



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-three Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Dr. Sara Via to Speak at November Meeting

Jane Malish

Our pre-Thanksgiving meeting on Wednesday, **November 16** at St. Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Rd., Bethesda, Md. 20852 gives us a chance to play in the dirt—a zen-moment stress reliever provided by Dr. Sara Via of UMD's Department of Entomology and UMD Extension. She works at UMD as a professor of Biology and through the Extension Service with Maryland Master Gardeners and other local groups to increase understanding of the scientific reality of climate change and how to mitigate its rapid progression.

Her program for the meeting is entitled "Life in the Underground: Healthy Soil, Healthy Plants, Healthy Planet." She'll touch on how organisms in the soil impact plant growth and their reaction to stress situations, and she'll help us understand how to identify healthy soil and how to know if we have it. Since I'm sure my soil isn't healthy I'll be hanging on her every word about how to build it. And because I'm so clueless about what healthy soil feels like, actually touching it will be a great way to arrive at that eureka moment when you say "so that's what good soil should be!" Dr. Via's soil touchy-feely will follow her presentation and everyone will have an opportunity to get up close and personal with the good dirt.

Dr. Via is a popular and dynamic speaker and her talk is a great opportunity for the club to share in her expertise on a timely subject.

A hot lunch will be served after the business meeting, ably prepared by Heloise Morgan, Diane Beverly, Kasia Massie, Carol Meyers, Karin Kelleher, Irene Sinclair, Barbara Roberts, Susan Lass, and Yvonne Orkin.

The kitchen crew that provided the wonderful salads and desserts for the October meeting included Penny Luborsky, Deb Peck, Sylvia Diss, Jackie Leung, Judy Vassolotti, Joyce Casso, Nancy Davidian, and Caroline Turner.

Star Your Calendar for Holiday Cheer December 14

Holiday Greens Co-chairs: Candy Kessel, Yvonne Orkin, Carolyn Randall

Guaranteed to put you in the holiday spirit, club members traditionally gather in December to make holiday arrangements to spread joy in our community. We create arrangements for residents to enjoy at shelters, soup kitchens, assisted living, extended care and other facilities for our underserved neighbors.

We use greens that members cut and condition from their own gardens, and those of willing neighbors, and the club provides the rest of the materials. We bring cheer to others and stimulate our creative juices as we assemble lovely designs. **Please note this gathering is early—December 14 (third Wed.) and starts promptly at 10:00 a.m.—because we have a lot of arranging and delivering to do.**



Even the table
decorations reflected a
Halloween theme at the
October meeting.

Photo by Vickie Baily

We will again provide arrangements for the Bethesda Cares holiday dinner (which treats residents of the county's shelters, with our centerpieces as door prizes) as well as our own list that includes members confined at home. With such a challenge—some 140 arrangements—we need members to provide lots of spruce, pine, balsam, boxwood, juniper, aucuba, cedar, holly, yew, Southern magnolia, winterberry, rosemary, Dusty Miller, etc. In short, we welcome any greens or other live plant material tough enough to last several weeks in well-watered floral oasis.

The club purchases such goodies as candy canes, faux berries, pine cones and other ornaments you can use to decorate the arrangements. Diane Beverly will again make attractive bows for added color. Members are encouraged to bring baubles, too; it's a great way to recycle small ornaments or other holiday decor items you no longer use.

Below are the organizations who receive our arrangements. If you volunteer at other such facilities or want to recommend a group we should add, please contact Yvonne Orkin, yvonneorkin@verizon.net.

Bethesda Cares
 Bethesda Men's Shelter
 Bethesda Police Station
 Catholic Charities (formerly Bethesda Men's Shelter)
 Central Union Mission
 Coalition for the Homeless
 National Center for Children & Families
 Rainbow Shelter
 Cornerstone Montgomery (formerly St. Luke's House)
 Shepherd's Table
 Stepping Stones Family Shelter
 Waverly House
 Whitman-Walker Health
 A Wider Circle

At the November meeting, we will circulate sign-up sheets for volunteers to (1) bring conditioned greens for the workshop; (2) help with set-up and clean-up; and (3) deliver the completed arrangements to the recipient organizations. Making deliveries can be very gratifying as recipients are very appreciative.

We'll create greens arrangements December 14 **regardless** of the weather so please mark your calendar now.



Photo by Sharon Washburn Southerland

Cyclamen Don't Disappoint on Field Trip

Candy Kessel

About 20 BCGC members enjoyed a show of literally thousands of hardy cyclamen spilling down the ridge of Edgewood Gardens in mid-October. The private garden in Exton, PA, was started by John Lonsdale after relocating from England in 1995.

The field trip was prompted by a presentation John made to the Potomac Valley Chapter of the Rock Garden Society (NARGS PVC) and the Four Seasons garden club in July, which several members heard. Seeing the slides of gorgeous *Cyclamen hederifolium*, the premier fall-blooming cyclamen, was inspiring; seeing them in person was overwhelming.

Many of us purchased those as well as *Cyclamen coum*, the best all-round spring flowering species. The beautiful variegated leaves appear in the fall. John hybridizes these and other cyclamen varieties, growing them all from seed; it takes about four years from seed to flower. That's how much of the steep garden ridge got planted.

To attract more participants, Sharon Southerland, an active NARGS PVC member, extended the invitation to that group and Four Seasons. Some serious plant geeks from those organizations joined us including Dan Weil who took photos. Here's a link to his photo gallery, to give you a sense of the extent of the cyclamen and how much can be gardened on a very steep hillside garden. <http://www.danielweil.com/Flora/Lonsdale-Garden/>.



Above: Kasia Massie, Margaret Edison, Karen Fricke, and Judith Graef enjoy the gardens at Edgewood, which featured a frog sculpture on the patio (left).

Photos by Candy Kessel

April Trip to Edgewood

BCGC has contracted with John Lonsdale for a return trip April 12 to see his collections of hellebores, buttercups, slipper orchids, trout lilies, daphnes, magnolias and other spring flowers and shrubs.

On that trip we're promised a mini-lecture about the garden before we tour. While John was very pleasant and happily answered members' questions in October, the layout of the garden made it difficult for more than a few participants to hear John, as we were strung out along the pathways. We'll work to remedy that problem in the spring.

Candy Kessel will begin accepting reservations for the spring trip in February; the cost will again be \$10. Day-trippers will



October was the perfect time to enjoy the abundant cyclamen blossoms.

Photo by Sharon Washburn Southerland

organize carpools and those wishing to overnight and see other area gardens and garden centers will do the same.

For more information about Edgewood, see <http://www.edgewoodgardens.net/>.

Vickie Baily is adding to the collection of member photos printed in the 2016-2017 Yearbook. Please see Vickie if your photo has not yet been taken. Please clip out and add the following photos to your Yearbook:



Phyllis Daen



Jackie Leung



Barbara Nalls



Conny Shapiro

Scenes from the October meeting



Above and left: Halloween spirit, top to toe!
Below: The meeting featured a plant exchange—an annual member favorite.

Photos by Vickie Baily



HORTICULTURAL NOTES

Flamboyant Color

Carole Ottesen

Right now—early November—quiet evergreens that have spent summer out of the limelight, are gaining prominence daily, a sign that winter is coming. Almost everything deciduous is fading or has already done so. Happily, there are bravely flamboyant exceptions, among which are these three:

Bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*)

Bluestar is a native perennial with the personality of a small shrub. It is slow to grow to fulfillment—four feet tall and wide. And when it gets there, it grips the soil with a vengeance and has the annoying habit of self-sowing. Its blue blooms are so gentle, someone was inspired to call them “the Lillian Gish of flowers.” Perhaps its most positive summer quality is latex sap that makes the deer avoid it. All of its faults are forgiven and forgotten in fall when bluestar explodes into a yellow-orange mound of feathery foliage that rivets attention and makes you happy you stuck with it.

Oriental spicebush (*Lindera angustifolia*)



While the native spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), turns the woods a pretty yellow, its Chinese cousin, the oriental spicebush, converts from pleasant, regulation green to startling pumpkin orange. Eventually, its leaves fade to tawny beige but persist on the

branches throughout the winter. Growing to about eight feet tall, the oriental spicebush is narrower and more upright than the native, spreading to only about five feet wide.

Mountain camellia (*Stewartia ovata*)

The award for the latest and most flamboyant fall color goes to the mountain camellia, a small native tree whose range is the forest understory of the Appalachian Plateau from North Carolina to Tennessee and Florida.



While the mountain camellia produces ruffled white flowers around a yellow-orange center almost identical to those of the Asian stewartia, its habit is more gracefully broad-spreading and its fall foliage, far showier. The summer green leaves take their sweet time changing color, going first pale orange before producing a violent crescendo of red orange into December.

Dark winter looms. How inspiring are the defiant deciduous plants that do not go gentle into dormancy.