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Between the Rows: Your own Eden; Master Gardener Spring Symposium March 21

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Creating Your Own Eden is the name of this year's fact- and delight-loaded Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Spring Symposium on Saturday, March 21, at Frontier Regional High School in South Deerfield. I can imagine a garden Eden where all the trees welcome insects to take a modest banquet from their leaves, where birds eat some of those insects, where weeds and flowers grow to provide food for caterpillars, some of which also get eaten, and where butterflies tour different flowers to gorge on nectar. Eden is a beautiful and sustainable garden.

Some of us already are sensitive to the dangers of pesticides and herbicides in our garden. Some of us are trying to do away with our lawns in order to add plants that support the insects, birds and butterflies that add so much beauty to the Eden that we all try to make of our garden. And yet, it can be so confusing. There is so much information. How will we take in all that information so we can use it?

The annual Master Gardener Symposium is the perfect place to get information and have questions answered.

Keynote speaker Kim Eierman is not only a master gardener herself, she is a master naturalist, and operates EcoBeneficial, her consulting firm that supports the use of native plants and the creation of sustainable landscapes. I will be prepared to take notes when she presents "EcoBeneficial Gardening: Going Beyond Sustainability." I have already looked at her website, www.ecobeneficial.com, and found information that is clear and specific. For example, most of us do not have a large plot of land so, while it is good to know that native oaks support over 500 types of insects and birds, we may not have the space for an oak tree.

The next best tree is the black cherry, *Prunus serotina*, which offers nectar and pollen to native pollinators and honey bees. The small red or black fruits are a favorite food of more than 40 species of birds and many mammals. It also serves as a host plant for over 450 species of moths and butterflies.

In addition to Eierman's keynote speech, an array of workshops is being offered. Morning sessions range from how to sharpen tools, to native shrubs for the garden, how to make a rustic twig trellis and more. In the afternoon, Eierman will speak again, this time in a presentation titled "Replacing the Green Desert; Native Turf Alternatives." Other afternoon sessions include how to make nutrient dense soil, attract pollinators and make lacto-fermented vegetables.

I will be giving an illustrated talk about sustainable roses in the afternoon. I have been growing pesticide- and herbicide-free roses on my Heath hill for over 30 years. When visitors come to the Annual Rose Viewing in June, many of them ask how I grow roses with such clean foliage and what they should do about the various problems their roses suffer. I am really no help at all in this area, because by chance, and sometimes by design, my roses don't have disease problems. The fate of the sustainable rose is not in our hands, it is in the genes of the particular rose. I am happy to pass on the news that "Roses Without Chemicals," by Peter Kukielski, is now available. I met Kukielski when he was curator of the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden at the New York Botanical Garden, but he is now a part of the American Rose Trials for Sustainability. He is the king of sustainable roses.

A keynote speaker and workshops are not enough to prepare for spring. Vendors and book sellers will be on hand. My book, "The Roses at the End of the Road," will be on sale for the event as well.

Registration forms are online and can be downloaded, then mailed in. The form lists all the workshop sessions so you can take your pick. The earlier you mail in your form, the better chance you have of getting your preferred programs. You can also order lunch if you wish. Questions? Email gardensymposium123@gmail.com and Lucy Alman will have the answers.

Upcoming events

- Today, March 7, is the last Winter Farmers Market at Greenfield Middle School on Federal Street. Hours are 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will be local vegetables, apples, honey, jams, wool and lots more. Bread and soup will also be available. The regular Farmers Market Season begins May 2. I assume the snow will be gone by then.
- Today is also the day that the Spring Bulb Show at the Lyman Plant House at Smith College begins. It will end March 22. The doors are open every day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This year's show is inspired by Claude Monet's gardens at Giverny. A \$5 donation is suggested.
- From March 7 to March 22, Talcott Greenhouse at Mount Holyoke College is hosting its annual free Spring Flower Show. This year, the theme is Tropical Oasis, but you'll enjoy many familiar and beloved spring bloomers like primroses and hyacinths as well. Doors are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Happily, the Art Museum is right next to Talcott Greenhouse so you could fill your day with a double delight.

In spite of the snow, spring is well on its way here.

Pat Leuchtman has been writing and gardening in Heath at End of the Road Farm since 1980. Readers can leave comments at her website: www.commonweeder.com.

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