

*Growing season at
M.L.'s Greenery in Motion!
2006 Newsletter*

*To witness change and growth and evolution
and the cycle of nature
in our gardens or even on our windowsills
is truly miraculous
and one of the greatest joys in life.*

Howard-Yana Shapiro, PhD and John Harrison



Welcome to Spring 2006 !

I hope you have weathered this strange winter in good shape and with no surprises. I know that everyone is looking forward to all of the color that's coming soon - I sure am!

The past year was rewarding, but also challenging. For some reason age has a way of catching up with one as do new additions to the household (2 Nigerian dwarf goats). Last season brought a leg injury, caused by chasing the aforementioned goats, which slowed me down significantly. While I have no intention of letting this get the better of me, it does mean there will be some changes in the coming season.

I love to come out and chat with you about your garden and design needs, but the visits will be a maximum of 2-3 hours and if more time is needed we'll schedule another visit. When on-site working, I'll be taking several brief breaks during the work day. Turns out that being a workaholic is not all that good in the long term.

I'm still doing custom growing this year, but I've decided not to include everything on the list. You'll see that the list is mostly the larger groups of annuals - marigolds, amaranths, salvias, zinnias etc. All of the varieties are ones that I use in the gardens I manage and all will do very well in any landscape. These are the backbone of any garden - annual or inserted into perennial gardens. When you come to pick up your order - take a look at all of the weird ones! (or let me know if there's something that you need)

You can leave a message on my phone or feel free to contact me by email until May 15, altobelli260@earthlink.net. After May 15 expect at least a week or two (especially for an e-mail response - I don't sit at my computer) for response time as the season gets increasing complicated.

Hangin' Gardens and Container Gardens

A lot of people are looking into container and raised gardens. In many ways they are easier to manage and raised gardens get the plants closer (easier to pick and clean!). The biggest problem is providing enough water to the container. There are self watering containers that really work and there are irrigation systems that can be installed to water just the raised beds.

Hangin' gardens and container gardens are a wonderful way to expand your gardening options. They fit into and onto spaces that wouldn't grow plants in any other way. You can grow fruits and flowers, vegetables and herbs. The only limit is your imagination!

Here are a few tips to make sure you're successful:

1. The container you choose must have drainage. The larger the container the more critical the drainage will be because it catches much more water in a downpour. For example, a whiskey barrel needs drainage drilled in the lowest ring on the side as well as across the bottom.
2. Make sure that the mix you use drains well. Garden soil is not the best choice. It's usually too heavy. Use a professional potting mix or excellent garden loam mixed well with peat moss and other drainage material.
3. Remember that the container is completely dependent on you for water and fertilizer. Keep an eye on it all season and adjust your garden tending according to what the plants are telling you. Use a slow release fertilizer at the beginning of the season (try osmicote or a well-balanced organic blend) and use liquid fertilizer later in the season if needed.
4. Be prepared to trim, deadhead and shape as necessary. Containers can get ratty looking in late summer. Try to anticipate this and do your shaping about 2 weeks before they rat out. This will keep them looking great long into the fall.

There is no product, there is no technology,
there is no tool we can buy
that replaces the compounds, the chemicals and the physical effect
in the soil that microbes perform.

Bob Shaffer, horticulture consultant in California
(in an interview with Graeme Sait)

Our job is to support those microbes using minerals and organic products that support their life cycles and systems.
Besides, it's the biggest kick in the world to bring a dead soil to life and watch it change!

Here are the products that you can pick up at the greenhouse with your plant orders.
All of these support the soil system and thereby the plants and animals.

North Country Organics **Pro Gro** and **Pro Holly**, both 50 lbs. (blended mineral and organic product)

Alfalfa meal, 50 lbs. (excellent soil biology accelerator)

Azomite, micromineral supplement, 40 lbs. (used for weak trees or under performing gardens)

Moo Doo Compost, bagged and completely reliable texture, 40 lbs.

Brewed Compost tea, available later in the season. (soil microbes grown in an aerated nutrient solution)

Very cool stuff!!

Remember that the **Gardner Agway (978-632-0991)** also carries a line of organic mineral and soil supplements. If you can't find it, Lisa will help you get it.