



# Liquid Sunshine

Newsletter of the Marsh Botanical Garden  
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## Soil Problems:

After numerous complaints that reflected a repeat of past history, we are switching the soil-less mix that we deliver to labs from Metro-Mix 200, to Fafard Super-Fine Germinating Mix. While no mix will be perfect for Arabidopsis, Tobacco, Tomatoes and the large number of species that we grow here in the glass-houses, we have made the decision to switch to the new mix based not only on complaints from our labs, but also from research that we did using the AERGC Forum, an Internet-based exchange for educational and research greenhouse conervators. We found that the Fafard mix is more consistent from bag to bag, and that it has a much better drainage structure, while still allowing for capillary action to water the plants using the sub-irrigation techniques that most of the labs utilize.

Some, perhaps most, labs are mixing this soil with additional amounts of vermiculite, sand or other amendments. The most important recommendation that we can provide is to remind all labs to practice good hygiene in the potting room. When transplanting seedlings, try to keep excess soil in the germinating containers from being transferred to the new containers. Keep the bench clean, using a ten percent bleach solution every week to sterilize it.

We continue to solicit your thoughts, comments and feedback concerning these issues. If you experience problems that you think might be related to the soil mix, or any other problem that we can help with, please don't hesitate to call. The contact information is below in our masthead.

## Garden Report:

### Bulbs Are Like Money In the Bank:

After the plantings in the annual beds were killed by the first hard frost, we removed the debris and roto-tilled the beds. We also removed the black plastic cover from a bed that was idle all growing season, and started designing the bulb border.

Marsh Garden was well known in the New Haven area for its Tulip and Iris plantings. While not being a complete slave to history, we decided to pay tribute by planting a few hundred Tulips, and a few other species of bulbs, totalling several thousand.

We look forward to hosting a spring event or two come bulb flowering time.

School of Forestry student Laurie Cuoco cleans out the bed.



*Liquid Sunshine* is a publication of the Marsh Botanical Garden at Yale University. The title comes from a common nickname for rain, because we only have time to write on rainy days.

Marsh Garden extends from Prospect Street to our office on the corner of Hillside Place and Mansfield Street. The Garden is open to the public and we welcome you to visit anytime.

Director	<i>Timothy Nelson</i>
Manager	<i>Eric Larson</i>
Horticulturist	<i>David Garinger</i>
Steering Committee	<i>Mark Ashton, Mary Helen Goldsmith, Michael Donoghue, Timothy Nelson</i>

Contact information: 432-6320 or <[eric.larson@yale.edu](mailto:eric.larson@yale.edu)>



Elizabeth Black, graduate student in International Affairs, helps plant Tulips. Extended season of bloom is part of the overall design.

## Greenhouse Update

**Mr. Clean:** We have been cleaning the walls, windows, benches, floors and other surfaces in Greenhouses numbers two and three. Dave Garinger has been overseeing this project, with much help from Lenny Savitz, the long-time employee who still works mornings, and our student labor, already mentioned above. Not only does the removal of algae and dirt create more light for the plants, but also cuts down on biomass in which insect and disease infestations begin. While not the favorite job of our student work force, this important work also allows us to reorganize and continue our update of the catalog of plants in those houses.

**Palms from Malaysia:** During our field trip to the New York Botanical Garden last summer, we were inspired by the sight of a couple of Joey Palms growing in their main conservatory. Dave came back and started a search for a source for these fine plants. After much travail, he found them offered from a nursery in Malaysia, which then forced us into applying, and receiving an import permit from USDA. After months of process and waiting, our Joey Palms, *Johannesteijsmannia altifons* and *J. magnifica* arrived several weeks ago. They are doing nicely after their long flight and quarantine, and are part of our diversity collection.

**Woody Allen got nothing on us:** We harvested the Bananas from the stalk growing in Greenhouse number two this week. Leslie Kuo and Ginger Stevens wrote about this last summer as a plant of the week in response to the formation of the flower and bunch of bananas. It takes up to six months for even our dwarf variety to ripen, but they are finally here. I doubt if they will keep until Ginger gets back for Christmas, but we will tell her then how good they were. Please come by if you haven't already tasted these tropical delicacies.

## Community Gatherings:

We hosted the Garden Club of New Haven on Monday, November 3. A total of 16 visitors came through, giving Dave a chance to use his very personal approach to providing a guided tour. The response was very positive, and we look forward to more interaction with this group.

## Holiday Greetings and Schedule:

We'd like to wish everyone a healthy, safe and joyful holiday season, no matter which one you celebrate. No deliveries will be available from December 19, 2003 to January 4, 2004, as all of us Marsh Gardens regulars will be visiting relatives and loved ones. We have someone who will be watering the greenhouses, but otherwise no services will be available.

## More Labels Installed

Aravinda Ananda, our undergraduate employee, has been working under the direct supervision of Mary Helen Goldsmith, past Director of the Garden, installing labels for scores of plants in the garden. This project has been several years in the making and has taken a great deal of work. On each label is printed the common name, botanical binomial and the family.

These metal labels are invaluable in providing information to visitors and students. Aravinda has completed the targeted phase of installation for this fall. There are a few more labels to install, but spring growth is necessary to locate the plants.

## Zen Garden Space Cleared:

We had the dumpster moved that stood directly beside the main entrance to our building. It now resides in a spot near the driveway where the truck can access it for emptying, further from the building for aesthetic reasons, but close enough to haul the trash out easily. We hope to obscure it from view a bit more by planting a shrub border around three sides of it and along the rather pedestrian chain link fence. In the space created by the moving of the dumpster, we are intent on installing a low-maintenance raked gravel, minimal planting garden, complete with bamboo rain spouts and water stone. Stay tuned for more. If you have any thoughts, comments or expertise to share, don't hold back.

