

TWIGS

The Garden Club of Greater Lansing



Member of: Michigan Garden Clubs Inc. District 2B, National Garden Club Central Region, National Garden Club Inc.

President's Message

I am so excited by our growth and potential as a garden club. Since late 2023 through current time, we have added seventeen new members. Thirteen of those members are new this year. We have had additional inquiry into our club by two other potential members. While exciting, this growth needs to be addressed. With this in mind I am setting up an ongoing Q&A orientation on a monthly basis. I will send out a notice each month of when we will meet. I will arrange for various sites, time and day. If this doesn't fit your schedule, we can work on adding another meeting time. I will have a topic to cover but I want you to also bring suggestions and of course questions. Please RSVP to me if you plan on coming. I want to make sure we can accommodate our members. Our first meeting is Monday, October 28th, 5:30–7:30 p.m. at Delta Township Library. I chose this site because many of our members have easier access to his place. TOPIC of discussion is Greens Market (GM). What we do, how we do, the importance of GM, what can you do to help, etc. I will also field questions about other topics or questions. Bring a lunch if you want. We are in the room at the south wall of the library. (Last time we met in the room on the west wall.) See you there!

Lois Snover Hanson's presentation was funny, interesting and as always so artistic and creative. After showing us how to make an arrangement, Lois



Members putting together a design

added fruit and or veggies into the arrangement. This was all done with a very artful design in mind. One of Lois's arrangements could have been used as the centerpiece to a charcuterie board. So many edibles were added to this arrangement. Amazing! Lois spent time walking around, answering questions, helping members pull together the final design for the night. Lois is full of helpful, guiding thoughts and she delivers with kindness and creative nuances.

Now is the time you really need to be sure that your calendars have some openings to help with the greens building workshops. With help from members, you can learn to make, swags, bows, pics, boxwood trees, small table arrangements and other designs. You will learn to affix ribbons, cones and other fun items into design. The club is still looking for pinecones. Look in your binder for directions on picking the correct ones and baking to dry out the cone and kill all insects. The dates and times of our workshops are in your Yearbook.



Examples of fruit or veggies used in design by Lois

November Meetings

Mon 4th @ GUMC 9:30–11:00 a.m.

Nov 11th @ GUMC 9:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

After the reports for our members, we will have demonstrations and answer some questions about our upcoming workshops. This is a soup and salad lunch. The working committee will provide soups and the rest of us will bring salads. Get creative with fall flavors.

Workshops

Help will be needed to retrieve supplies and equip from storage and help with set-up. A ½ day of gathering boxwood from MSU plus washers/cleaners of boxwood will also be taking place with members.

Nov 18–22: Bring all your supplies. Gloves, cutters, pliers etc.

District 2B Fall Meeting

What a fun day! The Mason Sycamore Garden Club provided us with a great opportunity to visit, learn, laugh, have fun, raise money through the wide variety of baskets. The setting for this meeting worked well. The variety of vendors was nice. It was also great to see one of our former members selling her fabulous honey products. **Donna** may visit us at the Greens Market. I think she misses us.

Clubs were recognized for their ability to invent solutions in various areas, or how creative they were for the community. Our two speakers kept us entertained while imparting knowledge on plants, and how to manage our gardens at the end of the season. We also learned about some pest management. **Beth** took the new role at Beal Gardens. Prior to this she was over the Horticulture Gardens. Her presentation highlighted the importance of having a plan but recognize the need to be flexible. Being flexible because weather, soil or plants themselves may change how we put our garden beds to rest while leaving interest in the garden for the winter. Our second speaker was **Zander**, a student from MSU who received a scholarship from MGC. It was great to have a benefactor of a MGC scholarship talked about his experiences.

The GCGL had a great turn out at the District meeting. We sat at two tables of eight. I think this is one of our larger attendee gatherings for the D2B mtg. Next year the planners for D2B fall mtg is the Williamston Garden Club. This too will be a local group so I think we will have another great turn out.

Horticulture

Seed Change: Growing Amaryllis that Don't Tumble

Many of us are familiar with grapefruit-sized amaryllis (*Hippeastrum* sp.) bulbs for sale in the fall. When blooming on a grey winter's day, they brighten a room like a holiday star. Unfortunately, the beautiful blooms can also meteorically plummet to the ground, because of their tall, unstable stems.

The 90 species of plants within the genus of *Hippeastrum* are native to central and south tropical America. Although we commonly call this plant "amaryllis," it is not the actual, summer-blooming *Amaryllis*, which originates from southern Africa and only includes two species. For the purpose of this article, the name "amaryllis" will refer to *Hippeastrum*.



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Red Amaryllis in my aunt's laundry room

The Story: My first amaryllis was a gift from a friend in graduate school. The bulb was in a light-weight, plastic pot and sat in a sunny apartment window for years. Every summer, it grew long, leaves that pressed against the window for light. As leaves grew, they would ultimately bend and crease under their own weight. Most years the plant only produced an untidy spray of leaves, but occasionally a tall spike emerged which rewarded me by toppling over and breaking before all the pink buds opened. I had often thought about getting rid of the plant because the flower spikes

were overly prone to breaking or falling; however, I kept it out of nostalgia for my friend. After several years, I learned how to make it bloom every season—by withholding water for six weeks each autumn and then resuming watering. Albeit tall, the spikes fall less frequently now that the plant is in a heavier pot, it is watered properly, and I stake the spikes if they look unsteady.

Even though I learned how to accommodate its growth habit, my appreciation for amaryllis didn't really blossom until I saw a magnificent, red specimen growing in a bright, laundry room at the back of my aunt's house. Instead of a solitary bulb in a flowerpot, my aunt had several bulbs flourishing in a community pot. The leaves were unbent and the flowers were held up by a short, sturdy stem without being staked.

On a return to visit to my aunt a few years later, I noticed that the plant was gone. When I inquired about its fate, I learned that the pot had been put outside and as far as my aunt knew, it was dead. When I searched the garden, the discarded terracotta pot showed no sign that anything had ever grown there, but after rooting around in the soil, I found bulbs. I broke off a golf-ball sized offset to take home.

A few weeks after planting, the offset bulb sprouted leaves. The bulb grew to the size of a baseball within a year, and to my surprise, it began to produce its first bloom. A month later, the plant bloomed a second time, followed by third, dispelling my belief that *Amaryllis* only bloom once in the winter. In fact, the same bulb can produce more than one flower spike during the year, sometimes with spikes emerging simultaneously.

Strangely, the spikes from my red, offset bulb were taller than my aunt's original, which should have been genetically the same. I discovered, in preparing for this article, that while Amaryllis need light and warmth (70°F/21°C) to initiate flowering, growing them in warmer temperatures will encourage flower spikes to grow faster and taller than they would in relatively cooler temperatures. Moving a plant to a cooler location, out of bright light will also



Collecting pollen from the anthers of the Red Amaryllis



Dusting collected pollen onto the stigma of the Pink Amaryllis

flowers. Alternately, I could simply buy a pink cultivar with a short stem, but that wouldn't be as much fun or have the nostalgic connection to my college friend and my aunt.

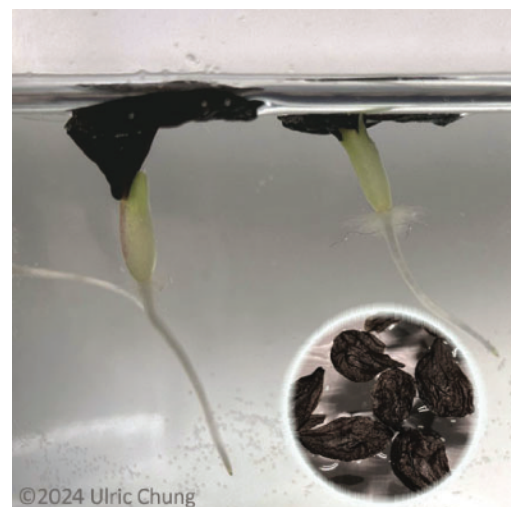
The Process: Amaryllis plants are perfect candidates for cross-pollination, because the parts of the flower are both easy to

extend the life of a bloom. As I think back, the laundry room where my aunt grew her amaryllis was chilly (perhaps mid 60's), bathed in diffused, natural light, and somewhat humid from doing laundry. When my plants begin to spike in the future, I plan to place the pots in a cooler, but bright location to see if that results in shorter flower stems.

In spite of the red amaryllis' flower stem being taller than expected, it was still shorter than my original pink amaryllis grown in exactly the same conditions. I wondered if I could grow a pink amaryllis with a shorter stem that would be less prone to falling without staking. One possible way to get such a plant would be to cross my red and pink plants, grow the seeds, and perhaps some of the offspring would have short stems with pink



Dried pod with seeds



Seeds sprouting in water



Transplanted seedlings



flower are both easy to identify and readily accessible.

I used a watercolor paintbrush, and dusted the pollen from the anthers of my red amaryllis flower to the stigma of my pink amaryllis.

Within six weeks, the petals shriveled, developing a pod that dried and split

or more. Although I was unaware of this at the time, amaryllis should be planted with about two-thirds of the bulb above the potting medium. Also, keeping plants slightly pot bound encourages the development of flowers over foliage.

Within three months of receiving my Christmas gift, one of my friends texted photos of her plant putting up a flower spike.

Shortly after that, I received follow-up photos of its coral-colored blooms. About a month later, one of my own plants also rewarded me

Offspring bulbs after two years and the first flower spike

to reveal, round, papery amaryllis seeds. They were so thin, that they appeared to be infertile, but on closer inspection each papery disk had a slight bump, which was the living part of the seed.

Amaryllis seeds can germinate in water, so I sprinkled them in a shallow container of water, and in two weeks, the seeds sprouted roots.

I picked out the germinating seeds and transplanted them into pots, where they quickly developed small leaves and bulbs.

The plants continued to grow steadily. Two years later, I had over 60 junior amaryllis plants with bulbs that were the size of ping pong balls and roots that distended the sides of their pots. The forest of plants eventually became so thick that I decided to get rid of any that I thought would not produce pink blooms.

I noticed that the leaves of the pink amaryllis parent were completely green, but the red parent had small red speckles at the base of its leaves. Using this as a possible clue for identifying bloom colors, I culled all junior plants showing any hint of red in their leaves and sold them at a garage sale.

Eighteen bulbs now remained, so I cut off the leaves, potted three bulbs per pot, and gave them as Christmas gifts to friends with a disclaimer that they might not bloom for a year



The two parent plants and one of the 60 or so offspring

with a coral-pink bloom that was shorter than the pink amaryllis parent, but taller than the red parent. My friends and I are looking forward to seeing the type of flowers that the remaining un-bloomed bulbs have in store.

Conclusion: Growing amaryllis from seed is easy and could make a fun project after the holidays for plant-loving adults or sharing your love for gardening with children. Although I thought that waiting years for the young plants to bloom would be boring, they were always changing enough to hold my interest. Amaryllis are also self-fertile, so if you don't care about crossing two plants and only want the experience of growing a spectacular flower, you only need one plant to set seeds.

Because the stem height can vary on the same plant, I will need to observe more flower spikes on my offspring plants to state unequivocally that heredity, and not environmental factors, is making the spikes shorter than the mother plant. In contrast, bloom colors of the parent plants have been consistent between flowerings, so I don't expect a coral-colored amaryllis offspring to produce pinker blooms later on. It is possible that another offspring plant could flower in the same shade of pink as the mother plant, but I suspect that I would have to cross-pollinate offspring plants and raise hundreds of seedlings to produce the sturdy, pink amaryllis that I envision. Nevertheless, the outcome of my project went in the right direction, which I consider to be a success. I'm happy with my coral amaryllis, my curiosity is satisfied, and I'm ready for my next project!

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The Garden Project

Looking For Volunteers!

The Garden Project at the Greater Lansing Food Bank has received over 60 Pallets of seed racks (roughly a quarter of a million seed packets) from Meijer's stores statewide. The Garden Project is looking for volunteers to sort the seeds at its warehouse in Bath, so that they can be redistributed in the spring. Volunteer hours are eligible for MSU Extension Master Gardener certification credit. To sign up and schedule time slots, please visit <https://greaterlansingfoodbank.org/volunteer> The Garden Project also has 300 lbs. of seed garlic still available for planting this fall.



Quick Look

Nov & Dec Greens Workshops— please review information in your Program Yearbook. This is most helpful and may answer some questions you have about the upcoming busy season.

Greens Market Sales on Sat. Dec 7th —We need you to help with the whole day. Set-up, staging, moving purchases, helping customer with purchases to their cars, clean-up too.

Christmas Tea Mon Dec 9th —In addition to our regular set-up, I am asking that we follow the standard set at our Summer Tea. We will collect canned goods and any financial donations. This will be delivered to the Greater Lansing Food Bank. Signup sheets will be available in Nov with what we need for the tea. Don't forget your favorite cup. We will have plenty of tea to taste.

Looking for a team of people who will be sorters at the Greater Lansing Food Bank. I need someone who will organize opportunities for people to help sort seed packets. We can arrange for sign-up sheets. Rick and Mary have both been helping at the Greater Lansing Food Bank with the seed sorting project.

Nov Celebrations

Rick Chung

Ann Lenhard

Barbara Lowes

Carol Ostrowski

Leigh Kussro