

MSU IN BLOOM

MSU HORTICULTURE GARDEN NEWS



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2020 Garden Member Sale

October 5-15

Public Sale

October 6-15

Pickup - as scheduled

October 19-24

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY KRISTIN GETTER, DIRECTOR OF THE MSU HORTICULTURE GARDENS

What an unusual summer it has been for our Gardens this year. Despite our limited student help, our wonderful Gardens' staff and volunteers really worked hard to keep the Gardens looking great. If you haven't visited us recently, late summer is the time to see the Annual Gardens at their peak (pictures below).



All of our July and August weddings were cancelled this summer, but last week we did finally receive approval to have entirely outdoor weddings (no use of our Conservatory or indoor spaces) for weddings with under 100 guests. Of course, social distancing guidelines and masks are still required (picture right), but most wedding parties seem glad to comply.

As many of you have already probably heard, MSU has decided to move all classes with some exceptions) to an online format. That will present a challenge for our instructors who teach lab courses (including myself), but it will protect our greenhouse and Gardens' staff as we won't have students coming into our greenhouses and headhouse areas this semester for their in-class lab work.

We are hoping to host our Fifth Annual Houseplant and Succulent sale again this Fall. Because it will be a contactless pick-up event, we are offering it in October (instead of November) so that the weather will be more amenable to picking up orders outdoors.



Left: The two beds alongside this sidewalk were designed by our Trial Gardens' intern and have filled in nicely. Right: Another gorgeous design by our Trial Gardens' manager.

YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED WHICH HOUSEPLANTS SURVIVED 10 WEEKS WITHOUT WATERING

BY KRISTIN GETTER, DIRECTOR OF THE MSU HORTICULTURE GARDENS

Oops – I forgot to bring my office plants home. When you are sent home in a rush in mid-March to work remotely, you would think any horticulturist would think of bringing their plants home with them. In my naivete, thinking we would only be going home for a few weeks to work remotely and thinking that I could still go into the office any time I wanted to, I chose to leave my plants at work. I wasn't allowed back into the building until almost 10 weeks later (to just pick up mail and grab some much-needed office supplies). Upon checking my plants, I was quite surprised which ones survived.

Of course, the Jade plant (*Crassula ovata* or *C. argentea*) and Thimble cactus (*Mammillaria gracilis fragilis*) were fine given their succulent nature. The ZZ plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*) was also fine given the round rhizomes they possess that function to store water. I knew that the Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum* spp.) wouldn't make it – and it didn't (pictured above).



The Peace Lily didn't survive COVID-19

But, the Prayer plant (*Marnata leuconeura*) survived (pictured below left), which is surprising given it is native to tropical South America and this particular *Marnata* species does not have tuberous roots as a water storage organ. Also surprising me was Chinese Evergreen (*Aglaonema commutatum*; pictured below middle) as most sources indicate that this species shouldn't be allowed to dry down for more than a few days. And finally, lucky bamboo (*Dracaena sanderiana*; picture below right) also survived. Given its need for consistently moist soils, and even being entirely adapted to growing in water, this surprised me most of all.



Left to right: The Prayer plant, Chinese Evergreen, and Lucky Bamboo did survive COVID-19.

PANDEMIC GARDENING

BY BETHANY TROY, PERENNIAL GARDEN MANAGER

Working with plants, I never would have imagined that we would be deemed essential during a global pandemic. This isn't to say we don't appreciate being here – of course, continuing to have a routine, and being surrounded by beauty on a daily basis is one of the greatest gifts of all right now. And how appropriate to be deemed essential when plants are needed more than ever for people to be hopeful, to escape, to notice and appreciate what is immediately around them.



Without our usual events and without students and faculty on campus, what are our gardens like this year? What have we encountered that we normally don't see? How have we been dealing with volunteer help and with student labor? Continue reading to get a little insider's look on how the MSU Horticulture Gardens are coping during this time.

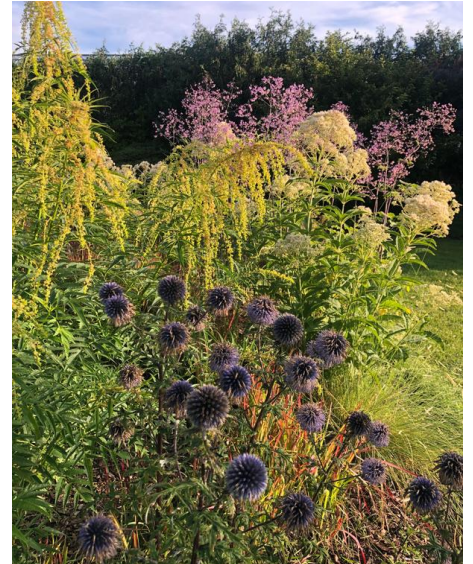
For one, labor has been an interesting feat. Instead of our normal 15(ish) students, we have around six students. This typically gives us about four students at a time, given days off and schedule changes. Despite this, it feels as if we have been getting more compliments than ever. Patrons, many of which seem new or have never been to the gardens before, are very appreciative of this space, and seek it for comfort and healing. It has been refreshing to know how important the gardens are during tough times within our community. That being said, some of our patrons have an uncontrollable surge of freedom when they enter the gardens – something we deal with on a case-by-case basis. We love your sense of freedom you feel when you enter the gardens. Keep in mind, we have living collections to protect and maintain!

Volunteers have been approved to work with us in the mornings, only three volunteers at a time. This has been very helpful as they rotate throughout different areas of the gardens. It's a change from the normal, of course – there are no delicious snacks to share, and we have to stay distanced and keep proper measures in place to ensure healthy habits. What felt like a hard-working social club has turned into a small team of eager-weeders. Regardless, our volunteers have shown us yet again how dedicated and passionate they are about our community. Again, another blessing we hold dear to our hearts and do not take for granted.



For me, my mind has been fixated on keeping our living collections alive. This means lots of watering and weeding, and not as much mulching and edging. This may prove for more work in the future, but for now we are thankful that our gardens are full, lush, and ready for the public to enjoy. With mostly one student all summer at my side (six feet apart, of course), we have surprisingly planted a lot of perennials, created and dismantled multiple beds, and have had a summer full of learning, singing, and laughter. We hope you have found time to fit this into your lives, as well. If anything, gardening is a friendly reminder of what is important to us when times are hard. That is our community, growth, being surrounded by living things, and appreciating the beauty in every living moment.

Remember – the gardens are here for you during this time. Feel free to come enjoy a walk through our fourteen acres of garden to pass the time, enjoy the sunshine, and learn something new.



2020
Michigan State University
HORTICULTURE GARDENS
Become a
MEMBER
Support the Gardens

2020 Garden Memberships are still available! You will enjoy the reciprocal membership to gardens while you are traveling in addition to early-bird access and 10% off your purchases during the 2020 Houseplant & Succulent Sale!

Join Today!

hrt.msu.edu/gardensmembership

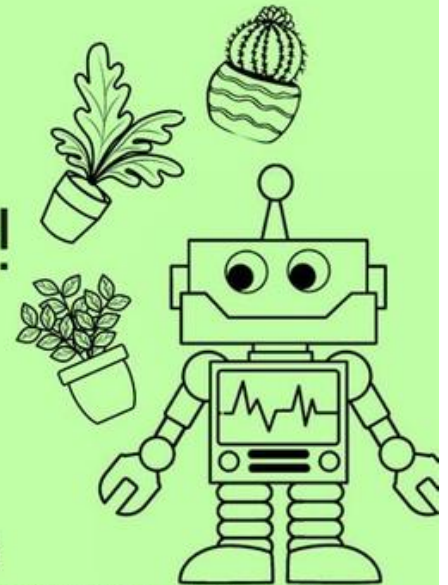
HOUSEPLANT & SUCCULENT SALE

BY DAEDRE MCGRATH, ANNUAL GARDEN MANAGER

After canceling the Spring Plant Sale, we are excited to bring you the 2020 Houseplant & Succulent Sale - Virtual Edition! The sale will be available online at hrt.msu.edu/houseplantandsucculentsale, starting October 5 for 2020 Garden Members only (with 10% off!), and October 6-15 for the general public. Not a member yet? Become a member today! hrt.msu.edu/gardensmembership

Fifth Annual

HOUSEPLANT & SUCCULENT SALE - Virtual Edition!



WHAT: PLANT SALE FUNDRAISER FEATURING CACTI, SUCCULENTS, FOLIAGE PLANTS, AND OTHER HOUSEPLANTS

HOW & 1. ONLINE PRE-ORDER ONLY, NO IN-PERSON SHOPPING

WHEN: 2. PRE-ORDERING STARTS OCTOBER 6 THROUGH OCTOBER 15

3. 2020 GARDEN MEMBERS GET EARLY-BIRD ORDERING ON OCTOBER 5 & 10% DISCOUNT

4. CURBSIDE ORDER PICKUP (BY APPOINTMENT) OCTOBER 19-24

ORDER PICKUP: 1066 BOGUE STREET
PLANT & SOIL SCIENCES BLDG
EAST LANSING, MI, 48824



ORDER HERE: hrt.msu.edu/houseplantandsucculentsale

NOT A MEMBER? JOIN TODAY: hrt.msu.edu/gardensmembership

ASK THE EXPERT

Salvaged from the now defunct Michigan Gardening Magazine, join us for Daedre's final Ask The Expert questions!

BY DAEDRE MCGRATH
TRIAL GARDEN MANAGER

White Mold

Question: It's mid-summer and all of a sudden my zinnias are dying. I'm seeing white fuzzy stuff at the base of the plant. Why are my plants getting moldy?

-Julie M. from East Lansing

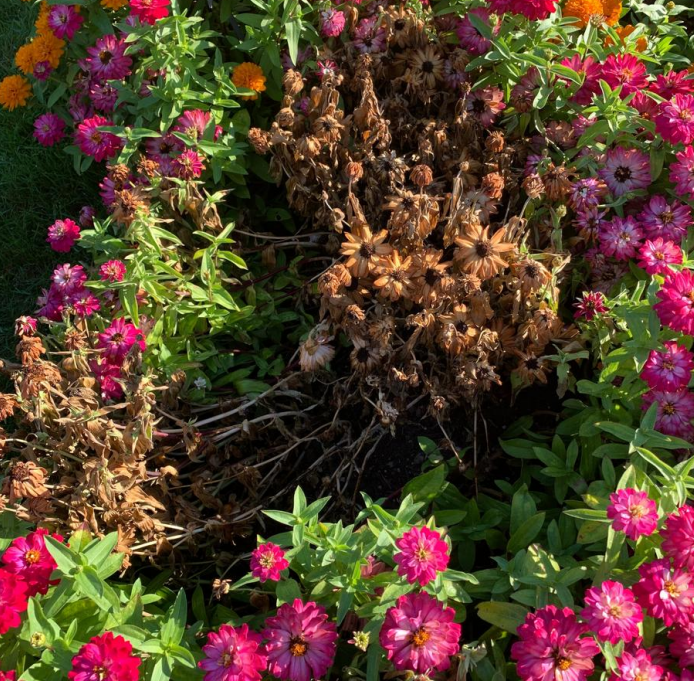
Answer: Sounds like your plants are suffering from Sclerotinia stem rot, a type of white mold that can affect many vegetables and bedding plants. It is most prevalent in warm, moist environments, which is why it usually shows up during humid summers. In the garden I manage, I have seen it affect zinnias, ornamental peppers, gaillardia, gomphrena, and basil, among others. The white fuzzy stuff you are seeing is the mycelium of this fungal pathogen, which excretes enzymes and oxalic acid that breaks down plant tissue, causing water-soaked lesions. Since this pathogen is soil-borne, the infection usually starts at the base of the plant, causing the stem to rot. Soon after, the entire plant will start to wilt. Unfortunately, there's not a lot that can be done to treat already infected plants. The pathogen can also persist in the soil from year to year, so once you have it, it's hard to get rid of. Improving air flow in your garden can help, so don't cram too many plants into a small space. Also, avoid planting plants that you know are susceptible.

Photos:

Top- White mold in a bed of zinnia. The infection often starts in the moist middle of a flower bed, then spreads outwards.

Middle- The white fuzzy mycelium of white mold (here, on ornamental pepper) can grow and spread quickly during warm and moist summers.

Bottom- Basil is another genus highly susceptible to white mold, especially when it is planted en-masse, such as in this crowded flower bed.



2020 STUDENT FAVORITES

Malinda Barberio

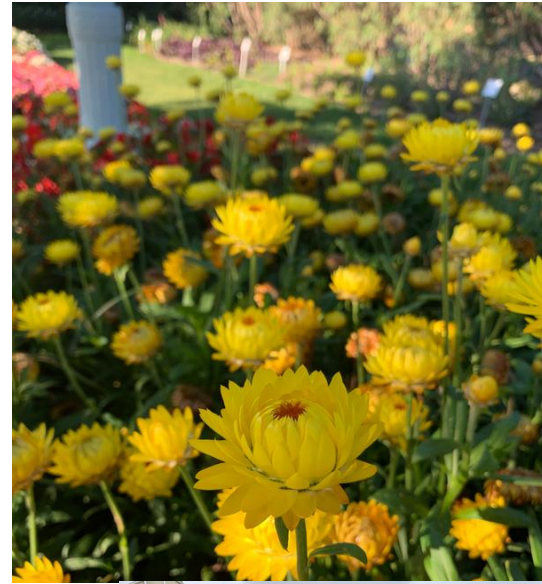
Recipient of the 2020 Annual Trial Garden Internship, which is generously co-funded by the Western Michigan Greenhouse Association and the Metro Detroit Flower Growers Association.

Some of her favorite plants this year:

***Bracteantha* 'Granvia Gold'** (right-second from top): This is a supersized strawflower. This is one of my favorite plants in the annual trials this year. It is extremely vigorous, heat tolerant, and mildew resistant.

***Colocasia* 'Coffee Cups'** (right-third from top): I'm an aroid-lover, so another one of my favorite plants this year is a Colocasia, or elephant ear. '*Coffee Cups*' is a cool variety because the cup-shaped foliage collects rainwater.

***Petunia* 'Easy Wave Silver'** (right-bottom): My final favorite plant in the trial this year also happens to also be one of our top performers. The flowers have a beautiful iridescent sheen.



Danielle Ellsworth

We are lucky to have Danielle Ellsworth back in the Gardens for the second summer. She has been a tremendous help getting the Arboretum shaped up. Danielle's favorite plant this year is Sweetshrub or *Calycanthus* 'Aphrodite'.

