What is the best part about spring? It’s always a surprise. One day it is as brown, dreary, and rainy as it has been all winter, and then it all changes. It only takes a day to turn everything around. It starts with the daffodils, who are like the harbingers of warmer weather to come. Don’t get me wrong, I love native plants, but it’s hard not to love the cheerful yellow face of the *Narcissus* as a symbol of winter’s end.

Enjoy this moment. The flowers will fade into another season, and the mosquitoes and heat will soon drive us back into the refuge of our air-conditioned homes. This is the perfect opportunity to remember the need for sunscreen, before you learn the hard way (like yours truly). Spring is a great reminder of why we love the outdoors, and I hope you are able to share this moment, before it is gone.

Cheers!

Mikaela Boley

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*Narcissus ‘Ipi-Tombi’*

“The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.”

-Gertrude Jekyll
Our Worlds Collide

While driving in my car one day going about my way, I happened upon two lovely fox. Crossing the road.

Unfortunately my journey too far gone the morning still not lit with sun, I slowed quickly but heard a thud. It was not clear what I had done.

I stopped along the side to catch a glimpse of what I hoped to be. Two fox running away from me.

But to my horror looking back at me one fox sitting on hind, legs three. One paw licking was he. The other fox long gone by now but this one harmed irreparably.

As I drew close to help him now I saw the beauty of his fur and delicate shape. A pup was he.

And as he intensely stared at me I said to him repeatedly i’m so sorry, i’m so sorry, i’m so sorry. .... and how stupid of me To be driving and causing pain. It all happened so fast you see.

Now a burden lies with me. Knowing a gift is harmed.

Brush and camera can capture yes, the beauty of our wildlife. But none can recreate the value they bring to our complex world. Unraveling day by day. New roads lain, dividers still to keep us in and on them.

Our worlds collide. We collide. When they are gone where will we be? how will we be? what will we be? who will we be?

Per chance if we could just slow a bit, and take responsibility of care. We could avoid harm to special gifts. Lighting our world.

by Lisa Marie Ghezzi
April 2, 2014
Spring Recipe:
Easter Egg Bake

1 lbs bacon
1/4 cup diced onion
1/4 cup diced green bell pepper
3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
8 eggs
2 cups milk
1-16 ounce package of thawed hash brown potatoes

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease 7x11 inch casserole dish.

Fry the bacon in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat until evenly browned, about 10 minutes. Drain on paper towel lined plate. Crumble.

In a large bowl beat together eggs and milk. Mix in cheese, bacon, onion, and green pepper. Stir in the thawed hash browns. Pour mixture into prepared casserole dish.

Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 30 minutes until eggs have set.

Recipe courtesy of Mikaela Boley
"I never saw a discontented tree. They grip the ground as thought they liked it. And though fast rooted they travel about as far as we do. They go wandering forth in all directions with every wind, going and coming like ourselves, traveling with us around the sun two million miles a day, and through space heaven know how fast and far!"

- John Muir

Dr. Chamovitz is the director of the Manna Center for Plant Biosciences at Tel Aviv University. He has lectured at universities around the world. His book is a concise, well documented story of plant senses. As a researcher, he was drawn to the biological processes specific to plant growth and light. The author compares senses in people and plants. He covers sight, hearing, touch, smell, spatial perception, and memory. He discusses the well controlled and sophisticated experiments performed by many scientists all over the world, graciously acknowledging all scientists involved.

Plants have a long history of use in scientific research. Darwin (1809-1882) emerges as a giant in the field of plant science. Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) worked out genetics using peas. Barbara McClintock (1902-1992) discovered jumping genes in maize.

The plant chosen for these studies is Arabidopsis thaliana, a small laboratory plant similar to the mustard plant. This plant’s genome and the human’s genome have been studied extensively. Although the plant has 25,000 genes and humans have 2.9 billion genes, both share several similar genes. Plants cannot hear. They contain a gene known to cause deafness in humans. The breast cancer gene (BRCA) is also present in the plant. Plants have no brain and no nerve system. Yet genetically, they are very complex. They cannot move so must be able to solve problems in place.

Similarities between plants and humans found at the genetic level are significant. However there are some very unique evolutionary adaptations. One example is the bony skeleton developed for support by vertebrates and the woody trunk developed by plants.

Plants are aware of the world around them and respond to it. They see their environment. They can differentiate red, blue and UV light. They smell aromas. They respond to touch as shown by the Venus Fly Trap knowing when a bug is large enough to nourish the plant. They are aware of gravity by orienting themselves to up and down.

Plants know quite a bit.
Spring planting time is upon us. As we prepare to Grow it and Eat it, I recommend that you take a look at the following fruits and vegetables. They are called the Dirty Dozen and the Clean Fifteen. The Dirty Dozen are the fruits and vegetables that contain pesticide residue; the Clean Fifteen do not.

You have several options. One is to purchase and consume organic fruits and veg; the other is to grow your own. As we know, the benefits of organic produce is that it is free of pesticides, and that organic produce generally costs more.

Recent studies indicate that there are at least a dozen fruits and vegetables that contain pesticide residue. The studies also indicate that consumers can reduce their pesticide exposure by as much as 80 per cent by buying all Dirty Dozen items organic.

Some environmentalists such as the Environmental Working Group also tag Kale, Collards and Summer Squash as being prone to pesticide residue. Vegetables with the least amount of pesticide residue generally have tough, inedible outer skins.

Experts also say that eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables generally outweigh the risks. It is recommended that you wash the produce on the Dirty Dozen list. Washing will remove some of the pesticide residue.
In the local Barnes & Noble, wedged between the how-to gardening books, is an entirely different array of books for the gardening-obsessed. I never thought of the possibility of reading non-fiction books about the flower and gardening industry.

New York Times bestseller, ‘Flower Confidential; The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful’ by Amy Stewart, is a non-fictional account of the flower industry that will change the way that you look at many things.

I had an epiphany in the midst of Master Gardener training. I have been fighting my sandy, loamy, probably-used-to-be-underwater backyard to grow green grass for years. Little did I know that I should succumb to the native instinct of the environment and release my yard back to nature? I now look at the once-desirable finely manicured criss-crossed patterns of beautiful green grass in a different way. After our turf grass and native plant lectures, I was hoping that no one in class realized that my two sons own a lawn care business and I personally house several behemoth gas-guzzling air polluting machines of destruction. I thought a perfectly green yard of grass was a major achievement. I was wrong.

My epiphany of turf grass is similar to the mind-blowing aspects of the flower industry that Amy Stewart brings to light. Picture this; it is the dead of winter. The snow-covered pansies are your only hope of any color in your yard (except for the berries that the deer and birds have partially consumed). Your camellias are a bit temperamental and out of sorts thanks to the radical temperature fluctuation.

(Continued on pg. 7)
You walk into your local grocery store and behold a brightly colored cut arrangement of flowers. This is the perfect medicine for the winter blahs and blues. You are oblivious to the fact that you are about ready to financially support the culmination of all things commercial and anti-natural.

How can the flowers be fresh in Maryland in the winter? Where did they come from and how did they get here? Why are some of the flowers a completely unnatural color? How did the one variety turn so blue? Why do the roses have multi-colored tipped petals? The bouquet exemplifies how far out of control the flower industry has become.

In ‘Flower Confidential’, Stewart pulls back the magic curtain of the floriculture industry. She takes you through the inner workings of the flower industry. The process of growing, cutting, packaging and sending the flowers that wind up in your grocery store in record time is mind boggling. She explains how a true natural red rose, along with other flowers, may be hybridized to the point of extinction. Stewart also addresses the pursuit of the perfect blue flower through genetic engineering. Supply, demand and competition replaced the birds and the bees with laboratory plants. Amy Stewart examines how customers now have an option to purchase ‘laboratory’ produced plants. Stewart takes the reader from California to Holland to Ecuador and to Columbia, South America.

I enjoyed this book because Amy Stewart has an honest way of reporting on a controversial subject and it fascinated me the way that she investigated and researched an area that most take for granted. I am not sure I will mount a protest in the floral aisle of my grocery store, but I know that I will look at flowers in a completely different way.
For the Foodies:

Early spring can be a great time for forage vegetables of unique varieties—some can even be found at farmer’s markets for a limited time. Try something new, and give these edibles a chance.

**Artichokes:**
Look for tightly formed flower heads that are young and tender. Best used when stems are freshly cut.

**Arugula:**
Cool weather crop that can be grown during early spring. Best harvested young when tender, before the plant gets bitter. Has a peppery taste.

**Asparagus:**
Harvest while spear head is tight. Thickness does not indicate tenderness. As a bonus, bolted asparagus still looks attractive in the garden!

**Garlic Scapes:**
The curled flower stalks of hard-necked garlic varieties. Harvest before stems curled for better flavor.

**Mesclun:**
Mix of assorted salads. Can be sown, grown, and cut all together. Sow successions of mesclun seeds every 1-2 weeks for future harvests.

**Morel Mushroom:**
Foraged in the wild during the spring. Look for firm specimens when buying from markets. Unique and rich flavor.
Green Onions:
Cultivated year-round. Grown through winter and harvested in the spring—great for salads or sautéed in dishes.

Nettles:
Can be found by foraging or by specialty in farmer’s markets. Only the very tender shoots are edible, but taste great in spring salads.

Ramps:
Foraged in early spring—they are like wild leeks, and taste similar to green onions. Sometimes offered at Farmer’s Markets.

Rhubarb:
Usually one of the first fruits of spring—look for heavy stalks with shiny skin. Use in pies or other sweet dishes, or a great canned good.

Watercress:
An aquatic plant in freshwater springs and streams. Very nutritious and is complementary in soups and salads.

Fiddleheads:
Young wild fern heads. The tightly coiled tops of ostrich ferns. Can be fried or grilled.

Written by Mikaela Boley— for additional information on traditional vegetable gardening, please visit the Home and Garden Information or Grow It, Eat It website: http://extension.umd.edu/hgic
Mikaela-

I tried to seed my lawn last fall, but waited until late November, and was not able to fertilize properly. The little amount of grass seed that germinated looks spindly and sparse. What can I do this spring? Do I need to start over?

Sincerely,
Lawn Disaster

Dear Lawn Disaster,

This is a common situation, and I can make a few suggestions that will hopefully fix the problem. The best time to seed your lawn is in the fall from late August through mid-October. If you are determined, the spring is the second best time.

First and foremost, I recommend a soil test. Soil testing gives you nutrient levels in the soil, pH, and suggestions for your soil conditions. Testing is easy and can be done through the Talbot County Extension Office for a fee.

If you properly prepare the soil beforehand, you will save yourself some trouble. I would start from scratch, and add a layer of organic material (compost) and an application of lime (if needed). A 2-inch layer should be spread over the area and incorporated into the soil. Using a drop or broadcast spreader, apply the proper amount of seed for your square footage or acreage. Good seed-to-soil contact is needed for optimum germination. Mulch with straw afterwards to keep moisture and prevent erosion.

Be sure to keep seedlings moist until they have germinated. The new grass may need more moisture in the heat of the summer since it is so fragile. We recommend watering deeply and infrequently to promote deeper root structure.

Fertilizing should be done according to soil test results during the initial seeding period, which will last 6-8 weeks. Follow-up applications of fertilizer should be done again in the fall. Please note that the Fertilizer Use Act prohibits single applications of fertilizer that exceed .9 lbs of Nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. For more information concerning the laws on fertilizer application, please visit MDA’s Department of Agriculture website: http://mda.maryland.gov. For additional tips and advice, use the Home and Garden Information Center at http://extension.umd.edu/hgic or call 800-342-2507.

-Mikaela
Mikaela Boley is the Horticulturist and Master Gardener Coordinator for University of Maryland Extension in Talbot County. The Extension Office often has questions from homeowners and members of the public regarding home gardening, soil testing, plant and insect identification, plus much more.

Do you have a question that needs answering? Want to talk gardening or get advice for environmentally friendly practices in the residential landscape?

Please contact Mikaela Boley, Home Horticulturist and Master Gardener Coordinator at (410) 822-1244 ext. 12, or by email mboley@umd.edu.

Mikaela-

This weed has been a nuisance in my landscape! It grows early in the turf and in my raised boxes (see picture above). What is it and how do I get rid of it?

-Weed B Gone

Dear Weed B Gone-

Along with spring and warmer weather, it’s not unusually to see an influx of spring weeds as well! There are several weeds that have purple flowers, but I am sure that your weed is deadnettle. It also has a purplish cast on the leaves, with square stems.

For control, this weed can be easily pulled by hand (if you are interested in an “organic” option). Proper mowing height and fertilization will also help control. Otherwise, when you use broad-spectrum herbicides, you risk killing desirable vegetation.

-Mikaela

Purple deadnettle, or Lamium purpureum, is a common weed in both residential landscapes and in agriculture.

Henbit (top left) and ground ivy (top right) are weeds similar to purple deadnettle. They also have purple flowers, but different habits. Photos Courtesy of HGIC.
Upcoming Events and Dates 2014

Cabin Fever Relievers– 2014

“Is winter driving you crazy? Are you dreaming of spring? We’ve got something for you!”

Check out the Master Gardener Cabin Fever Reliever series this April! Located at the beautifully landscaped Brooklett’s Senior Center in Easton, our series will address planning, planting, amending, and preparing your garden for spring. With a variety of topics, they are totally free and totally worth checking out! The series is open to the public and free.

Location: Brooklett’s Senior Center, 400 Brooklett’s Ave, Easton, MD
Dates: 1st and 4th Mondays in April
Time: 1:30-3:00 pm Fee: None!

April 7th—Composting and backyard chickens. All you will need to know as a beginner or intermediate.

April 21st—Spring pests and weed management, last minute gardening advice for spring, and how to utilize resources to answer questions for your needs.

Want more information? Contact Mikaela Boley, Master Gardener Coordinator for Talbot County at 410-822-1244 or mboley@umd.edu.

Poplar Island Trip Dates– 2014

Future Poplar Island trip dates for Master Gardeners 2014

- April 16th
- June 16th
- July 16th
- August 18th
- September 17th
- October 15th

Contact Bonnie James for more information about the Poplar Island garden: bonniejames@gmail.com
For transportation to Poplar Island on these dates, contact Megan Garrett: MGARR@menv.com

Please contact Mikaela Boley, Master Gardener Coordinator with any question or to volunteer to help with a program at mboley@umd.edu or 410-822-1244.
MG Advanced Training Classes for Spring 2014
For full details, additional classes, and registration, go to:
http://extension.umd.edu/mg/advanced-training

MG Annual Training Day:
Location: University of Maryland– College Park
Date: May 29th  Time: 8:00AM– 4:30PM
Reg. Fee: $69 before May 1st/$79 after May 1st
Training Day Highlights: Keynote Speaker Dennis VanEnglesdorp on “Why we Need Bees”. Featured speaker David Haskell, author of The Forest Unseen. 40 workshops of varying topics to choose from. Tradeshows and exhibits, as well as included lunch. Join some 800 Master Gardeners from across the state! Sign up early to register for the workshops of your choice.

**Registration is available through mail-in form or online at: http://extension.umd.edu/mg/annual-training-day-2014

Native Plant Essentials:
Location: Online
Dates: April-June  Time: At your discretion  Fee: Free
Course Description: In response to the overwhelming registrants for the Native Plant Essentials class, this advanced training will be available as an online course. Although it is the preferred method to take this class in-person, the course is available for those who were put on the waiting list or need the class as a pre-requisite for the Native Landscaping for Shade Gardens in Maryland.

Garden Fair and Plant Sale–
Friends of the Arboretum
April 25– 1-4pm
April 26th– 9am-4pm
3501 New York Ave. NE, Washington D.C.

Virginia Garden Week—
April 26th —May 3rd
Includes Eastern Shore
www.vagard

National Cherry Blossom Festival
Washington, DC
March 20th– April 13th

Talbot County Master Gardener
Monthly Meetings
Join us for the monthly meeting to discuss current events, future opportunities, and answer volunteer questions. Meetings start at 9:30 AM and address orders of business, followed by a guest speaker.

Date: April 16th, 9:30 AM– Volunteer Appreciation
Location: Easton Public Library

Date: June 18th, 9:30AM
Location: Easton Public Library

Do you have newsletter item?
We accept news items, poems, gardening advice, recipes, book reviews, and everything gardening! Please send to Mikaela Boley at mboley@umd.edu.

ASK YOUR HORTICULTURIST:
mboley@umd.edu
Current Resident Or:

You can also visit the Maryland Master Gardeners website at: http://extension.umd.edu/mg
and the Talbot County Extension website at: http://extension.umd.edu/talbot-county

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, call our University of Maryland Extension Office at 410-822-1244.