Indeed, with a full summer under our belts, it is time to greet autumn. The humidity is gone, and chilly nights with open windows are a welcome change. Nature might be slowing down, but Master Gardeners only seem to speed up!

Some important thoughts for this time of year might include turf management, fall pests coming indoors, a winter vegetable garden, or garden clean-up. Remember to rake up leaves with signs of disease and dispose of separately, and to chop up disease-free leaves for quicker decomposition. Wait until November to really prune the shrubs that were flowering in the late summer, before new growth begins. And don’t forget that November 15th is the last day homeowners may apply fertilizer to lawns! This issue features some important considerations for the fall, and should be useful for all homeowners (not just gardeners).

With waning daylight and cooler days ahead, I hope you are able to get out and enjoy the outdoors during the best part of the year.

Cheers!

Mikaela Boley

Liquidambar styraciflua- “Gumball” from the sweetgum tree
As the resident horticulturist, I receive a lot of interesting questions and conundrums from the public. Since quite a few of the questions repeat themselves, I thought I would give some blanket advice on a couple of the most popular topics this time of year:

**The Perfect Turf**: While turf enthusiasts might argue with me, there is no such thing as the “perfect turf.” I don’t believe in it, as a horticulturist or as a homeowner. It’s not worth the inputs, time, or effort to achieve this level of perfection. My advice is so try to get the landscape as healthy as possible without environmental damage, and allow the ecology of your yard to flourish in your abandon. Oftentimes, the presence of weeds is an indication of something amiss in the landscape (compaction, low nitrogen, excessive moisture, etc.) I wouldn’t worry too much about some clover.

**“This Insect is Destroying my Tree!”**: Some insects are guilty by association. In many cases, the problem originates from something completely different. I encourage homeowners to get a positive I.D. on suspected pests, through myself or by submitting photos to HGIC. Do not spray or treat with anything until you have confirmation.

**Bedbugs and Ticks**: While I can help and identify the specimen at hand, I will likely direct you to use a professional pest service that deals specifically with these problems. If you are bitten by a tick and suspect Lyme’s disease, you are better off consulting a healthcare provider for more information.

**White Pines**: I get a lot of concerned calls about this time of year — many people are convinced that their pine trees are dying. It is normal for some needle cast to occur in white pines, and you may notice the bronze layer of needles underneath the tree. As long as entire limbs or branch tips are not dying off, your tree is probably fine.

**Forgotten Soil**: Homeowners can invest a significant amount of money buying plants for the landscape. However, if you do not invest in increasing the quality of your soil, that money might go to waste. Soil is the most important, and neglected, resource in the landscape. A basic fertility test will give you a lot of information, including pH, nutrient levels, organic matter content, and recommendations. Urban soils are often disturbed, compacted, of poor material and have no topsoil. Be sure to consult a soil test before any major project.

**Indoor Pests** Again, while our office can help identify the insect, suspected house visitors are better dealt with by consulting professional pest control companies. Many of the pesticides we are familiar with are for outdoor and landscape use, not for the indoors.
Winter is Coming!  
And so are BMSB...

**BMSB**: Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (*Halyomorpha halys*)

A fairly new pest in the United States, the BMSB is an exotic pest that has gained a lot of publicity the last 10 years. Adults actively seek overwintering sites in late summer and early fall, and they usually come inside buildings. While they are not harmful to humans, pets, or houses, they do feed on plant leaves, buds, and fruits.

In preparation for the onslaught of Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, I listened to a webinar on these little beasties presented by Dr. Tracy Leskey (USDA). It was a part of the series on “All Bugs Good and Bad”. They’re mysterious – some homes are literally ‘shingled’ by them as they find a place to winter over and others get a few lingering in the window frames. Birds do not seem to find them to be delectable in sufficient quantities. But what I didn’t know is their origins and the speed of their spectacular dominance in the landscape.

There are several kinds of native stinkbugs. These are different. The USDA believes that the critter was introduced in 1996 in Pennsylvania. It was first recorded in 2001 in Allentown. Area farmers began to see problems in 2008, and in 2009, homeowners were hit with a large assault supported by a mild winter. 2010 that was the big breakout year in the Mid Atlantic, where it became a “serious agricultural nuisance” ... which means its terrible but at least does not suck blood or transmit disease. They’re now in 41 states, but the Mid Atlantic is ground zero where they have risen to a ‘landscape level threat’, as they feed on most anything.

Insecticides even at high doses, have proven ineffective. In addition to devastating IPM, the BMSB that appear to be dead (“moribund”) shake it off and come back to life! Nightmare.

But there is a silver lining. Researchers have identified their pheromones and combining them insecticide appears to be working for nymphs and adults alike. Stay tuned. Learn more at:  
http://www.extension.org/pages/70120/all-bugs-good-and-bad-2014-webinar-series#VCWXwSldWw0

Keep everyone posted at  http://www.stopbmsb.org

By: Melinda Hudson
Want to do something fun in your community? Here’s a little twist to the garden tour! We called it the Travelers Rest Road (our street) Bay-Wise Walk-About!

Bay-Wise trained Master Gardeners Lisa Marie Ghezzi and Pam Keeton found a way to get to know their neighbors better and spread the good word on Bay-Wise best practices. This past Spring they met over tea with a small group of neighbors to talk about garden areas of interest. The group welcomed the idea of sharing Bay-Wise best practices with the neighborhood through demonstration gardens and described things like rain gardens, organic vegetable gardens and stormwater management practices that would like to learn more about.

Lisa and Pam identified 5 gardens and 1-2 features in each that would provide a good visual example of a Bay-Wise best practice and confirmed with each of the homeowners their willingness and availability to be involved.

Utilizing Pam’s communications expertise and creative skills, Pam wrote a one page description of each property and the features to be show-cased, along with a little background on why the homeowner installed the feature and some basic information on what it took to complete it, and lessons learned. The one-pagers included enticing photographs to enhance the write-ups.

Lisa and Pam sent a letter, made calls and purposefully "bumped" into neighbors on the road to invite them to the two hour July 19th event followed by a tail gate party at the last property. To their surprise over 30 people showed up. Together the group toured one neighbor's wildflower meadow, an incredibly inspiring 4.5 acre plot of land formerly a patch of weeds, now sprinkled with color, bird boxes and a path similar to the yellow brick road! Breathtaking!

The properties were spread fairly evenly along the 2 mile circle, so the neighbors drove or walked to the next property which featured a lovely septic system mound creation. To blend in with the flora and fauna, these property owners worked with a landscape designer to use native plants, including Bayberry, Witch Hazel and Sensitive Fern. The Loblolly pines provide for a natural mulching each fall and spring of needles that fall and provide a golden brown carpet.

The group moved on to observe honey bees at work and chickens at play on the next neighbor's property. Adults and children alike enjoyed hearing about the fascinating lives of the bees and the inquisitive chickens who help compost food scraps and manage the tick population.

(Continued on pg. 6)
Did you remember that the Maryland Lawn Fertilizer Act prohibits homeowners from applying fertilizer to their lawns between November 15 and March 1? And if you do fertilize, you can't exceed 0.9 lbs. of Nitrogen per 1,000 sq.ft. Other restrictions prohibit application of fertilizer to frozen ground or when heavy rain is forecast, using fertilizer as a de-icer and applying it within 15 feet of open water. The Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy would like to see further lawn care practices beyond the law which would lessen the pollution of our waterways. First, choose not to fertilize, but if you do, only fertilize once a year in the fall. Second, set your mower height at 3 inches or taller and leave grass clippings and mulched leaves on the lawn as a natural fertilizer. And finally, convert much of your lawn to landscaped beds, or meadow, grass or forested buffers, especially within 15 to 20 feet of water.

Confusion frequently arises over the timing of pruning flowering shrubs and trees and whole seasons of bloom can be lost. In the majority of cases, the following guidelines apply:

**Spring flowering** - for plants that flower before the end of June, prune immediately after flowering. Because their flower buds develop during the prior growing season on old wood, pruning in fall, winter or spring would remove buds and reduce or eliminate the following spring blooms.

**Summer flowering** - for plants that flower in summer or autumn, prune in winter or early spring before new growth begins. These plants develop flowers on new growth produced during the spring.

Watch for increased spider mite activity on your plants, particularly spruce, juniper and hemlock. Spider mites are about the size of a period on a page and are difficult to see with the naked eye. However, they have a very broad host range and can inflict considerable damage in a very short period of time. Spider mites suck the chlorophyll from leaves and needles, causing yellowing, browning and eventual death. To detect them, place a clipboard covered with white under a branch and tap it sharply. If the little dots walk around, you have spider mites. To manage the problem on susceptible plants, periodically spray a strong stream of water on both sides of the leaves or needles. Insecticidal soap and horticulture oil can also be used.

Fall is ideally the best time of year to put in new planting beds or renovate old ones. In reality, however, enthusiasm for major garden work is usually greater in the spring after being cooped up all winter. Also, nurseries have better supplies of plant stock. If you do decide to undertake major projects in the fall, plan ahead for the new plants you will need. All too often, obsessive gardeners (and I'm at the top of the list) buy a cute little plant, then wander around the yard looking for a good place to put it. Above all, determine the projected height and width of the plants you are considering, or they might outgrow their situation and you will have to severely prune or remove them altogether because the utility companies can't find their meters! Also, if you are renovating beds, don't hesitate to remove plants which don't meet your expectations or need constant care to combat insect and disease problems. They are taking up precious space.
Heavy rains can be a problem on many of our properties. The next property visited featured two ways to utilize the water running off and beautify the area with sculpted land features and native plantings. Not to mention a healthy vegetable garden providing bountiful vegetables for the family and their friends!

The last stop provided one example of a living shoreline. The property owners had created this to not only build back an area that was once filled with native grasses providing habitat for many wildlife species, but also to enhance the property value. The tour observed several birds flitting in and out of the grasses while they listened about the plants and creation of the shoreline. After walking the 1,000 foot perimeter they stopped to watch worms at work in a vermiculture bin. Needless to say, the children really enjoyed touching the worms, and one little boy even tried to sneak some off in his pocket!

The group ended the tour by continuing the conversation at a fun social tailgate gathering. We probably tried to squeeze too much into the day, but the positive is that everyone was totally engaged and everyone learned something. The group was very gracious and wanted to do it again in the spring. Pam and Lisa had fun too!

"Why do the leaves change color?"

It all starts with photosynthesis...
Plants use sunlight to process water and CO2 into oxygen and glucose. This glucose is food for the plant to use as energy, and to grow. Chlorophyll is a chemical in the plant leaf, which allows photosynthesis to take place. It also gives leaves the green color we all know and recognize.

Preparing for winter...
With daytime getting shorter, and temperatures colder, plants can sense the need for winter preparation. Because there is not enough light or water for photosynthesis during this season, they go dormant and use energy stored from the summer. As they shut down the process for making food, the chlorophyll breaks down and disappears.

Those brilliant colors..
The colors we recognize in fall (yellow, brown, orange, and red) are revealed when the chlorophyll breaks down, and have always been present in the leaf. Sometimes, chemical changes occur, which form additional colors. Red anthocyanin are pigments that provide this vibrancy. Some chemical mixtures produce red, purple, or other variations of yellow and orange.

Something in the air...
Weather can affect color intensity. Temperature, light, and plant moisture have an influence on the degree and duration of autumn color. Cool temperatures (but above freezing) will increase anthocyanin formation and give maples brighter red color.
This stunning book may be called a coffee table book, as the art is of such high quality. The above illustrated cover painting of a mountain laurel is typical of the art in the book. The details of each hand painted plate make each plant incredibly life-like, which is perhaps the whole point with botanical painting, as this art form date to before photography existed. It was a way for explorers to describe newly found plants to an excited European and later American gardening public.

In addition, the layout of the book is quite elegant. 60 native plants, shrubs and trees are included in the book. Each has two pages devoted to it. One page is a beautiful botanical painting made by one of the 40 participating artists. The opposing page is a write-up indicating plant details and environmental requirements, where the plant may be found, what plant family it belongs to, and how the plant was used in the past or today. The written sections were reviewed by a number of specialists from universities and public gardens, including a botanist with the US Botanical Garden. Professor Douglas Tallamy of the University of Delaware, who lectured in Easton recently on how to sustain wildlife with native plants, wrote part of the Introduction.

The bonus aspect of this plant book is that it does not only cover the flora but also the fauna. For a gardener, the book adds this other layer of important information. Some of the written sections include which birds will frequent the plant or eat the berries of the shrub, and most pages include a small painting of a specific pollinator, such as a specific butterfly or moth or other insect that is the main pollinator or feeds on the plant.  As Master Gardeners we may have noticed and read about the decline of many of our native butterflies and moths.  This is often attributed to habitat loss and pesticide exposure.  Seeing these insects connected to the plants that help them thrive and that they in turn pollinate makes a very special case for planting native plants.

I very much recommend this book as a Christmas present to the gardener in your family, as even the most avid gardener may not have bought this book yet.  It was published in June of 2014.  It costs $39.95 on Amazon.com, but can obviously be obtained from other sources too.

Reviewed by Lena Gill on September 14th, 2014
A recent article by Gabriel Popkin in the March/April  American Horitculture’s *The American GARDENER* featured an article about a number of people who are working to save the Monarch Butterfly by planting milkweed and providing habitat.

As most of us know, Monarchs, the *Danaus plexippus*, overwinter in forested regions of the Mexican Sierra Madre. In the spring they fly north throughout the United States and Canada. During the past 10 years, Monarch butterfly populations have declined.

One reason is that the forest areas of Mexico have declined, also. Much of it has been harvested by loggers. While the Mexican government is now working to protect the forests, illegal logging tourists have also negatively impacted them.

Another problem is the decline of common Milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*. For years, this robust native shared the space with corn and soybeans. Now farmers are using the herbicide Round-up to clear the lands they plant.

Milkweed is the favored plant that Monarchs eat. When they are grown, they also eat nectars. *Asclepias* contain chemicals called glycosides that make the Monarchs taste bad to predators. Additionally Monarchs often build their chrysalis on the underside of the plant.

Chip Taylor, professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, at the University of Kansas started a Monarch Waystation program. It encourages gardeners to plant at least 10 milkweed plants and 4 nectar producing plants. It also encourages providing shelter, sunlight and space. An area of 100 square feet will do.

People who don’t want to plant the native milkweed are encouraged to plant the *Asclepias tuberosa* and *Asclepias incarnata*. Recommended nectar plants are the *Amelanchiers*, the *Violas*, the *Liatris* and the *Hamamelis* ssp. Non natives such as *Zinnias* and *Syringias* also work.

At this time there are over 7000 Monarch Waystations in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Texas, Washington D.C, and Kentucky.

For additional Monarch Waystation certification requirements, go to [www.monarchwatch.org/waystations](http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations).

See the March/April edition of *The American GARDENER* for the full story.
Dear Mikaela,

I have been flunking composting for years. I got a composted for Christmas. I have been adding lots of veggie parts, tea bags and whatever.

I realized that I did not have sufficient carbon so I added shredded paper.

A wise advisor told me to leave it be, and I did. The last time I checked it was dry and had lost its pungent aroma.

How often do I need to add water? How often do I need to spin it? Please advise.

Uncomposted in St. Michaels

Dear Uncomposted in St. Michaels-

Composting is like finding a good recipe. The good news is that it’s not too late! If your compost looks dry and has no odor, you might want to try wetting it a little to start the hot composting process again. Once you add water and start periodically spinning the composter, that should get the pile warm. This will get the microbes to break down your materials faster.

You do not want your compost to smell bad or sopping wet. If the smell is bad, you should probably add more carbon materials like leaves, or shredded paper. You also don’t want to soak the compost to the point of dripping water.

The Home and Garden Information Center has a great comprehensive publication on their website at: http://www.extension.umd.edu/hgic, HG 35.

-Mikaela
Upcoming Events and Dates 2014

MG Advanced Training Classes for Fall 2014
For full details, additional classes, and registration, go to:
http://extension.umd.edu/mg/advanced-training

Native Grasses:
Location: UME Harford Co., Forest Hill
Dates: October 21st
Time: 9:30AM–3:00PM
Fee: $30
Course Description: Fall is the time that our native grasses strut their stuff! Join us for a fun, non-technical class: light on grass taxonomy and heavy on work with fresh specimens of indiangrass, little bluestem, switchgrass, purpletop, bushy beardgrass, purple lovegrass, and more.

Fall Festivals

Pickering Creek Harvest Hoe Down
Location: Pickering Creek Audubon Center
Date: October 12th, 2014
Time: 11AM-4PM

Talbot Agriculture Center Harvest Festival
Location: Talbot County Agricultural Center
Date: October 19th, 2014
Time: 11AM-5PM

Annual Waterfowl Festival
Location: Historic Downtown Easton
Dates: November 14th-16th
Time: 10AM-4PM

To volunteer at one of these activities, please contact Mikaela at mboley@umd.edu for schedule, availability, and other details.

Horticulture Therapy
We are continuing to do horticulture therapy at The Pines in Easton.

Visits are every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month—visits are 30-45 minutes. Gatherings are at 2:30pm. Grab a partner and sign up for the following dates:

- October 9th
- October 23rd
- November 13th
- December 11th

Contact Mikaela at mboley@umd.edu to sign up.

DID YOU KNOW...
Master Gardeners have a Facebook page? You can find us online at by clicking here. Or, search “Talbot County Master Gardeners” and follow our page! We include photos from recent activities, advice, and recent news items.

Remember to “Like” us!

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.
With fall in the air and holidays on the horizon, we have very special plans for the rest of 2014. These meetings require an RSVP to mboley@umd.edu if you intent to attend.

**October 8th**— Join the Talbot County Extension Office to celebrate Extension’s Birthday! The signing of the Smith-Lever Act was 100 years ago, in 1914. It established a system of cooperative extension services linked to the land-grant universities to provide information to the public regarding agricultural, home economic, leadership, and 4-H opportunities. The office will be open for participants to tour and ask questions. Door prizes and food are available.

**Time:** 3:00-6:00pm

**October 15th**— Join us at Adkins Arboretum for lunch and an afternoon of enjoying the fall splendor of our native Eastern Shore arboretum. Lunch will be provided upon an RSVP confirmation.

**Time:** 12:00pm

**December 10th**— A special holiday meeting to be held at Garden Treasures, with a workshop included for $25 for wreath making. Wine, cheese, and light fare will be available for workshop participants, as well as comradery and good cheer. Garden Treasures staff will supply materials and instruction, and no prior design knowledge is needed! You must RSVP to this event to attend.

**Time:** 4:00-6:00pm

**Cost:** $25/person

**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:**

Is there a garden question that is bothering you? Just write in to:

"Ask Mikaela"

mboley@umd.edu

**Need to Unsubscribe?**

You may unsubscribe from the newsletter at any time, by contacting Mikaela Boley by email at mboley@umd.edu, calling 410-822-1244, or a written request sent to: 28577 Mary’s Court– Suite 1, Easton, MD 21601.

**Want to receive this newsletter by email?**

That’s easy! Simply email mboley@umd.edu to complete your request and you will be added to the “email” newsletter list. We will also be happy to remove you from the main mailing list if you would like to save paper.
Current Resident Or:

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

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