



Community Gardener

Awalk around the block with Mary Maguire Lerman is like a day at gardening school. Mary earned a bachelor's degree in horticultural science from the University of Minnesota, and logged nearly 33 years of service at the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. She also had a stint at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory in St. Paul. With all this, in addition to countless hours of research and years of digging in the dirt all around the region, suffice it to say, Mary knows her way around the northern landscape.

Many will recognize her name from her local crusade to eradicate invasive species, most particularly buckthorn, but also, more recently, white mulberry trees. Seeing Mary's garden in the St. Anthony Park neighborhood of St. Paul, one discovers that the woman who is perhaps best known for her public horticulture is also a passionate and inspiring home gardener.

A thriving vegetable plot with a parade of heirloom tomatoes flanks her backyard barn. Yukon Gold potatoes grow in large landscape pots. "All you have to do is tip the pot over to harvest the potatoes," she says. Some of the most impressive perennials you will ever see fill her garden beds. The varieties are endless and unique.

Sticking up for native species and educating the public about plants that threaten them will always be near and dear to Mary's heart. She organized the St. Anthony Park Neighborhood Buckthorn Roundup and, in 2001, co-authored a U.S. Forest Service grant that provided funds to both



Mary Maguire Lerman

Minneapolis and St. Paul parks and neighborhoods for removing woody invasives and educating the public about invasive plants. The white mulberry tree that in June showers city sidewalks with its juicy berries is her newest nemesis.

"What happens with any of these fruited invasive trees is that the birds will harvest the fruit, and then they perch at the edge of the woods and drop their seeds," she says.

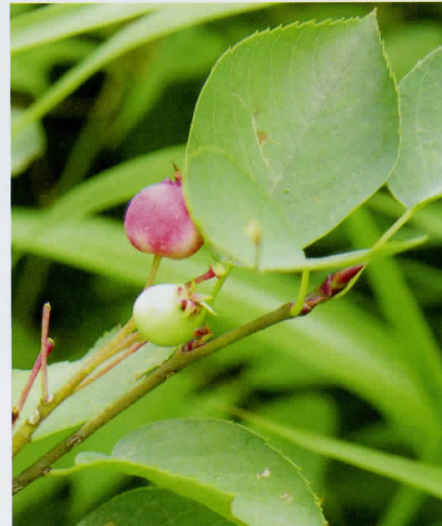
"A buckthorn invasion always starts at the edge of the woods and slowly moves in." Mulberry trees are found in spaces anywhere birds will perch, including under power lines and the edges of garages and along fence lines. Buckthorn is not especially showy and is a shrub that gardeners can easily live without, but mulberries are delicious and beloved by many. Mary has an alternative fruit gardeners might enjoy growing in their own backyard—a 'Regent' serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia* 'Regent').

As ambitious as Mary is about ridding the landscape of undesirable plants, she works with equal verve at incorporating the wonderful ones, as evidenced by her own backyard and her work in the community. Mary is active in the St. Anthony Park Garden Club. The club tends the MSHS Garden at the Minnesota State Fair and Mary's yard is often the holding space for donated plants that are waiting to find their home in that garden.

To Mary, the community is one big garden and we are all the gardeners.



Minneapolis-based garden and graphic designer Eric Johnson blogs at gardendrama.com.



ERIC JOHNSON

Try a 'Regent' Serviceberry

Amelanchier alnifolia 'Regent' is a compact shrub that tops out at 6 feet tall by 6 feet wide. It produces a beautiful, tasty berry (which birds love). The leaves have a blue cast and turn a vibrant orange-red in the fall. Clusters of showy white flowers emerge in the spring. Serviceberries must be planted in a sunny site to produce fruit. Watch out! Rabbits love these shrubs.

Menacing Mulberry

White mulberry trees are weak-wooded and decay easily, making them hazardous in the landscape. The fruits are delicious but produce many seeds for the birds to spread. White mulberries have a long taproot, making them difficult to pull out. Use a tile spade to remove small seedlings. When trees are cut down, a strong solution (50 percent) of Round-Up® must be applied to prevent re-sprouting.

Battling Buckthorn

Buckthorn is a shallow-rooted shrub. Smaller buckthorn can be easily pulled out with a weed wrench, especially after a rain. October and November are good times to spot and remove it, as it tends to hold its leaves longer than other shrubs, except in drought years. Larger buckthorn can be cut and the stumps treated with a 25 percent Round-Up solution.

—E.J.