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# MSU IN BLOOM

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## MSU HORTICULTURE GARDEN NEWS



### IN THIS ISSUE

GARDEN STAFF UPDATES | VOLUNTEER UPDATES |  
CLEMATIS TRIALS | ASK THE EXPERT

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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Spring Plant Sale	Canceled
Garden Day	Canceled
Curious Gardener	FALL 2020
Houseplant & Succulent Sale	Nov 5
Holiday Open House	Dec 3

# FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

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BY KRISTIN GETTER, DIRECTOR OF THE MSU HORTICULTURE GARDENS

I hope this newsletter finds you all safe and healthy. I am sure the COVID-19 pandemic has changed your lives as it has ours. Here in the Gardens, a variety of changes have taken place. Probably the biggest change is the fact that we were only allowed to classify two of our full-time staff as 'necessary' and thus able to physically come into the workplace. Dan and Daedre are both working on-site in the greenhouses, one per day, 7 days per week in order to maintain the plants we have. The other 5 full-time staff are doing their jobs remotely (writing future articles for our newsletters, developing future presentations for our community programming, etc.) and are being paid. We have no student help right now at all. Another unfortunate change was the cancellation of all our upcoming events, including our Spring Plant Sale scheduled for next month, Garden Day scheduled for August 1, 2020, and all April and May Gardens' rentals (including weddings). June, July, and August weddings may or may not be canceled, but either way we are offering these rentals no-penalty cancellations if they wish. In addition, we will not be having any volunteer help until at least September 1, 2020. For those of you who relied on our spring plant sale to supply your gardens for the summer, please consider supporting local independent garden centers who are facing challenging financial times. At the time of this newsletter, in the East Lansing area, Lansing Gardens and Cottage Gardens are both currently doing curbside pickup, VanAttas Greenhouse is currently gearing up to have no-contact shopping as well. Christians Greenhouse and Garden Center will be opening up May 1 (assuming they are legally allowed to do so).

Our capability to maintain the Gardens this summer will be challenging as well. It appears our Dean will eventually allow us to carefully implement a return-to-work plan once the Executive Order has expired to allow all staff (and only a few students-well less than the number we need) to help us maintain the Gardens this summer. Without being able to have all of our students, and not having our volunteers this summer, we will lower our expectations of what the Gardens will look like this year. However, we will still focus on our main mission this summer: community support. Gardens are therapeutic for the community. The emotional, mental, and physical health benefits associated with surrounding oneself with plants is well documented, including reduced anxiety and stress, decreased depression, greater happiness and life satisfaction, mitigation of post-traumatic stress disorder, and improved self-esteem. Our Gardens should be an oasis for community members to visit in order to deal with these difficult times.

Many of you have asked about our financial status, given we had to cancel our largest fundraiser of the year (our Spring Plant Sale, which supplies 12% of our income) and many wedding rentals are being canceled (weddings supply 15% of our income). As we are largely self-funded, both are a big blow to us. Fortunately, we recently received funding from a generous donor to endow a new full-time staff position. We were just about to advertise the hiring of this new position when COVID-19 developed. We are now using that new funding to pay existing staff and will hold off on hiring anyone new until next year. However, should your situation allow it, we always appreciate your support. Visit our Garden Giving webpage for ways that you can help. Thank you for your friendship.

# VOLUNTEER UPDATE

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BY BETHANY TROY, PERENNIAL GARDEN MANAGER & VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Unfortunately, with all face-to-face meetings/events canceled this summer on campus, we have come to a point where we must suspend all volunteer activities for the duration of the summer. This includes the visitor's booth, garden labor, and Children's Garden activities. Again, the safety of our community is our number one priority.

Our hearts are heavy. We have been re-prioritizing our essential needs and functions in response to the ongoing changes presented to us from the pandemic. In this process, we have reflected on your involvement here at the gardens. While we say this regularly, I'm not sure we have ever felt this statement to be more accurate than ever - we truly cannot do the work that we do without you. You make the gardens happen, from events to maintaining a beautiful garden for the public. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and know we are thinking of you and looking forward to when we can work together again in the future.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, feel free to contact Bethany Troy, Perennial Garden Manager & Volunteer Coordinator, [troybeth@msu.edu](mailto:troybeth@msu.edu) or (517) 353-0330.

How lucky we are to be involved in a working community so meaningful and life-changing, that we long for it when we are away.

# NEW STAFF WELCOME

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BY KRISTIN GETTER, DIRECTOR OF THE MSU HORTICULTURE GARDENS

It is with great pleasure that I introduce our newest hire to our Gardens' friends. Amy McCausey started last month as our new Wedding and Event Coordinator. Amy came to us from MSU's Facility for Rare Isotope Beams where she organized national and international conferences. For us, Amy coordinates and organizes all our Gardens' programs (Spring Program, Curious Gardener, Make & Take events, Garden Day, etc.) and will also be our Wedding (and other venue rentals) coordinator when Sarah Heim Graduates in May 2020. Amy also manages our membership program and



commemorative brick program. She is picking up the work very quickly despite only being allowed to work one week on campus before being mandated by MSU to work remotely until further notice. We are thrilled to have her. Should you have any questions about our programs or about renting our gardens, contact Amy at [hgardens@msu.edu](mailto:hgardens@msu.edu).

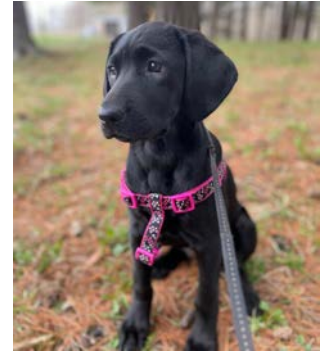


# PERSONAL UPDATES FROM GARDEN STAFF

## What's up with Amy?

BY AMY MCCAUSEY, WEDDING & EVENT COORDINATOR

Hello Garden Friends! It was my pleasure to join the Garden Staff in March 2020. I have enjoyed adapting to my new role, although it has been a challenge to learn how to connect and fit in while at a distance from everyone. Having a passion for tackling a challenge and for flowers has made it a bit easier. I am happily married to my husband Cam and we have an adult daughter, a teenage daughter,



and a two-year-old grandson. We live in a rural village in mid-michigan and over the past five weeks, our family has welcomed a new puppy, a new horse, and 3 baby goats. In addition to acquiring more animals during the pandemic, I have been taking webinars to increase my knowledge and sharpen my skills. Outside of work, I obviously love animals,



we have a total of 3 horses, 5 goats, 5 rabbits, 2 cats and the new puppy. I also love to do crafts, read and I look forward to meeting and working with the Garden volunteers, supporters, and friends as soon as the current situation allows. Until then, stay safe and healthy!

## What's up with Bethany?

BY BETHANY TROY, PERENNIAL GARDEN MANAGER & VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Currently, I am working from my home, aptly named the Loretta Inn. I spend my days researching, writing newsletter articles, taking webinars on various horticultural subjects to expand my knowledge, and developing future classes. My next steps are to incorporate more virtual learning and experiences for our volunteers and members alike to help get us through



this summer apart from each other. I spend a lot of time working outside in my garden at my home, in which soon I will be installing a vegetable garden (more fun updates on that

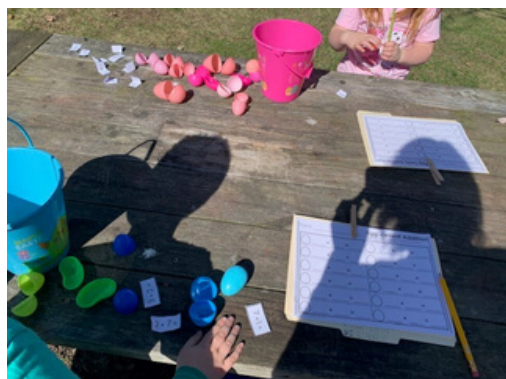


to follow!). Upon reflection, I am so appreciative of being a part of our community, and feel extremely lucky to have taken the path I have to live such an enriched life full of lovely people and plants. I miss my coworkers, our volunteers, our visitors who enjoy walking through the gardens on a sunny day, our students who are inquisitive and passionate about their work and their future, and the plants that bring me motivation and life.

## What's up with Jess?

BY JESSICA WRIGHT, CHILDREN'S EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Greetings from Coldwater, Garden Friends! The last month has found all of us in new and changing roles. I have added the role of a teacher to my two children ages five and six, and needless to say, we have learned a lot together. We have been trying to make our learning time together fun and have been



doing lots of art projects and, of course, lots of recesses! My husband is a banker and is an essential worker, so he is out of the house every day, that leaves the kids and I home working on learning skills like telling time and making slime. Over the past four weeks, Norm and I have worked together to create some virtual field trip materials for the students that will not be able to attend field trips this spring. We

hope to provide students and teachers with valuable resources to help them navigate this time. I am dreaming of the garden and all its possibilities. I can't wait to get back to the gardens and our team. Missing you all, Stay safe.

## What's up with Daedre?

BY DAEDRE MCGRATH, TRIAL GARDEN MANAGER

My husband Dan, our daughter Ramona, and I are doing well. Dan and I are both fortunate to still be employed. Despite the closure of all NCG Cinemas (24 theaters across seven states), Dan is able to do some work remotely in preparation for their eventual reopening. Although Ramona's daycare remains open (as it is closely associated with Sparrow Hospital), we pulled her out of daycare to reduce her exposure to other people. I am currently working on campus at the greenhouse



Monday/Wednesday/Friday and working from home Tuesday/Thursday. Ramona turns two years old at the end of July and her vocabulary and skill set is growing daily. While having her home all day every day is a major change of pace, it has been a gift to spend more time with her than normal. New outdoor activities Ramona has explored since the Stay-at-Home order include: sidewalk chalk, Easter egg hunting, earthworm poking, digging in the dirt, picking flowers (I'm hoping this "skill" passes soon), and throwing/kicking a ball. In conclusion, we are enjoying spring together and have plenty of toilet paper!



## What's up with Sarah?

BY SARAH HEIM, GRADUATING SENIOR, WEDDING COORDINATOR

First of all, I would like to thank the Horticulture team for the opportunity to serve with them for my final year of my undergraduate experience at MSU! I am graduating with my Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality business at the end of the spring semester (May 2020). Moving forward, I am still currently applying and interviewing for positions in event management across the nation; preferably in the wedding sector.



I look forward to getting out there and starting my full-time career! The job search is a challenge in such a time as this, but I am remaining optimistic. I am very grateful for our team that has continued to support each other through this complicated season. Of course, we are Spartans, and it is a Spartan's Will to remain resilient! Again, it has been a pleasure to spend my last year at MSU as your Wedding & Event Coordinator, and I am very excited for Amy McCausey (the new full-time coordinator) to take the wheel! She's already doing fabulous, even amid the circumstances! As always, Go Green!

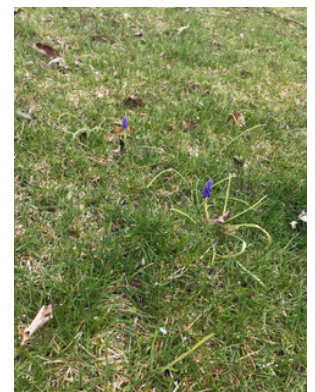
## OBSERVATIONS OUTSIDE THE COVID CAVE

BY DAN BULKOWSKI, GREENHOUSE & GARDEN MANAGER



Less visitors to the gardens, brings more wildlife into the gardens. Half of these tulip bulbs, pictured to the left, in this raised container are eaten, most likely by a deer. This container is outside our back door, near the building, on our new walkway to the gardens.

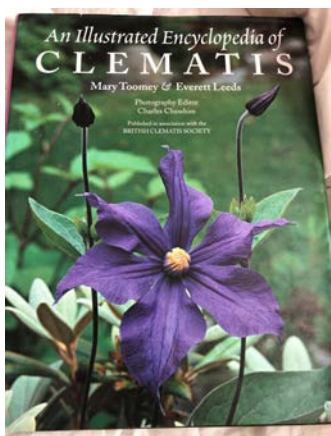
The purple flowers pictured to the right are grape hyacinth bulbs. In a normal year, MSU grounds crew would be working/mowing by now. These grape hyacinths used to be in a wooded area, on a hill facing the Children's



Garden, that was converted to lawn years ago. So again, in a normal year, these would never bloom because they would have been mowed down several times by now. (The white blurry specks are snow flakes flying).

# CLEMATIS TRIALS

BY BETHANY TROY, PERENNIAL GARDEN MANAGER & VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR



The famous Clematis – a plant prized for its numerous, delicate flowers in shades of white, purple, blue, pink, and red. One that speaks of elegance, providing a noble vertical element in the garden, with luscious foliage and flowers so prominent and eye-catching that you can't help but talk about it with your friends and family. Along with its beauty comes a bit of mystery behind care and maintenance – pruning groups and a number of different varieties and cultivars can make Clematis seem intimidating. Our attraction along with our curiosity for clematis has led us to an exciting point – we are starting our very first three-year Clematis trial this summer at the gardens.

Our trialing journey begins with twenty-four varieties of Clematis, each on its own trellis displayed around the anniversary plaza, just south of our hosta collection. Cultivars have been carefully selected for color, flower shape, and general reputation as a well-performing variety in the horticulture world. Our goals involve collecting data to determine how well each cultivar performs in the Michigan garden. Attention will be directed towards floral development, flower size/coverage, and disease resistance. While we are excited for the installment and curation of this project, there are a few cultivars that I am particularly excited about trialing.



*Clematis texensis*  
'Happy Diana'

One particular cultivar comes to mind that got me excited – maybe because I'm a nerd for smaller flowers that force you to get up close to really see them. *Clematis texensis* 'Happy Diana' is a Japanese cultivar, touting the largest flowers in the *texensis* group. With bell-shaped, pink flowers that seem almost from a fairy tale, I am truly looking forward to seeing how this variety grows in our gardens!

If you know me well, you know I'm a sucker for chartreuse colors in the garden, so I had to add this color to our Clematis trials. 'Stolwijk Gold' bears such foliage, along with delicate, dangling purple flowers that look striking. Both staff and students have been looking forward to seeing how 'Stolwijk Gold' performs over the years.



*Clematis* 'Stolwijk Gold'



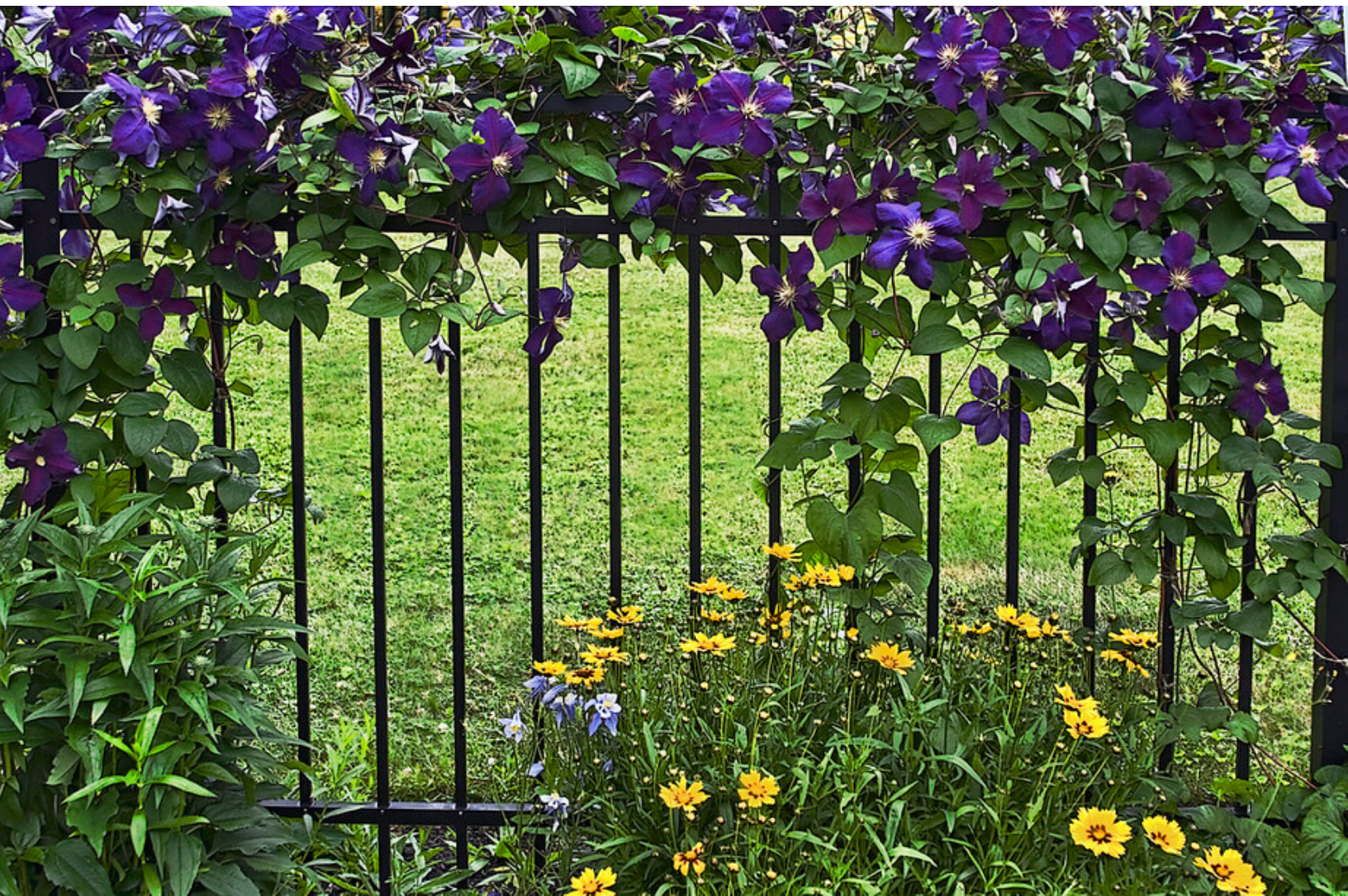
I can't help but love fine-detailed, delicate looks – particularly with vining plants, which is why I am looking forward to growing and evaluating *Clematis montana* 'Broughton Star'. A pink, unusual, double-flowering variety with two-toned flowers holds a reputation of flowering profusely. Be sure to come visit next spring to see this beauty showing off!



*Clematis montana* 'Broughton Star'

Clematis have been incorporated into gardens across the world since the sixteenth century. They have been bred extensively

throughout the world, proving their prominence and importance in ornamental horticulture. The Clematis trial is anticipated to be installed this summer, with data collection to continue for a duration of three years. Come visit when you can, and learn more about your favorite vining perennial while enjoying our displays throughout the gardens!





# 4-H CHILDREN'S GARDENS SUMMER PROGRAMS CANCELED

BY NORM LOWNDS, CURATOR, MICHIGAN 4-H CHILDREN'S GARDEN

Due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, we have canceled all programs through September 1. We are following the directives from MSU Extension as stated here:

April 2, 2020, Michigan State University leadership made the key decision to modify or suspend youth events scheduled to take place this summer on MSU's campus. This, combined with Gov. Whitmer's announcement that in-person K-12 instruction is suspended for the remainder of the academic year, has informed changes to our guidance to MSU Extension's youth programming:

- All on-campus MSU youth events scheduled to occur before September 1, 2020 must be modified to an online space, postponed or cancelled.
- No face-to-face youth events or programs may take place anywhere in the state, including summer camps, until September 1, 2020. This also includes MSU Extension youth programming at the Detroit Partnership for Food, Learning and Innovation, MSU Tollgate Farm and Conference Center, Summer Discovery Cruises and other programs throughout the state.

We are planning for the resumption of our regular programming starting in September.

The 4-H Children's Gardens will remain open this summer and we expect to see many visitors as restrictions on movement are relaxed. We will be operating with a reduced crew so if you stop by, don't be surprised to see Jessica and myself watering and weeding. We hope you will say Hi, while maintaining proper social distancing.

Please do everything you can to stay safe and healthy!



# ASK THE EXPERT



Salvaged from the now defunct Michigan Gardening Magazine, join us throughout 2020 for Daedre's final Ask The Expert questions!

BY DAEDRE MCGRATH  
TRIAL GARDEN MANAGER

## Streamlined Planting

**Question:** I volunteer to plant thousands of annuals along a couple of the main streets in my home-town each year. These marathon planting sessions take forever. Can you suggest any tips to streamline the process?

- Joan S. from Midland

**Answer:** I plant at least 30,000 plants each year during a three-week window, so I'm always looking for ways to save time and save my body from injury. Using a hand-trowel to plant flowers one by one is not a reasonable option for me. When I first started my job, we used a long-handled step-down bulb planter to quickly punch planting holes into the ground. Then we would literally toss the plants into the holes and crouch down to back-fill the holes. If you have a team of several people, you can get a nice assembly-line going. You still have to get on your hands and knees to plant the plants, but at least you can dig the holds standing up. Unfortunately, after a few years of stepping down on that bulb planter, I developed a repetitive stress injury, so I sought out a new method for digging the holes. We now use a cordless electric drill with a long-shafted bulb auger attachment. I can drill the holes standing up and it's easier, faster, and less stressful on the body. We always keep a spare battery in the charger so we can swap them out as needed. Our soils are very free of obstructions so the drill/auger combo works well for us, but might be less effective if you have hard, root-filled, or stony soil. Whether you try to manual or electric bulb planter, they are both relatively inexpensive options that are worth every penny!



## Photos:

Top- Drill Auger

Bottom- Bulb Planter and Drill Auger



## Pre-emergent Herbicides

**Question:** How does Preen work? Is it really safe for vegetable gardens? - Deb T. from East Lansing

**Answer:** The active ingredient in Preen is trifluralin, a pre-emergent herbicide. The pre-emergent part means that it prevents seeds from germinating. However, it will prevent both weed seeds and desirable seeds from sprouting, so make sure to apply it after any direct-sown veggies (like beans or lettuce) have sprouted and become established. Preen also won't kill seedlings that have already emerged. If your veggie garden is already weedy, it won't kill the existing weeds but will prevent further weed seeds from germinating. The good news is that means you can use it on and around established desirable plants without harming them. Since this product only works on germinating seeds, it is safe to use on fruits and vegetables. Preen also make a product specifically for vegetable gardens with a different active ingredient, corn gluten meal. It works the same way, so it's really up to you which product you choose.

### Photos:

Top- Preen

Bottom- Preen Application

