you and the twenty-five other guys (last year) just plan to walk in and hope to have places and turkeys ready for you? Were you prepared for a huge dues increase to permit the committee to overbuy the food on the suspicion that you just might appear? Of course not. You just forgot. But please don't forget: it's too tough on your officers and committee chairmen.

Example 2: Dues deadlines were announced well ahead. You had a month or so in which to write a check, fill in a brief form, and get it to the treasurer. Yet — you had to be called, wheedled, begged to get going...to do the things your mother thought she had taught you to do ... to respond courteously and on time. After the "final deadline" you and about 20 of your friends still didn't seem alive. Yet when -someone called you, your response was affirmative. Why,oh,why does the treasurer have to say "Oh, yes, that guy is never on time. Someone always has to call him to get any action."

I think we are coddling and educating you to be begged, to be given special attention and, frankly, I wonder if you are worth it. It's great to have you as a member but we should instruct our board of directors to quit being so solicitious over you. If your dues check isn't received by deadline time, just drop you. If you don't send in your reservations for dinner, bus, or whatever, just don't plan food or bus seat for you. If you come without reservations, don't let you get in line for food or bus until others have been cared for. You are a very likeable guy, a friend of many of us; you probably run a business or profession much better than you run your club membership. Why don't you make life a lot easier for your officers and chairmen by remembering to be a little more considerate. Remember that when you ASSUME you make an ASS of U and ME.

Shall I end this tirade with a bit of courtesy? Okay, I'll say PLEASE RESPOND ON TIME before a deadline. Thanks, fellows.



TERRACE TALK

Welcome to late fall. The rains and brisk weather are certainly slowing down the garden activity and the desire to get the fall clean-up taken care of. For those of you (an me) who have not completed the fall clean up, this should be done to help keep the garden clean and make it

ready for spring planting. I still have things growing in the garden, (October 22) cauliflower, broccoli, brussells sprouts and other cole crops. As yet they look fine, but must be harvested shortly.

George McCollough received a letter from Men's Garden Clubs of America saying that if the dues are not paid and registration and memberships to Des Moines by January 1st, 1985, the name of the member would be removed from the Gardener publication mailing and the member will not continue to receive the magazine. Take a moment now and make out the membership check so that you are in good standing and continue to receive the Gardener and the Minnesota Horticulturist magazine, plus get into the new club roster which will be printed shortly after the first of January. Membership forms and instructions are included in this issue of the Garden Spray.

The Christmas party committee has had one meeting and the planing for our annual Christmas party on Tuesday December 4th, is in progress. I hope every member will be able to attend again this year, along with your guests. It is such a festive occasion, the committee does such a fine job.

The Lake Harriet Methodist Church took up the club's offer to provide the church with some planting of flower beds. Saturday, October 20th, several members (plus my Grandson Matt) headed by Chet Groger, planted 218 bulbs along the south wall of the church. These should help to beautify the church in early spring. Many thanks to those who helped.

-Russ

OLD GARDEN FRIENDS

There's none just like old garden friends, They're real friends, tried and true, And such friends are the best friends, Friends like me and you.

Old MGC friends know a fellow
In a different sort of way,
For cherished are the gardening memories
That haunt some yesterday.

The garden friend takes an interest
When you unfold your schemes
And tries to keep you in the groove
When you confide wild gardening dreams.

A man may sail around the world
And chase the rainbow's end,
But there's nothing like a bench and pool
And a good old garden friend.

Frank H. Leech

DRIFT FROM THE SPRAYER by Ed Culbert

This past summer I had a garden full of the whitest white flowers I have ever seen. Last year the plant voluntarily moved over into my yard after I saw it peeping out from the hydrangeas in my neighbor's yard and admired it. This year it has taken over my garden and, although I'd heard it was poisonous my arder was not one whit diminished. I thought it was snakeroot so looked it up in Rickett's, WILD FLOWERS OF THE UNITED STATES--THE NORTHEASTERN STATES.

There it was on page 496 and plate 164--White Snakeroot, eupatorium rugosum, with this warning. "This species is poisonous. Cattle that graze it become subject to the disease known at "trembles". The poison is soluble in milk and is thus transmitted to those who drink it. The resulting symptoms are called milk sickness."

Rickett says there are five other plants commonly called snakeroot: 2 Black, Sampson's, Seneca, and Virginia. No two are in the same family. Mine is the only poisonous, if ingested, one.

But then I have matrimony vine growing up to the second story of my house in the Boston ivy. It's red berries are beautiful—and poisonous. I have lily-of-the-valley which though poisonous smells good. I have rhubarb a tonic if one doesn't eat the leaves. I have raspberries whose briers stick in my hands and stay imbedded but the berries are delicious. I have shrub roses whose spines penetrate my clothing and fester under my skin. Their flowers delight my eye. I have cucumbers. Their skin is bitter but they accompany a meal singularly well. I have a Dolgo crabapple on whose rotting fruit the robins get drunk. Yet even the over-ripe fruit makes good jelly. I could go on and on.

Obviously gardening isn't for the timorous. There are dangerous potential though seldom realized side-effects--not the least of which is the fact that it may become habitual. Indeed gardening has its hazards but it is fun. And to those who eschew it I can complacently quote from Gilbert and Sullivan "Some little bug will get you some day. Some little bug will creep behind you someway..." regardless.

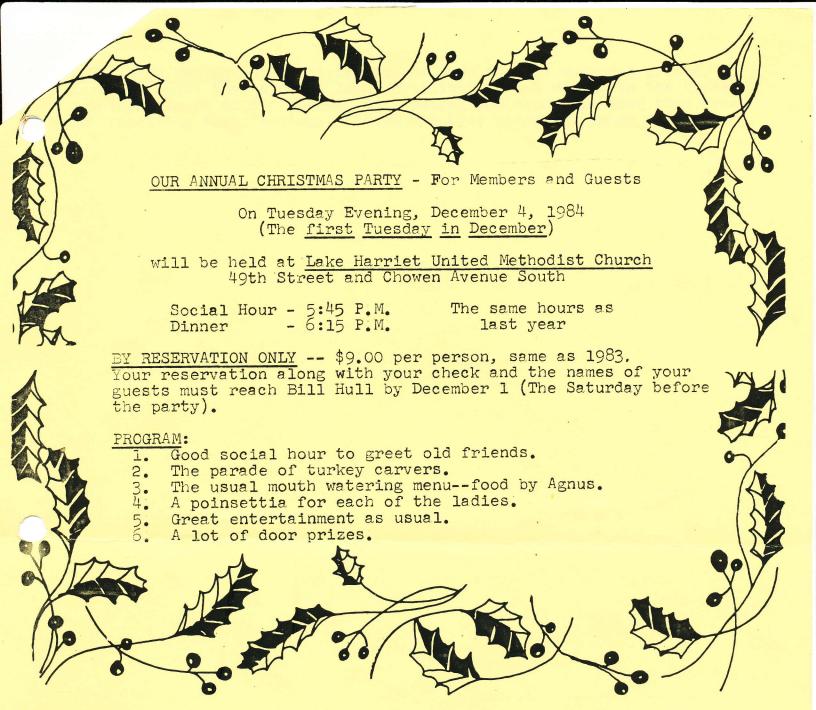
"To make compost in sixty days: Dissolve three ounces of permanganate of potash in three gallons of water for each cubic yard of waste material, leaves, grass clippings, etc. Apply with sprinkling can and cover with soil. Turn over in one month and then apply a similar dose. On the next two successive weeks apply a mixture of two ounces to two gallons of water and then let stand two more weeks at which time the compost will be ready for use. I have tried this in a small way and find it to be effective. I used one ounce to one gallon of water on about three bushels of leaves and grass clippings and in two weeks I found some very good compost at the bottom of the pile."

—-Yardner, Houston, Texas

ALL ABOUT EVERGREENS, a new ORTHO book, contains the information needed to select, plant, and care for evergreen trees and shrubs. The book provides a photo essay of dramatic outdoor uses of evergreens. Also included is a description of over 200 evergreen species and varieties to help select the right evergreen for a particular geographic region. There is also a 192 page book GARDENING TECHNIQUES which is of value.

Visitors are always welcome at MGCA meetings. However, it's still a male stronghold.

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Fill in the form below, detach and mail with your check to Bill Hull, 6833 Creston Road, Edina, MN. 55435 (Tel. 926-1327)

Research shows that typical lawn fertilization can result in the trees gaining from 50 to 100 percent more height and trunk diameter than trees not receiving such feeding. Indeed the tree canopy, a rough measure of shade, may be two to four times more voluminous when fertilized. Shade trees often are fed by boring holes into the soil and filling them with fertilizer. It is doubtful that benefits to the tree are any greater for this method than by spreading fertilizer over the lawn beneath the tree.

Soil aeration is very important for good tree and shrub health. Roots suffer when covered by impervious materials such as pavement, plastic sheeting, or metals. Even "porous" bricks and concrete blocks should not be used to cover large portions of the root areas of trees and shrubs.

The forests made colonial America a reality and enabled America to become a nation. The forests provided food for the abundant game for the colonist's table; the forests provided the timber for his cabin, his forts, his ships; the forests provided wood for his hearth and oven, and for many of his simple tools; the plants of the forest floor provided his dyes, his spice, his medicine, and some of his food. Then as now, the very lives of the people depended upon the plants around them.

The colorful perennial that we call "Butterfly Weed" (Asclepias tuberosa) the colonists called "Pleurisy Root" since the treatment of pleurisy was one of its several medicinal uses. An ointment, made by stewing the fresh roots of Jack-in-the-pulpit (Arisaema triphyllum) in lard was once used to cure ringworm and similar skin conditions. The Dogwood (Cornus florida) was a botanical supermarket for the early settlers. The ripe fruits, infused in brandy, made a form of bitters; from the dried bark of the trunk an ink, as well as a substitute for quinine, could be made; and an extract of the fresh bark was used as a cathartic; the Indians extracted a red dye from the bark of the fibrous roots; the compact wood was used for wedges to split logs, as handles for tools, for the teeth of harrows to smooth the rough fields, for horse collars, plane stocks, the cogs on mill wheels, and many other places where a hard, durable wood was needed; dogwood charcoal was prized for use in making gunpowder.

Learning from the Indians and from experience, the colonists soon found a use for nearly every kind of plant that they encountered in the new world. Fresh or dried roots, bark, leaves, or fruits were ground and then could be variously prepared in water, alcohol, lard or honey for a wide range of practical uses.

"...where an astringent tonic is required, this plant Dogwood meets our requirements. See Eupatorium (Boneset) and Liriodendron (Poplar). These, with the blackberry and chinquapin as astringents, the gentians and pipsissewa as tonics and tonic diuretics, the sweet gum, sassafras, and the bene (Sesame) for their mucilaginous and aromatic properties, and wild jalap (Podophyllum) as a cathartic, supply the surgeon in camp during a blockade with easily procurable medicinal plants, which are sufficient for almost every purpose."

The above quote came from page 65 of Porcher's book on the "Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests, Medical, Economical and Agricultural; being also a Medical Botany of the Southern States; with practical information on the useful properties of the trees, plants, and shrubs." The book was published in 1869.

ROCK GARDENING THE TOPIC AT OCTOBER MGCM MEETING

reported by Andy Marlow

Plants growing in some of nature's most hostile environments provide the inspiration for rock gardening. That's according to Betty Ann Mech, rock gardener extraordinaire and speaker at the October 9 meeting of MGCM. Ms. Mech is the owner of Rice Creek Gardens in Northeast Minneapolis, a member of both the Minnesota State Horticulture Society and the Minnesota chapter of the Rock Garden Society, and designer of the recently rediscovered and partially reconstructed rock garden across from the Lake Harriet Rose Garden.

Ms. Mech began her presentation by exhibiting slides of the many possible inspirations for rock gardens. They include plants growing in rocky outcroppings in the mountains, in the desert, on talis slopes, in swamps, in deep woods and around waterfalls. The most successful rock gardens, she says, are those that best mimic natural conditions. That means they should look as if nature distributed the materials, not humans. Rocks should be all of one kind and color. They should be weathered, not new-looking. The rocks should nestle into the ground as if they grew there, not just positioned on top of the ground. And, rocks are not always necessary. In a woodland garden, for instance, Ms. Mech suggested using decomposing logs or blocks of peat instead of, or in addition to, rocks.

Porous rocks, such as limestone and sandstone, are preferred materials since they will hold and slowly release water to the soil. In addition, they are native to this area and will blend right in to the environment. However, they are stratified rocks and should be installed so they look as if they had been naturally tilted up out of the ground. Granite boulders, also native to the area, can be used, but their rounded shape and varied colors make them difficult to work with. Rocks can be bought from a stoneyard or quarry, gathered from private land with permission, or recycled from landfills if you're not "lucky" enough to have them already.

Plants for a rock garden should be perennials and, generally, under a foot high. They should be dense, forming tight carpets, buns or rosettes of foliage. Most are covered with flowers in the appropriate season, but are attractive even when not in bloom. They should require little or no care; staking or spraying, for instance. Weeds, which are not usually under a foot, will stick right up, demanding to be pulled.

Amoung her favorite plants, Betty Ann lists many varieties of dwarf conifers. She says they provide different textures and a transitionary zone between the hard rocks and softer flowering perennials. Also, the conifers provide color in winter. She has used the Bristle Cone Pine with some sucess, although it's not easy to find locally. A number of

dwarf junipers and Weeping White Pine also are useful for rock gardening.

Which perennial plants you use depends on the climate you're trying to recreate in your rock garden. Alpine Asters, species Crocus, Hepatica, many kinds of Creeping Phlox, spcies and polyanthus Primula, Sedum and dwarf varieties of Veronica are used in many applications. A desert garden may called for different plants, however, as would a "great plains" rock garden. Many cactii from the plains are suitable for these gardens. Ms. Mech warned that some of these succulents might appear to shrivel and die during the fall, but she says they are only hunkering down to make sure they get a protective snow cover and will return to their full glory in the spring. She didn't name many of these, but did talk about a miniature Hen-and-Chicks smaller than a little fingernail.

Betty Ann uses a special soil mix for starting new gardens. It's composed of one part clay loam, one part sand and one part black peat. For your garden, she suggests piling leaves (preferably oak) a foot and a half or two feet deep on the new garden area in the fall. In the spring, rototill then into the soil along with lots of peat. Better yet, she says, let them remain until the following fall so their completely decomposed and all the weeds and grasses underneath the pile are all dead. A good rock garden soil will contain about 50% organic material.

Illustrating her talk with slides of rock gardens ranging from Scotland to Lake Harriet and her own yard, Betty Ann gave everyone an idea of what can be achieved in a rock garden. She invited members to visit her display gardens or Lake Harriet, for as personal look. She also distributed catalogs and fact sheets so that members who were sufficeintly inspired could get started this fall on their new rock garden.

1985 DUES NOW DUE and PAYABLE

MGCA dues for 1985 are due December 1st and are delinquent if not paid by Jauuary 1st. If on January 1st you are not paid up your name is dropped from the mailing lists of the GARDEN SPRAY, the HORTICULTURIST and the GARDENER. Those who pay up after January 1st not only risk missing some issues of the publications but may be too late to get their names in the MGCM directory. In addition they create unnecessary chores for the treasurer and the editor. So fill in the form on the back of this sheet and send with your check to our treasurer.

NEW MEMBER
Harold Gulde
5917 Chowen Ave S.
Edina, MN 55410

922-1302

ADDRESS CHANGE
Phillip H. Smith 377-6635
717 Westwood Drive S.
Golden Valley, MN 55416

Every Member Sponsors A New Member

HAVE YOU?

Your 1985 club dues are due and payable by December 1st.

If you have any special circumstances concerning renewing your membership, please call the club president. We want you to renew your membership and be included in the Club Directory published February 1st.

(Please return this portion. The information is needed for the Directory.)

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Edwin C. Culbert, Editor
5315 Portland Avenue
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President: Russell C. Smith 1610 Holdridge Terrace, Wayzata 55391 Vice-President: Andrew Marlow 10700 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka 55343 Secretary: Michael Denesuk 55414 910 21st Ave. S. E., Minneapolis George H. McCollough Treasurer: 8812 Tretbough Dr., Bloomington 55431 Past-President: Chet H. Groger 6836 Creston Road, Edina 55435 DIRECTORS:

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