

September 19, 2015

As I write this we are having the third day in a row with the promise of fall in the air! Now that Labor Day is behind us, it is time to start thinking of what you need to do in your garden before the end of the autumn season. While we probably have two months of good weather ahead of us, it always passes quickly.

Container grown trees, shrubs and perennials can be planted now through November and will be busy growing roots over the fall and winter. They will be well established when spring arrives and will be much larger next summer than their spring-planted counterparts. If you want to plant pansies, violas, ornamental cabbages, kale, and other annuals for winter and spring color, try to get them planted as soon as they become available, while the days are still warm and the nights are starting to cool, so they are well settled in before cold weather arrives. All winter annuals want fertile soil, a well-drained site, and as much sun as possible.



Bulbs such as daffodils, crocus, and grape hyacinths can be planted in October. Tulips and Dutch hyacinths should be planted right after Thanksgiving, or in early December, after the soil temperature has dropped. If you are moving trees or shrubs in your own garden, it is best to wait until we have had a killing frost and the leaves have dropped naturally. The plants are dormant then and will suffer less transplant shock than if you moved them in leaf. In any case, dig them with as much soil attached as possible.

Last issue I brought up the subject of Crepe Myrtle scale. Chris Cosby has covered this in more depth. It makes us realize that nothing in nature stays the same forever, and, as gardeners, we need to learn to adapt as things change. Nick Esthus has given us the update on the newly-rebuilt Japanese bridges. You now will know the facts about why they are built in the true Japanese style.

Wishing you all a pleasant and productive fall season,

Rick Powell

Bridge Over Tranquil Waters

If you have visited the Garden lately, you would have surely observed the renovations taking place on the zigzag bridge, or in Japanese, *yatsubashi*. Since I started working at the Botanic Garden just over 4 years ago, I've heard several stories of its origins. Some have called it a meditation bridge, in that you have to focus on your path, otherwise you could end up having an unforeseen swim. Another bit of folklore that has been used in association with zigzag bridges is that they provide a way to escape evil spirits, as they are only able to travel in straight lines. However, this is just a fun story, with no real basis in traditional Japanese garden design.



As with many of the elements found within Japanese gardens, many Westerners feel there must be a certain mystique or folklore which explains their purpose, but in reality, their identity and purpose mostly come from Japanese history, art, poetry, and culture.

Below you will find a brief history of the yatsubashi's origins, compiled by Dr. David Slawson, a Japanese garden designer and author on the subject, who trained in Japan and has spent much of his life living and learning the Japanese garden. My hope is that this explanation will give you a better appreciation of the yatsubashi and encourage you to learn more on Japanese gardens, their elements, and their origins.

“Once a certain man decided that it was useless for him to remain in the capital. With one or two old friends, he set out toward the east in search of a province in which to settle.

Since none of the party knew the way, they blundered ahead as best they could, until in time they arrived at a place called Yatsubashi in Mikawa Province. (It was a spot where the river branched into eight channels, each with a bridge, and thus it had come to be called Yatsubashi—‘Eight Bridges.’)



Dismounting to sit under a tree near this marshy area, they ate a meal of parched rice. Someone glanced at the clumps of irises that were blooming luxuriantly in the swamp. ‘Compose a poem

on the subject, *A Traveler's Sentiments*, beginning each line with a syllable from the word 'iris' [kakitsubata],' he said. The man recited,

I have a beloved wife,	KA-ra-go-ro-mo (からごろも)
Familiar as the skirt	KI-tsu-tsu-na-re-ni-shi (きつつなれにし)
Of a well-worn robe,	TSU-ma-shi-a-re-ba (つましあれば)
And so this distant journeying	HA-ru-ba-ru-ki-nu-ru (はるばるきぬる)
Fills my heart with grief.	TA-bi-wo-shi-zo-o-mo-u (たびをしぞおもう)

They all wept into their dried rice until it swelled with the moisture.”

-From *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan*, translated by Helen Craig McCullough (Stanford University Press, 1968)

The marsh scene of iris clumps and zigzag wooden plank bridges over the eight channels was later depicted in the famous paintings of Ogata Korin, and in Japanese gardens such as Korakuin in Okayama. You can see how knowing something about Japanese history and art can help us understand the scenic effects that evoke shared experience in Japanese gardens, and how we might evoke our own shared experience in garden art.

By Nick Esthus, Japanese and Asian Garden Curator

Ode to the Herb Garden Volunteers



Our last Herbal Work Study brought in 4 volunteers (Jane, Barry, Josie, and Sarah) to help weed and groom in the Herb Garden – one Saturday a month gains me 4 to 7 new helpers.

We have a few “regular” Herb Garden volunteers: John on Mondays, Lisa on Wednesdays, and Kathy on Fridays.

There is also Evelyn, who will come gather stinging nettles when their harvest time is near and I can’t possibly take care of one more task.



What am I talking about? Volunteers.

Tough Talk

As gardeners, we are used to dealing with the vagaries of natural forces. Changes in rainfall patterns, insect and disease pressure, fluctuating maximum and minimum temperatures, and a myriad of other unexpected phenomena of greater or lesser import that serve to remind us that the only constant in nature is change. Acceptance of such natural phenomena is not so difficult, given that we can do little to change them. We simply adapt to the current reality and make the necessary edits to our plant palettes or garden maintenance routines and hope for the best. Such forces are, to borrow a phrase from the French Structural Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, “good to think with.” They allow us ample opportunities to ponder the mysteries of nature and our place in the larger scheme of things, opportunities that I, for one, relish tremendously, for the deeper insights that often come as a result.

I would like to argue that anthropogenic phenomena are also “good to think with,” and the phenomenon that comes immediately to mind is the recent discovery and frighteningly rapid spread of the Crapemyrtle Bark Scale. First sighted near Dallas, Texas in 2004, the scale has spread throughout the southeastern states, primarily along the major transit routes used by production nurseries, and has become firmly entrenched in the Memphis area. Once I saw the scale for myself last summer, I began to ponder the possible vectors for the spread of the insect, trying to sort out how movement of the scale might be affected by examining common

Volunteers are one of the main reasons the Botanic Garden is such a nice place.

If it were not for our volunteers, well, the weeds might just take over, our plant sales wouldn't have such a nice selection of plants, and there would be a shortage of smiling faces in the Garden.



By Sherri McCalla, Herb Garden Curator

***Don't forget about our upcoming
Fall Plant Sale!***



**Memphis Botanic Garden
Pop-Up Plant Sale
October 3
9 am-5 pm**

This year's Fall Plant Sale will be a one-day-only event featuring an

landscape practices. As many of us note with varying degrees of horror, each winter hundreds, if not thousands, of crape myrtles are summarily beheaded, with the resulting branches piled onto trucks and trailers and carried on to the next job until the vehicle is full and the load needs to be disposed of. Not once have I seen a crew clean their tools between jobs, nor their clothes, both of which the insects easily adhere to. So the insect has found a prime vector for perpetuating itself across the Mid-south in the countless landscape crews that do this kind of work. Personal opinions of this practice aside, I think it's time we reconsider whether or not such "pruning" is desirable.

Now we get to the tough talk. Given that the most widely recommended treatment protocol for this new insect pest involves the application of systemic insecticides, and that said insecticides, neonicotinoids, are currently being investigated for their role on Colony Collapse Disorder in honeybees, I think it's time we take a good, hard look at our desires to keep these lovely but over-planted trees in our gardens. Just this season, I have talked with dozens of gardeners and homeowners about what to do with their affected crape myrtles. My usual response is that I wouldn't hesitate to perform a one-cut pruning operation. Having followed the repercussions of large-scale chemical application over many years, I can't help but feel that the use of systemic insecticides to (hopefully) control a pest of ornamental trees that offer little in the way of ecosystem services is a viable long-term strategy. Just considering the sheer number of crape myrtles gracing the streets and gardens of the southeastern states and

exclusive collection of plants cultivated in our own greenhouse nursery.

Garden staff and volunteers can guide you on selection and plant care tips.

Fall-planted perennials, trees, and shrubs perform better during the following growing season than those planted in the spring, so take advantage of the autumn weather and get started on your own home oasis now!

Admission to the Pop-Up Plant Sale is free.

Call 636-4100 for information.

Memphis Botanic Garden's Seasonal Plant Sales are generously sponsored by



doing the math to estimate how much of these chemicals would be required for a single treatment for each tree gives me pause. Certainly, the companies that manufacture the insecticides and those that apply them are set to profit tremendously, but do we really want more chemicals like this in our environment? Or can we find another, preferably native, tree to take the place of crapemyrtles. I can think of a few right offhand that suit my preferences-serviceberries, dogwoods, and fringe trees would be at the top of the list, followed by yellowwoods, hornbeams, redbuds and deciduous hollies. None of these have the long bloom period and colorful bark of the crapes, but they offer some combination of flowers, fruit, fall color, and/or interesting structure, in addition to significant ecosystem services. Of course, treatment or removal of your crapemyrtles is a personal choice, and I doubt any of us gardeners will judge you for your decision.

Having very recently discovered the scale in the garden, the MBG Horticulture staff is in the first phase of developing a strategy for the crapes here on the grounds. It is likely we will treat some that we feel are truly important features of the garden and remove others to make space for new plantings. As always, these challenges can be seen as opportunities and incentives to make changes in the garden, and are most definitely “good to think with.”

By Chris Cosby, Senior Manager of Gardens

