



# Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

*"Ninety-four Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"*

[www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org](http://www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org)

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Member of  
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Garden Clubs and  
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**Signs of spring at last in  
the table arrangements  
at the March meeting!**

*All photos by Vickie Baily  
unless otherwise noted.*

## Back in the Garden

Wednesday, April 25 is our final "formal" meeting of the year. By then we should be out in our gardens attacking weeds with our hoes and hands, amending soil, planting shrubs and bushes, chasing rabbits, and watering our potted-up contributions to the Plant Sale while also praying for rain. All these activities take a toll on our lithe and supple bodies and aches and pains ensue. **Mr. Josh Dickstein**, a physical therapist at Sumner Fitness, has 16 years' experience treating aches and pains and is knowledgeable about pain management. He will speak to us about how to work more healthily, which garden gadgets are best to minimize aches, and what ergonomic gardening tools to choose. This is news we can use so be sure to come to the meeting on April 25 at 10:30am at St. Mark Presbyterian Church when Josh talks about *Back in the Garden* and Kathy Benjamin and her fellow volunteers prepare a sumptuous hot lunch.

*Jane Malish*

## Wednesday, June 13: Smithsonian Greenhouses Tour and Picnic

You won't want to miss this opportunity to feast your eyes on beautiful plants in lush profusion displayed row after row in huge greenhouses. Every plant is flourishing; there are no disappointments. Conditions for growing are exquisitely managed and every detail is attended to. So you begin to understand why your orchids don't look like these and excuse yourself. In addition, seeing such perfection is quite therapeutic. It's nice to know it can be achieved and you don't have to do it.

The tour of the houses will take an about 1 ½ hour, starting at 10:30am, followed by lunch on site. The tour will be conducted by Ms. Vickie Dibella and the folks who manage the individual greenhouses will explain their particular responsibilities.

We will carpool from the River Road Universalist Unitarian Congregation located at 6301 River Road.

We'll depart RRUC at 9:30am in order to reach the greenhouses by 10:30am. The simplest route is to take the Beltway inner loop north toward Baltimore from the River Road access ramp. The exit to the greenhouses is several exits beyond the IKEA exit: Exit 11B, Pennsylvania Avenue / Rte. 4 west toward Washington. After exiting, turn left onto Silver Hill Rd. Go approximately 1.7 miles to the entrance gate to *Smithsonian Museum Support Center-Greenhouse Nursery Complex* on the right side. There is a guardhouse on your left where you turn and that's where you'll give your name to be admitted. Go around the drive to your right and you'll see a blue building fronted by a parking lot on your left. The entrance is to the left of the blue building

There's a \$10 fee to cover lunch. You can give your payment to Kathy Benjamin and make your lunch selection at the April 25 meeting or you can mail your check along with lunch selection to Kathy at P. O. Box 486, Garrett Park, MD. 20896. A list of the lunch selections will be posted on the members-only portion of the BCGC website. Make checks out to BCGC; for security reasons we must submit names to the Smithsonian by June 6. June 6 is the deadline for paying.

If you have questions about signing up for the picnic and lunch choices, please contact Kathy Benjamin at [katherine.benjamin@verizon.net](mailto:katherine.benjamin@verizon.net).

And in the next few days we'll send an email inviting you to sign up to carpool or request to ride in a carpool. We're seeking drivers who can accommodate a total of 4 people including themselves. If your car can hold more that's a bonus. A note to potential carpool drivers: I've had occasion to drive the Beltway to the Pennsylvania Avenue exit rather frequently lately and each trip has gone smoothly and easily. Hopefully that will be the case on June 13! See you on Wednesday, April 25.

*Jane Malish*

## **Election of BCGC Officers for Next Year Will be held at the April meeting**

**Susan Lass**, president

**Judy Termini**, vice president

**Judith Graef** and **Carol Meyers**, co-secretaries

**Lise Ringland**, treasurer

With thanks to the nominating committee:

Judy Termini

Barbara Collier

Judith Graef

Nina Stark-Slapnik

Sharon Washburn

## **Inquiring Minds Need to Know**

*Suzanne Grefsheim*

At its March meeting the Board discussed ways we can make the club more meaningful and rewarding for all members and realized that is hard to do since we don't know much about your expectations and interests. As a result I have charged a Board sub-committee to develop a membership survey to be undertaken in the Fall.

The survey could help with other issues as well. For example, every spring, when dues are collected, the Board questions the value of the \$8 fee per member we send to the National Capital Area Garden Clubs (NCAGC) to remain under their umbrella organization. This money supports the initiatives of National Garden Clubs and its Maryland chapter, which each get \$1. The rest goes to support the NCAGC and local programs. We ask whether members are aware of NCAGC's local programs; if so, are they taking advantage of them, and again we don't really know.

Next year when it comes time to write the check to NCAGC, we want to have your input so we can decide how best to use our funds to support member interests and priorities. And when committee chairs are looking for a "few good women" to help with a project, we will know who among you has the interest and skills to find the project both fun and rewarding.

So, when the survey arrives in your in-box next fall, please take a little time to respond.

## **Plant Sale**

### **FROM OUR GARDENS TO YOURS**

This is our new motto for the plant sale. Now it is time to make good on our promise!

With three weeks left to the plant sale I hope you will do two things:

1: Dig plants out of your garden

2: volunteer on Signup Genius to help us the week of the plant sale May 10th.

Remember: a plant that is plentiful in your garden might be just what I am looking for in my garden.

**SIGNUP GENIUS** is the best way to volunteer!

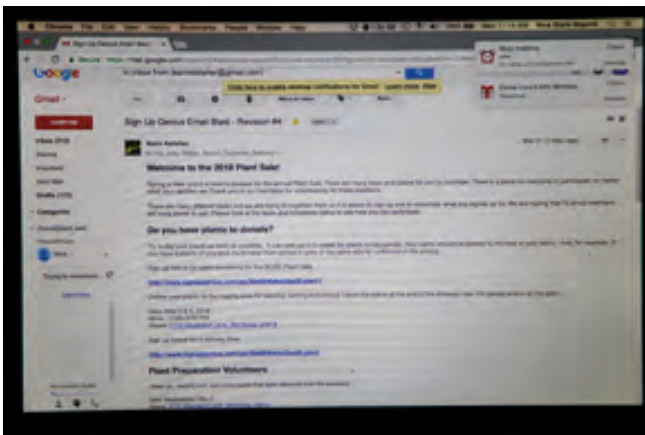
Please look at your recent emails to find the links to Signup Genius. Each volunteer job has its own link to sign up. This link is listed below the job description on your email. Click it and follow the prompts.

**IF YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLE** with Signup Genius you need to sit in front of your computer and call me Nina at 240-481-6061 and I can walk you through it by sitting at my computer. If I am not available, call Karin Kelleher at 312-5507954 and she will help you. The best way yo get on signup

genius is on YOUR computer. We can walk you through it.

PLEASE VOLUNTEER. This is our plant sale and we can all help in our own way. Just three weeks and counting...

Thank you!  
Nina



Plant Sale Chair Nina Stark-Slapnik inaugurated use of Sign-up Genius for volunteers to select areas where they will help with the 2018 event. Members were able to sign up at the March meeting (above) and can sign up from home as well.

## Environmental Concerns

Barbara Collier

### Milkweeds and Butterfly Activism

It is well known that the beautiful perennial plants known as milkweeds are essential to monarch butterflies. That is, although monarchs can consume nectar from many kinds of flowers, they lay their eggs only on milkweed species, and their caterpillars depend heavily on milkweeds for food.

Accordingly, even if the flowers themselves were not fascinatingly

complex and beautiful, their role in the monarch life cycle gives us gardeners excellent reasons for seeking them out. So if you grow milkweeds, be sure to welcome the sight of caterpillar-chewed foliage. And if you



don't, *Asclepias tuberosa*  
(photo by Barbara Collier)

consider introducing a milkweed the next time a spot opens up in your garden.

Milkweeds are in the American genus *Asclepias*, which includes the familiar butterfly weed, *A. tuberosa*; the rose or swamp milkweed, *A. incarnata*; the common milkweed, *A. syriaca*; and many others. Butterfly weed and swamp milkweed are the most commonly available types, and both are excellent garden plants. You can find other varieties, but they take a bit more effort to acquire. (Consult the National Wildlife Federation's list of "Twelve Great Native Milkweeds," which includes native ranges and required growing conditions.)

Milkweeds are among the latest things to emerge in the spring: I can see no sign of them yet. But every year I worry that they may not be coming back, and then there they are. If you grow them, you may have learned to mark them. (This is especially helpful if you follow the "cover the ground with plants, not mulch" principle.)

The butterfly weed, *A. tuberosa* (1 to 2 feet tall), is usually a brilliant, showy orange (some cultivars are yellow). It tends to prefer dry to medium soils; if it is in soil that is too moist, it may succumb to crown rot. Having a long taproot, it resents trans-

plantation, but the upside is that it is drought resistant. It prefers a sunny exposure, but it will tolerate light shade.

As its common name suggests, the swamp milkweed, *A. incarnata* (2 to 5 feet tall), grows in moist and even wet soils, although it does well in ordinary garden soil. Like *tuberosa*, it resents transplantation, but it is more shade tolerant than *tuberosa*. It comes in colors shading from white to pink and mauve.

The third most common type, *A. syriaca* (3 to 5 feet tall), is somewhat problematic as a garden plant since it can spread aggressively by rhizomes as well as from the seeds of its rather spectacular pods. But if you have a full sun meadow, its pink and purplish blossoms are a handsome addition. If not, you can admire it on sunny roadsides in the summer. I saw a wonderful stand of them, along with common mullein, a few years ago near the parking lot at the Brookside Nature Center. Such wild milkweed colonies are vital for preserving the monarch butterfly, as more and more of its habitat disappears to development and herbicides.

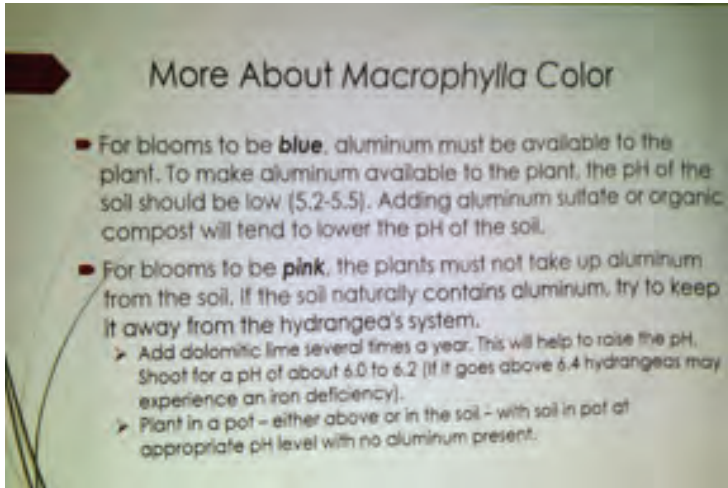
Beyond planting milkweeds, citizen activists are addressing the plight of the monarch in various ways:

Environmental Action has an online petition "Tell Amazon: Sell Live Milkweed Plants To Turn Gardens Into Monarch Sanctuaries." (You will be asked to support the group, of course.)

Monarch Butterfly USA has a website providing information as well as suggested actions.

The Monarch Butterfly Fund is a small nonprofit that aims to foster the conservation of monarchs and their habit; its website includes a handy Monarch Action List with suggestions of ways to help the effort, including links to citizen science organizations and others.





March speaker Les Rucker (above with Maria Marzullo) shared his knowledge of hydrangeas with meeting attendees.



Head of the Nominating Committee, Judy Termini, announced the slate of officers for next year. We will all miss Suzanne Grefsheim at the helm, but the proposal of Susan Lass was met with cheers. Judy herself is willing to stay on as VP.



More signs of spring at the March meeting included Candy Kessel (left) wearing bunny ears and a toy bunny loose on the luncheon table.



District IV President, Melissa Siegel attended the March meeting.



Kraft Corner included Arlene Howard and her architect, Sharon Washburn Sutherland. Members saw the work Sharon did on the renovation of Arlene's house at the Open Garden visit on April 11.

## HORTICULTURAL NOTES

# *Giants in the Earth*

*Carole Ottesen*

This is the time of year when you suspect there really are giants in the earth. They are conjuring change, turning on the trees, pushing up infant green through last season's withered litter. It starts in the tiniest increments—barely noticed swollen buds, miniscule shoots poking millimeters out of cold ground. Minute by minute and day by day, week by week, change accelerates, buds burst into flower, shoots stretch up and multiply until the whole world is green again.

If you have a great new garden plan that has been cooking all winter long, if you've been watching the temperatures, eyeing the sky, and think that, finally, the time has come, you'd better get moving. Spring happens so fast it can pass you by.

While it is happening, spring has the power to immobilize. Perhaps it's the sudden warmth that induces delicious languor. It could also be the return of your garden's early delights that invites aimless wandering and delightful inspection of the beds. And it is surely the discovery of self-sown surprises or unexpected survivals that give you pause: a tiny new bloodroot pops up where you least expect it and the shrub you thought had given up the ghost last summer is sprouting promising fat buds.

Spring also brings a disjunction between planning and doing. The changes you made with your eyes looking through that winter window—moving the shrub, pruning the limb, changing the walk—were accomplished in nanoseconds. In spring, dream time hits real time. The project of a single day can stretch into summer.

When that happens and a project seems so daunting you are tempted to throw in the trowel. Don't. Take tips from my kindergarten teacher Miss Cohen and Stalin. Miss Cohen advised: "Yard by yard the way is hard. Inch by inch and it's a cinch." Stalin had the same idea and made five-year plans

You can trick yourself into a heady sense of accomplishment with five-day or five-week plans. If the work schedule is reasonably doable, you'll have the satisfaction after completing it.

If not, there is always next fall or, failing that, next spring.



**Bloodroot volunteer**

*Photo by Carole Ottesen*



*Member Grown:*    Annuals    Perennials    Herbs    Vegetables

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BETHESDA COMMUNITY GARDEN CLUB'S



# Annual Plant Sale

Thursday

**May 10**

7am-1pm,  
rain or shine

*cash or check only*

Proceeds help  
landscape the  
Bethesda &  
Davis Public  
Libraries

**FARM WOMEN'S MARKET**  
7155 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda  
(public parking in back)

[www.BethesdaCommunityGardenClub.org](http://www.BethesdaCommunityGardenClub.org)

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