



**Master  
Gardener™**

An educational program of the LSU AgCenter

**ST. TAMMANY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**  
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Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy.  
 Sunshine in my eyes can make me cry.  
 Sunshine on the water looks so lovely.  
 Sunshine almost always makes me high.

John Denver

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Photo by J Blazek

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## Opening Our Hearts To The Youth At The FPJDC

There are times when a small action makes a large impact. This happens every week as our St. Tammany master gardeners work at the Florida Parishes Juvenile Detention Center. It started out as building a garden but has grown into a fulfilling educational program. Fulfilling not only to the youth who reside there, but also to the master gardeners who volunteer there.



This spring, master gardener volunteers installed a 30 by 50 foot garden on the grounds of the FPJDC using funds donated to Leadership St. Tammany. The catch was that the JDC needed help in maintaining the garden. They do not have the staff or expertise to deal directly with it. This is their third attempt at a garden project which takes as much effort to maintain as our own personal gardens do.

Since its installation, volunteers have spent a few hours on Thursday mornings working on and discussing the garden with a select group of youth. These boys are finishing high school or have already graduated and are taking on line technical or college classes. We chat with them at each visit to pick up tidbits about what they are interested in learning. Using these topics, we create discussions for the next visit. We talk about what they remember of their parent's or grandparent's gardens. They recall pleasant memories when they worked with family in those gardens. Each week we draw them further outward with our discussions. We have seen them go from reticent boys to ones who raise their hand to be recognized and volunteer information. They tell us what they know and how much they enjoy their time with us. They work hard to be allowed to participate in the garden project and to visit with us weekly.

Discussions have included topics on vegetables, flowers, composting, the types of and importance of pollinators, female and male parts of the flowers, soil fertility (we continue to struggle with this after buying bulk vegetable soil locally), soil fertilization, female and male flowers of cucurbits, and more. Each week, we chose a few topics that had previously come up in discussion. We include topics that are pertinent to the work that is to be accomplished that week.



During our first visit we asked the boys what they wanted to grow. We learned they were interested in hot peppers which led us to a discussion on Scoville units, the measurement of the heat factor in peppers. One youth wanted to grow honeydew melon. When we could not locate a plant, we brought one to eat. That led us to a discussion on hybrids and their seeds. An existing blueberry patch is being re-invigorated and cultivated. We plan make a blueberry pie for them. We want to try varieties of cherry tomatoes to have them taste the differences. They are journaling what they see and experience.

## Opening Our Hearts To The Youth At The FPJDC, continued

Table talks about bees, worms, and composting are big hits. Taste testing fruits and vegetables creates engagement, a little fun, and enjoyment. Feedback from their schoolteacher is extremely positive with the boys asking for copies of the handouts we bring. They are asked to do a little research on the projects. It is a nice diversion from their day-to-day activities.

The boys are doing a great job and have a lot of pride in their garden. They continue to warm up to us. Volunteer Melanie Edwards thanked them for the work they had done recently. One of them made eye contact and said, "You just do not understand how much these lessons in the garden mean to us". Our hearts swelled with happiness.



We are planting the seeds for these young men to enjoy food from the garden, make delicious meals from the fruits of their labor, and encourage healthy eating. We are introducing observational skills in monitoring the garden, in noticing changes. This project gives them the opportunity to work hard and nurture something. They are growing in knowledge and building skills that they can take with them when they leave. Should their passion for gardening become something akin to what we master gardeners have, they can pursue a job or further their education in horticulture, landscaping, or a culinary field. Now that is a fantastic impact ... master gardeners passing their joy of gardening to another generation!

We would love to have more volunteers. Should you desire to join us, please contact me at [christinefoster63@gmail.com](mailto:christinefoster63@gmail.com) or 985-264-1737. Any week would be wonderful.

All photos by C Foster

Christine Foster  
Master Gardener  
FPJDC Project Chair

## Time to Divide Your Iris Plants

August is a great time to divide your iris plants. During the end of the summer, iris are dormant. There are no blooms and the leaves may even be spotted and brownish-yellow. Dividing iris plants now does not interfere with blooms or growth. In fact, quite the opposite. If individual plants are crowded together, dividing them now will improve next year's growth and blooms. To make digging easier, be sure to pick a day after a good rain when the soil is still damp.



Using a sharp shovel, cut down into the ground separating individual plants from the larger group.



Then gently dig under the rhizomes and roots to lift the plant. This can also be done with a large garden fork.



## Time to Divide Your Iris Plants, continued



Expose the rhizome connecting the plant to the neighboring iris. Identify where the younger rhizome meets the older rhizome. Young rhizomes are thinner and have new green shoots attached. Using a clean pair of gardening shears, cut the new rhizome leaving about five inches on the transplant.



This grouping is actually several plants and can be further subdivided as long as each fan of leaves has roots and a piece of rhizome.



Individual viable iris plants with roots and rhizome.

## Time to Divide Your Iris Plants, continued



Keep exposed rhizomes and roots moist. For best results, transplants should be placed back in the ground quickly. Plant about 12 inches apart. Be sure the rhizome is horizontal, not vertical, when placing it in the ground. Plant the fan of leaves in the direction you want the iris to spread. Mulch will keep the ground moist while the transplants get acclimated to their new home.



Transplants can also be potted if not placed in the ground right away. This makes it easier to share plants with families and friends. After potting, trim the leaves to five to six inches tall.



## Time to Divide Your Iris Plants, continued

Usually, iris beds need to be divided every two to three years or so. The farther apart you place the transplants, the longer it will be before you have to divide them again. Dividing will improve blooming and overall health of the plants.

Where should you plant them? Iris like the sunniest place in your yard. They need a minimum of six hours of sun in order to produce a bounty of blooms. More sun hours? Even better. Water them well after transplanting. Iris love water. They do very well in a trench, in a shallow ditch, on the side of a fresh water lake or waterway. They even do well potted and placed in a few inches of water in an aquatic garden.



All photos by J Blazek

### Tips for success:

1. Over-crowding and too little sun are the most common reasons for poor blooming in iris plants.
2. Iris rhizomes should be planted horizontally about an inch below the surface of the ground.
3. After transplanting your iris, if there is lack of rain, water the plants once or twice a week for the next several months. Be generous. It is hard to over-water an iris.
4. When preparing a spot for your iris transplants, place several inches of compost in the new bed. And do not forget to mulch after planting.

### References:

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/beauty/iris/louisiana/index.shtml>

[http://apps.lsuagcenter.com/news\\_archive/2010/september/get\\_it\\_growing/Its-time-to-divide-Louisiana-irises.htm](http://apps.lsuagcenter.com/news_archive/2010/september/get_it_growing/Its-time-to-divide-Louisiana-irises.htm)

[https://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/communications/news/news\\_archive/2015/august/get-it-growing/its-time-to-divide-louisiana-irises](https://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/communications/news/news_archive/2015/august/get-it-growing/its-time-to-divide-louisiana-irises)

[LSU Agcenter PDF on Louisiana Iris](#)

Jamie Blazek  
Master Gardener  
Vegucator  
Editor, *The Gardengoer*

## Fontainebleau State Park: Project Three

The newest Fontainebleau State Park project for the STMGA master gardeners, in conjunction with the Sierra Club, was the planting of a native pollinator garden near the entrance to the first campground. It is considered stage one of project three because some of the existing plants (sugarcane, ginger, and lantana) were left temporarily. As we receive more native plant donations, and the natives currently there grow and multiply, we will relocate the non-natives to other areas.



The following were planted:

Lindheimer's Beeblossom, formerly known as Gaura (*Oenothera lindheimeri*)

Blue Mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum*)

Tickseeds (*Coreopsis gladiata & lanceolata*)

Scarlet Sage (*Salvia coccinea*)

Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)

Clasping Coneflower (*Rudbeckia amplexicaulis*)

Spotted Beebalm or Horsemint (*Monarda punctata*)

Indian Blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*)

Wingstem (*Verbesina alternifolia*)

Cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus & bipinnatus*)



## Fontainebleau State Park: Project Three, continued

Two plants are awaiting final designation, Joe-pyeweed (*Eutrochium maculatum* or *pupureum*), and Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata* or *pyncnostachya*). And it looks like a Swamp Sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*) snuck in with one of the red salvias.

All of these are considered native and are bee and butterfly friendly. Some reproduce at the root and will grow into clumps, others like Mistflower and Cosmos self-seed. We also planted additional lantana (yellow). Although not considered native, it was donated and is much loved by butterflies.



During an interview Margie Vicknair-Pray, the Sierra Club project leader, invited all interested members of the public to volunteer and join the project which successfully brought in new members to the team! Another initiative was started since our last report. We dubbed it “Control of Invasives.” It is led by master gardener, Patty Zebreck. Patty started the workday with a presentation on how to identify young tallows and camphors. After, she, Will Afton (LSU AgCenter County Agent), Barbara Hargrove (from the Folsom Native Plant Society), and master gardener, Deborah Nolen, walked the park and identified four main culprits. By far the biggest invasive plant is the Chinese Tallow Tree (*Triadica sebifera*) followed by the Camphor Tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*).



An area near the Visitor’s Center was identified and the workers concentrated on pulling young seedlings and marking larger trees. Further workdays are planned on the first and third Mondays of each month when larger saplings and trees will be removed with the help of the park personnel and an outside contractor.

Kim Burt  
Master Gardener  
Vegucator  
FSP Project Chair

The rest of the photos by K Burt

# The Otis House Garden At Fairview Riverside State Park

The Otis House Garden is a St. Tammany Master Garden Project. Pruning and garden maintenance started early this year. Visiting the Otis House garden in late February may have led some to wonder, “Where’s the garden?” After major pruning, that lush old garden of roses and perennials was reduced to sticks.



Pre-pruning and maintenance

Experienced gardeners know the benefits of pruning. While it is sometimes difficult to lop off blooms, the plants will rebound and reward. Some skeptical gardeners wondered about such hard pruning. After trying it, though, they let me know how beautifully their plants had grown. The roses at the Otis House bloomed more abundantly this year than last, but sadly, the weeds also flourished.



Post pruning and new edging



Hedge trimming the day lilies

Volunteers answered the call several days to help clean up the garden beds. Often filling several contractor bags with debris. Working in 90+ degree heat, I am amazed by the devotion and stamina of our master gardener volunteers. Their efforts are much appreciated. Judy McCloskey generously offered her truck to transport metal edging. Ann Satterlee used her hedge trimmer on the day lilies, saving us hours of clipping. Metal edging was installed around the center bed to replace rotted wooden landscape timbers. The same edging will be placed at other garden sections during our next two workdays.



Flat Stanley supervising the volunteers

We maintained the gardens throughout Covid, observing mandated precautions, but we could not offer programs for the public. I look forward to providing educational garden tours this year.



Harold Ryan with Baronne Prevost Rose

# The Otis House Garden At Fairview Riverside State Park, continued

A few of my favorite roses at Otis House



Prosperity Rose



Otis House and Louis Philippe Rose



Old Blush Rose



A spring day several months after pruning



Baronne Henriette de Snoy Rose



Caldwell Pink Rose



One group of volunteer master gardeners



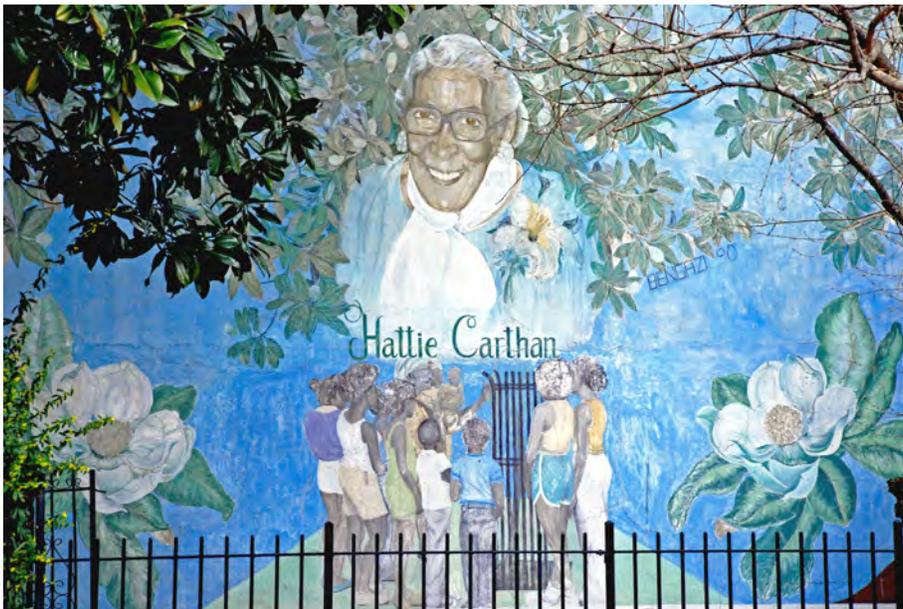
Mutabilis Rose

So many volunteers helped during several scheduled workdays this year. I would like to thank them all. Information on future workdays can be found in our MoM weekly e-mail. If you are interested in helping us with this project you can contact me at [adurel@bellsouth.net](mailto:adurel@bellsouth.net).

Ann Durel  
Master Gardener  
Otis House Gardens, Project Chair

## Recommended Video

Gardens can transform cities. Learn how two women made a difference in their neighborhoods and how they positively impacted the look and feel of their communities.



Google image of a mural at the Magnolia Tree Earth Center in Brooklyn, NY

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_g2CaF12xxw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_g2CaF12xxw)

Christine Foster  
Master Gardener  
FPJDC Project Chair

## To Bee or Not to Bee

It is summer in Louisiana and we humans are not the only beings enjoying our gardens. Now I am definitely not an expert on chemical pest control. I am always afraid that I will accidentally kill a beloved caterpillar or one of our honeybees. I am just not comfortable with using anything beyond a sprinkling of poison on a fire ant bed. So, if you want advice on how to get rid of stink bugs on your tomatoes, I am not your person. My perfect tomatoes come from the Farmer's Market.



Swallowtail caterpillar



Eastern Lubber Grasshopper

The longer I am a gardener, the more appreciative I have become of bugs. I have, however, become quite adept at killing a few that annoy me. The eastern lubber grasshopper, *Romalea guttata*, is one example. Their most favorite food, in my yard at least, are my St. Joseph's lilies which by summer have finished blooming and are just hanging out looking lush and apparently delicious.



Amaryllis St. Joseph Lilies

If ignored, lubbers will devour the lily leaves to the ground practically overnight. It is best to eliminate lubbers as babies right after they hatch in spring, but I never manage to do that. My method is to hunt down the adults. Sometimes, they elude me while sitting perfectly still. Hidden. But more often than not they jump as I walk by, drawing my attention. I used to feel a little sorry for them. So, wearing gloves, I would take them over to my neighbor's yard for a visit and a cup of tea. Eventually they would return to my lilies and start munching. Still feeling guilty, and still unable to kill them, I started putting them in the middle of the street. My thinking was if they were smashed by a car, the responsibility for their demise would not rest solely on my shoulders.

As the years passed, I have hardened. I now chase those lubbers down. Swat them off my plants. Stomp on them and grind them into the ground. I am a ruthless killer.

## To Bee or Not to Bee, continued

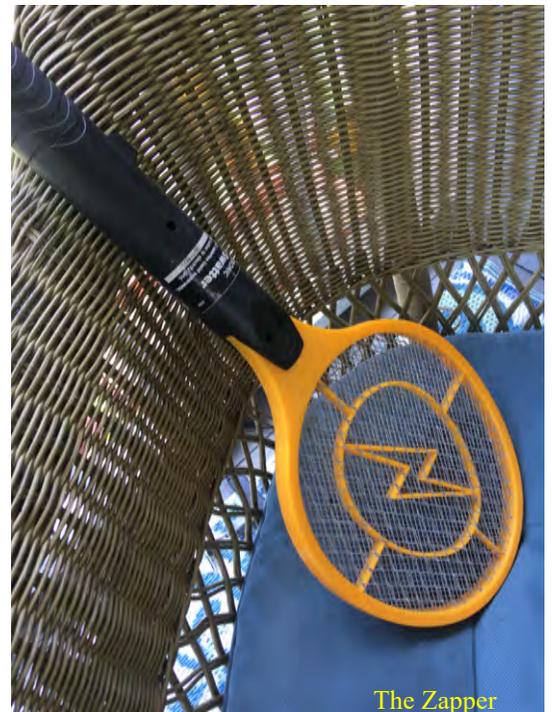
As for flies, I have a Bug-A-Salt gun. You simply load it with ... you guessed it ... salt. Then you wait until a fly lands within range.



This is one of my husband's favorite activities while sitting on the front porch. It has a laser light on it as well. A good aim, a steady pull on the trigger, and he can blast a fly right off a wine glass, sometimes without breaking it.

Gnats and mosquitoes get the Zapper treatment. It is a battery-operated swatter about the size of a small tennis racket that electrocutes the little beasts on contact. It works on a wasp too, if need be. Albeit a bit tortuous. Ineffective on flies unless you are really quick ... or they are really slow.

Years ago, while living in another place far, far away from Louisiana, my biggest pest problem was slugs. My favorite way to deal with them was to put out shallow bowls full of beer. The idea is to bury the bowls so that the edges are even with the soil. Pour in the brew and come back the next day to find the them drowned in their sorrows. This really worked well but was not very pretty. And what a waste of beer!



The Zapper

I am still waiting on a device that will satisfactorily obliterate a cockroach. What I want is to push a button on a remote and with a tiny puff of smoke ... poof! Gone without a trace. Please let me know immediately if you hear of the availability of such a thing.

## To Bee or Not to Bee, continued

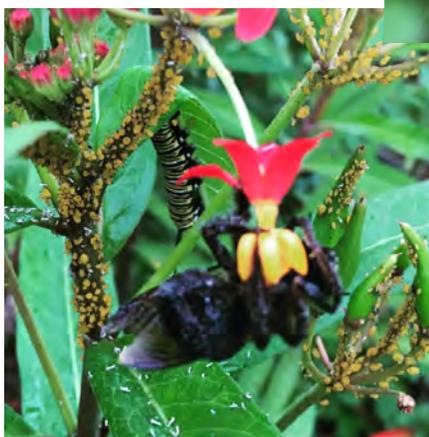
When I first moved into my house here in Louisiana, the yard was mostly barren. In the back it was all builder's sand and fleas. The front had some old camellias and a decent bit of St. Augustine grass. That was about it. I remember wandering around looking for life. There seemed to be no insects whatsoever, except the fleas. No earthworms, no spiders. Nothing. It was a wasteland. I hung a bird feeder and kept it full of black sunflower seeds so my feathered friends had something to eat. I laid down newspaper along the fences and dumped compost and soil. I begged my neighbors for plants. "Anything," I remember saying, "even weeds. I don't care". I acquired liriope and turk's cap, pink indigo and Alstroemeria, as well as seeds for the St. Joseph's lilies. It was summer. Not the best time to plant but I persevered. Finally, I began to see life.



Several years have passed and bugs are everywhere, beneficial ones as well as the annoying ones. There are bees buzzing in the clover, fat earthworms breaking down organic matter, beautiful orb weaver spiders spinning webs, and swallowtail caterpillars on my young Hop Wafer tree. I am happy with all of them. They are all welcome to stay and raise their families and to live out their lives without being sprayed, swatted, smashed, or stomped to death.



Pinky swear.



All photos by B Stanga

Billie Stanga  
Master Gardener

## A Virtual Tour Of Christine Foster's Garden in Santa Fe, NM



Join me on a virtual tour of the gardens in my home located in an historic district in Santa Fe, NM. This video was taken in early June right after the wisteria vine, oriental poppies and forsythia bushes had finished blooming. Santa Fe was recently moved from horticultural zone 5b to zone 6 due to climate change and regular drought conditions. Yet the flora and fauna continue to amaze.

Click on the following link or copy and paste into your web browser:

<https://youtu.be/JQyJDGiQJF4>

I hoped you enjoy this tour of my western garden in spring. Stay tuned for a video to be taken in August or September. Even more flowers will be in full bloom as the garden transitions through the summer season. In addition you will see a 50-year-old apricot tree and an apple tree dropping fruit.

Christine Foster  
Master Gardener  
FPJDC Project Chair

## Apple Snails: A Dangerous Invasive

Apple snails, *Pomacea maculata*, are an invasive species of mollusks that have been found in Louisiana. They live underwater but lay their eggs above the water line on rocks, trees, piers, and vegetation. These snails prefer slow-moving fresh water and can have a negative impact on the rice and crawfish industry here. They have few natural predators in Louisiana. The snails are large and can be golden to dark brown in color. The eggs are pink and from afar may look like bubblegum. Apple snails serve as an intermediate host for a parasite, rat lungworm, which can infect humans who eat the undercooked snail meat or contaminated produce. Some apple snails in Louisiana have tested positive for this parasite. The eggs should not be handled by bare hands because they can contain a neurotoxin that affects eyes and skin.



If you spot these large snails or their eggs you should report the occurrence to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries by phone, 225-765-3977, or by email [aquaticinvasives@wlf.la.gov](mailto:aquaticinvasives@wlf.la.gov). Include pictures, location, and contact information to make it easier to confirm identification.

To learn more about removal and control of this invasive species, refer to the brochure from Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries:

[https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/assets/Resources/Publications/Invasive\\_Species/Applesnail-Brochure.pdf](https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/assets/Resources/Publications/Invasive_Species/Applesnail-Brochure.pdf)

Jamie Blazek  
Master Gardener  
Vegucator  
Editor, *The Gardengoer*

# Landscaping A New Home From Scratch

In the next two months, my husband and I are moving out of our 100+ year-old house surrounded by 100-year-old trees, large shrubs, and 16 years of my own gardening effort. We are moving into a newly constructed house in a developing neighborhood. I will be starting my yard almost from scratch. Over the next couple of years, I plan to periodically chronicle the evolution of my landscape from where it is today to my dreamed-of oasis. I will highlight the plans we make, detours we choose (or are forced to make by necessity), successes, failures, and lessons. I will report an estimate of cost as I go along.

I am doing this for two reasons:

- to discipline myself to record progress
- to help others make good decisions and avoid some mistakes that I will surely make.

Lucky the builder did not scrape the entire site completely bare. He left some nice, big trees in the rear half of the backyard, and a few nice trees in the front (mostly oaks, a couple of pines, and miscellaneous others). Beyond that, a nice, new house and a mess of a yard that covers well over an acre.



While I am good at picking plants and getting them in a good spot, I am hopeless when it comes to hardscape design, focal points, picturing the finished product, etc. At 64, I am too old to waste time, effort, or money on poorly conceived plantings. I want to get it right from the start if I can. I want a plan that I can achieve in phases because I do not have an unlimited budget. Enter the landscape designer.

I provided the designer with my project program. A program defines what the plan must accomplish.

My project program:

- more trees
- four seasons of color
- plants that are not fussy or require constant pruning
- not more than 50% grass
- an informal cottage look
- fruit trees
- a future vegetable garden
- the rear section of the backyard should be a woodland garden with mostly native plants
- a list of plants I love, and those I loathe



## Landscaping A New Home From Scratch, continued

After meeting with the designer at the new house, we agreed that I should consult a professional arborist to discuss a large cherrybark oak tree with a hollowed area on the trunk. The arborist put my fears to rest when he declared the tree to be fundamentally sound, but in need of some TLC due to construction stress. Additionally, he suggested removal of a large limb from a backyard oak and removal of an ugly, scraggly pine tree. Cost of arborist consultation, \$140. Cost of limb removal \$900. My husband decided he could safely cut down the pine himself to save some money.

A few weeks later, I received the designer's first draft. As I hoped, he saw some possibilities that I had not conceived, but they made good sense. For example, he designated a "utility" area in an inconspicuous space behind the garage to house a shed, raised beds, potting area, etc., all within a picket fence that can be a landscape feature. He laid out planting beds that did not quite hit the mark, so it was back to the drawing board.



The designer's second draft included revisions based on the best ideas from him, my spouse, and me. This included a front entry walk that promised lots of blooms, the Japanese maples my hubby wanted. The backyard will now feature a flagstone patio, and a terraced effect that provides a clear differentiation between the cultivated area near the house, and the wilder woodland area in the back.

Cost of the completed plans, \$1,700. Total invested so far: \$2,740. The yard is still a complete mess, but now I have a plan. So the project seems less overwhelming.



All photos by B Lachin

Next step: installing hardscape and some drainage and erosion control measures. Stay tuned!

Beth Lachin  
Master Gardener  
STMGA Membership Committee Chair

## A Book Review: Finding The Mother Tree



**FINDING THE  
MOTHER TREE**  
Discovering the  
Wisdom of the Forest  
**SUZANNE SIMARD**

Do trees communicate with their own species, as well as other species? Do trees share nutrients? Does a mother tree take care of her offspring? These are some of the research topics covered in the long academic career of Suzanne Simard, author of this book.

This New York Times best seller takes the reader on a journey from the point of view of a child, sister, mother, researcher, teacher, and cancer patient. In her great wisdom, she shows how everything on the earth is connected. Trees are not just for pulp but are creatures of great depths. They communicate and cooperate with their offspring and other species through a complicated web. Their community is not all that different from our own.

The author was raised in the logging world of British Columbia. She writes of her childhood days spent cataloging the trees in the forest. How she came to love and respect them. She guides us through her research, her academic career, the birth of her children and her battle with cancer.

This book gets a little technical at times, but it is a book that any master gardener would enjoy.

Jack Morgan  
Master Gardener

## Longue Vue House and Gardens in July



The July day was warm and cloudy. We arrived at Longue Vue early so we could tour the gardens first. The gardens have a variety of styles and many species of plants, including artichokes (pictured below). My friend Jane gave us the tour of the Longue Vue house. She is an excellent guide and the wife of our own Dave Maher. Jane revealed Longue Vue's fascinating story. The interiors are lovely and filled with original furnishings.



Longue Vue House and Gardens in July, continued



All photos by B Pierce

Monica Pierce  
Master Gardener



Photo by M Blazek

Jamie Blazek  
Master Gardener  
Vegucator  
Editor, *The Gardengoer*

**THE GARDENGOER**  
**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE**  
**ST. TAMMANY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**



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