

Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 1

Spring Edition

March 2007

Hot Gardening



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Have You Ever Seen ME?

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)



In Michigan we gladly welcome the appearance of robins as proof of spring's return. But what about this one!

Take a real close look. Although most of the bird appears white, like a true albino, notice that the breast does show much of its normal coloration. A true "Albinistic" bird lacks pigmentation in ALL parts (skin/feathers and eyes). In short, the pigment cells that create color don't exist at all.

The Robin **PICTURED ABOVE** however, has a condition called "Leucism". The term "Leucistic" (*Loo-sis-tic*) is given to mammals fitting the condition of being "partially albino". Leucism causes birds (mammals) to appear paler than normal.

This is due to a lack of pigmentation, meaning pigment cells for color are not present in the skin, feathers or other parts of the bird (mammal). Many birds can look beige or cream-colored and some appear to be pure white. Leucism is purely genetic, and not nutritional in origin. The genetic mutation responsible for 'leucism' is a case of incomplete dominance, meaning, that it doesn't appear to be an 'all or nothing' type of genetic mutation.

***HOT** Garden Trends*

Garden trends move forward as quickly as fashion or decorating styles. Here's some trends to try and or be on the look out for:



Bold Colors

These have already gained ground in interior design, product packaging, and fashion. In the garden it means that hot pink and bright orange are no longer avoided as a flowerbed screamers. Today's gardeners are gladly open to the energy and excitement of bright, vivid hues.

Going Tropical

Traveling to exotic places is fun, but bringing that paradise home is better! Yes, this is actually possible with growers developing new plants such as frost-tolerant bananas and cold-tolerant windmill palm. Garden centers are also on the bandwagon and are making these new varieties available. Tender bulbs like Cannas also add tropical drama, with their giant leaves and exotic blooms. For more exotic flowers try vines like Bougainvillea, Hibiscus and



Mandivilla. They are simply "must have" tropical attention getters.

Stonescaping

No, I don't mean creating a rock garden. I mean featuring rocks themselves as focal points. Consider sculptural carved rocks, or stones with words laser cut into the surface. Giant boulders can substitute for shrubbery. A dry streambed "flowing" with smooth black, green or blue river stones could be the answer to a wet or dry area. On the subject of "keeping things flowing", stone paths move the eye through the garden or toward a focal point. Stones are being hollowed for bird-baths or water basins. They're also perfect winter interest objects. Stone definitely fits everyone's request for low-maintenance and or low-water-use gardens. Besides, you just can't kill a good rock.

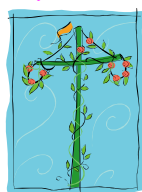


Moving Water

For the past few years, ponds have been all the rage in gardening trends. They do however, come with safety concerns and high maintenance. For those seeking the soothing sound of trickling water, think about the subject on a smaller scale. A tabletop or small patio fountain may be the way to go. They're simple to set up, low cost, and easier to maintain. Most can be used **BOTH** indoor or outdoor, so you get your money's worth year round.



Up & Away



Gardeners never seem to have enough space. This includes, people with small spaces, privacy needs, or eye-sores to hide.

So what do we do when we run out? Push the boundaries upward! The zest for vines has gone crazy with new varieties of Clematis, Roses and tropicals (mentioned earlier) being offered every season. Then of course there's the ever increasing market of unusual and artistic trellises, teepees, wire supports, and other fun/funky structures lift those blooms sky-high.

Garden Accents

Much of the creativity & personality of a garden is displayed in both the **PLANTS** as well as the **Art** of the garden. Unique benches, birdbaths, sundials, art glass and bird houses are at the top of many "gotta have" lists. The demand has fueled classes, seminars, and art groups with energy to make lots of cool garden crafts. The skill of creating bentwood trellises, curling steel rebar into plant supports, and forming rustic arches will continue as long as gardeners keep gardening.

The Gardening Lifestyle

This is a trend that my life already reflects, (I just didn't have a fancy name for it)! For myself and many others, gardening is **PERSONAL** & crosses the line from something they **DO**, to **who they ARE**. For these vivacious folks, gardening **IS** a **LIFESTYLE**. It becomes reflected in various aspects of their daily life. The trend is powered by garden magazines, gardening/practical work clothes as a fashion, interior design with a nature theme, neighborhood garden tours, and travel get-a-ways specifically for gardeners. Gardeners have become almost celebrities (seen HGTV lately?) & a culture onto themselves. I'll be joining in on the frenzy too, with the advent of our **EARTHENJOY PODCAST** coming soon!

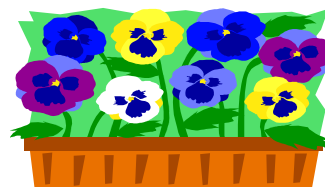
The downloads will soon be available as a companion/addition to this newsletter. I already do many public talks/classes/seminars in the "off season".....so taking on the I-Pod is next!

MUD IS BEAUTY...

(IN THE MAKING)

—Robert William Service

Pansy Power



Don't let the name fool you, Pansies are anything but frail, weak, or sensitive. They can take what March dishes out, including snow and freezing temperatures. Planted in a pot by your front door, or in your garden, they provide a cheerful sign that spring is on it's way. Here's some pansy pointers:

Buy Healthy Plants

While making your selection, pop a few plants out and examine the roots. They should be white, and not overly root bound. If the roots look brown, beware. That may be a sign of root rot. Healthy leaves should be a rich green color. Leaves that are yellow, spotted or have mold could indicate serious disease issues.

Plant Properly

Pansies thrive in full to part sun, well-drained soil, and steady moisture. Spring and fall are the best planting times as pansies prefer cooler temperatures.

Deadhead & Fertilize

At the time of planting, be sure to pinch off faded any blooms. Continue to deadhead every couple of days, to encourage more flowering. Feed weekly with a water soluble fertilizer.

Prune in June

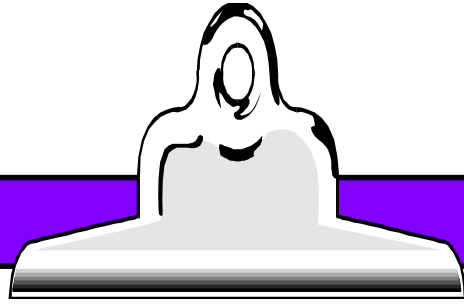
During the hot summer months (June through August), heat causes pansies to get leggy and lose blooms. When this happens, you can do one of two things. Either pull them to make room for summer annuals, or cut them back to the leafy green portion. The leaves will continue to grow and will be ready to bloom again in the cooler fall weather.



May Flowers Always
Line Your Path
& Sunshine
Light Your Day
—Irish Blessing

HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Gardener Gatherings



What & Where

Matthaei Botanical Gardens
Spring Plant Sale
May 4, 5 & 6

call 734-998-7061 for location & details

Canton Beautification Council
Perennial Exchange & Seminars
May 5th 9:00 AM 12:00 PM

call Ray at 734-502-2017 for location

Livonia Garden Club Plant Sharing
May 12th 10:00 AM 12:00 PM

at Historical Greenmead
call Liz at 734-425-6880 for details

Novi Spring Perennial Exchange
May 19th 9:00 AM 12:00 PM

Old Township Hall
10 mile Rd. E. of Taft
call 248-347-0400 for more info

Northville Historical Society
Perennial Exchange
at Historical Mill Race Village
May 26th 8:00 AM 12:00 PM

call 248-348-1845 for location & details

MSU Tollgate Gardens
Spring Plant Sale
June 2nd 9:00 AM 2:00 PM
call 248-347-3860 for location & details

Contact us at 734-416-0866 or earthenjoy@wowway.com