



# Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

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

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**This unusual arrangement, made by Vickie Baily, was one of the 150 arrangements assembled during the Holiday Greens Workshop.**

*All photos by Vickie Baily  
unless otherwise noted.*

Drizzly damp days got you down? No worries; at the meeting on January 23, the Director of Horticulture at Mount Vernon, J. Dean Norton, will capture your attention and draw your thoughts toward George Washington's glorious 18th century home and landscape. You'll learn about the roles that archeology and research have played for over 160 years in helping to make Mount Vernon one of the most accurately restored 18th century estates in America. An informative and entertaining look at the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the 1800's will add to your enjoyment. Luckily you'll soon be able to put the pedal to the metal and see the gardens just as George Washington saw them.

As usual, Yvonne Orkin and her team are organizing another wonderful Sandwich Lunch. They will set the table with a variety of salads, chips and desserts, but there will be a huge void if we don't all bring a sandwich to share. *We've run a bit short on sandwiches lately, so please make one, quarter it if you can, but don't leave it on your kitchen counter.* The meeting will be held at St. Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Road, North Bethesda.

*—Judith Graef*

## The Tradition Continues – 2018 Holiday Greens Workshop

*2018 Holiday Greens Workshop Committee: Patricia Pennington (chair), Belva Finlay, Sabita Sankaran, Debbie Shakelton*

Despite 2018 breaking records for the rainiest year in our area, the weather couldn't have been better December 12<sup>th</sup> when members assembled for the Holiday Greens Workshop. In just a few hours we made 150 arrangements for shelters, charities, and others who needed some holiday cheer. Once again members turned a variety of greens, doodads, and bows into amazing live displays of nature's beauty. Our arrangements in 2018 were made in three different sizes because some of our previous recipients told us that the beautiful centerpieces were a bit too large. Consequently, in addition to 102 traditional centerpieces, members made 40 scaled-down centerpieces, and 8 small arrangements that fit in a red Solo cup. All the arrangements were delivered by members that afternoon to 15 organizations and 6 garden club members. This annual tradition, started about sixty years ago, demonstrates how doing something for others is both rewarding and fun. It also shows what can be accomplished when everyone contributes to the effort.

Several people helped in unseen (and tedious, time consuming) ways... Sabita Sankaran arrived *very* early December 12<sup>th</sup> to ensure that all the oasis was cut, properly soaked and ready for members to use at the stroke of 10 am. Debbie Shakelton brought the bulk of the doodads, and organized them so it was easy to see the wide variety available. If you added a beautiful bow to your arrangement, we have Diane Beverly to thank. She made all of them. And Carolyn Randall printed and laminated the very small Season's Greetings tags that were included with each arrangement. Each tag had BCGC's website and care/watering instructions.

Many members signed up to arrive early and transform the church meeting area into our Greens Workshop. And lots of members brought cut and conditioned greens. We had a fabulous assortment of healthy, attractive, unique greens courtesy of those members. The abundance of beautiful greens made making 150 arrangements an enjoyable experience. It was quite easy to find plant materials to cover the oasis and make works of art! The members who checked each arrangement for visible signs of oasis were repeatedly thrilled by the amazing, unique arrangements members created. With such a bounty of greens, many members were able to take leftovers home to make arrangements for their family and friends. To everyone who brought greens, we appreciate all the work that went into your providing the raw materials for our 2018 Holiday Greens Workshop!

This year our valiant team who organized the greens arrangements for delivery, Lois Brown and Lou Olin, were assisted by new member Hillary Fitis. They were an amazingly efficient team. Twenty-three members delivered the beautiful arrangements to recipients in Montgomery County and the District. Kudos to everyone involved in the delivery process!

While we didn't have an official 'clean-up team', many pitched in and cleaned the room and tables, and did a remarkable job sweeping up and bagging all the remaining greens and tiny pieces. Great job! Without their help it would have been a long wait for the tasty soup luncheon and the lively 'gift exchange' that followed the workshop.

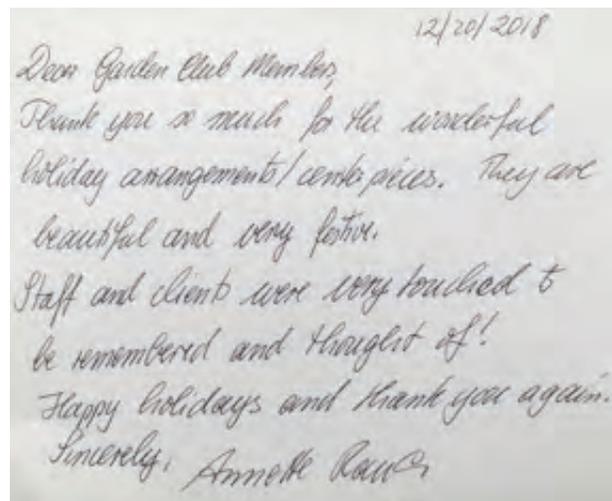
In addition to members contributing their time and energy, American Plant deserves our thanks for donating the cardboard boxes used in delivering arrangements. This year we were surprised by the generous gift of ribbons, pine cones, and doodads from Good Earth Garden Market in Potomac. They were brought to the Greens Workshop by Karen Fricke, who works there one or two days a week.

The members who delivered arrangements and holiday cheer included Maggie Banuls, Betty Bartky, Kathy Benjamin, Barbara Collier, Sylvia Diss, Hillary Fitis, Suzanne Grefsheim, Judith Hackett, Holly Joseph, Candy Kessel, Dee Lertora, Jackie Leung, Anthea Levy, Penny Luborsky-Wechsler, Susan Miller, Lou Olin, Yvonne Orkin, Marge Pray,

Carolyn Randall, Debbie Shakelton, Nina Stark-Slapnik, Marilyn Tenenbaum, and Jeanne Weiss.

The deserving organizations of the 2018 greens were A Wider Circle, Bethesda Police Station, Catholic Charities, Central Union Mission, Coalition for the Homeless, Cornerstone Montgomery, Good Will dinner (an annual event for people in shelters around Montgomery County), Interfaith Works Women's Center, National Center for Children & Families, Rainbow Shelter, Saint Mark Presbyterian Church, Shepherd's Table, Stepping Stones, Waverly House, and Whitman-Walker Health.

One of the recipients, Cornerstone Montgomery, sent a lovely thank you card expressing their appreciation (below).



Thanks to all for a successful 2018 workshop. Be thinking of how you want to participate in the 2019 Holiday Greens Workshop! (See photos, pages 4-5)

## Environmental Concerns

### Salty Talk

Barbara Collier

We are now getting into the time of year when we start thinking more about salt—not the stuff in our kitchens, but the salt on our roads and paved surfaces. Some of us worry about it getting onto our shoes and staining them and drying out the leather. Some of us (the engineers) worry about road salt deteriorating roads, bridges, and buildings. Pet owners worry about it harming their pets' feet. We gardeners worry about it washing off into our gardens and killing our plants. And all of us who are

concerned about the environment worry about it running off into waterways, where its harmful effects on the health of our flora and fauna are well documented.

But all of us should be concerned about increasing salt levels in fresh water and the threats they pose to human health. Research by Sujay Kaushal at the University of Maryland, his colleagues, and students has demonstrated not only the continental scale of freshwater salinization, but its multiple causes and effects. For example, it is not just road salt (which is mostly sodium chloride) that human activity has added to the natural environment: the built environment also contributes various kinds of salts from the weathering of concrete and cement surfaces, accelerated by human activity and acid rain. (Other sources of salt are fertilizer and lime use, mine drainage, irrigation runoff, and the brine used in fracking.) This smorgasbord of salts then reacts with ions in streams to form what Kaushal calls “chemical cocktails,” which can release nutrients and metals that further contaminate fresh water. One of the results of such cocktails is the kind of corrosion of our aging infrastructure that led to the water crises in Flint, Michigan, and elsewhere.

Road salt, then, is not the only factor in the bigger salt picture, but it is a major factor, and one that could be better managed if there is public pressure and political will. This pressure needs to be brought to all levels of government and the private sector, since a big challenge on getting a handle on road salt is that almost all government jurisdictions, as well as numerous private organizations, are involved. Fortunately, some steps are beginning to be taken in the right direction. The Maryland State Highway Administration has developed a Salt Management Plan, and local jurisdictions are expected to follow suit. The State plan describes various ways to minimize the use of road salt, ranging from proper storage of salt and calibration of equipment to pretreating roads with brine before storms begin—using brine consumes less salt, as it can be spread more efficiently. It is estimated that it takes four times less salt to prevent ice from accumulating than to remove it after it has formed.

But what can we as individuals do? Aside from hoping for a mild winter, there are a few things:

When possible, avoid contributing to the problem by removing snow cover from walkways and other

areas before it can turn to ice. If you use deicers, use as little as possible and only where critical. If you spread a deicer and there is no storm, sweep it up and store it in a dry, covered place for later use. You can mix in sand or clay kitty litter for traction so that less salt is needed, but you may need to sweep these up also, and be careful not to let them clog storm drains. Don't use fertilizer as a deicer, as it also is a pollutant.

If you see a salt spill or dump on a road, call 311, Montgomery County's number for non-emergency government information and services. Even if the spill is on a Federal, State, or other non-County road, call 311 and report it anyway. You should report it to your County Councilmember as well, and if you want to be really thorough, you could also report it to at-large Councilmembers Evan Glass and Hans Riemer, who are both on the Transportation and Environment Committee. If you notice that the spill is not cleaned up in a reasonable time, it is good to follow up.

If you want to go further, you can get involved in the Izaak Walton League's Winter Salt Watch project. The League distributes kits that include test strips for assessing and reporting the chloride levels of any freshwater stream. Volunteers dip the strips into streams before and after events such as storms and road salting. They then photograph the results and upload them through a smartphone app called the Water Reporter. The Walton League aggregates the results so they can be used for monitoring stream health over time and for clean water advocacy; the posts are also displayed on a Winter Salt Watch Map on the League's web site. Volunteers are encouraged to take pictures of salt spills and post these, too; this records spill location and can help in reporting them to the authorities. In addition, the Winter Salt Watch project is supported by our local Audubon Naturalist Society's Water Quality Monitoring Program.

A final note: when I downloaded the Water Reporter app, I found that it is used for much more than the Winter Salt Watch. To use it, you join the Water Reporter community, a social network that supports initiatives that are monitoring and protecting watersheds all over the country. A social network for good! Think of that.

## Member Survey Set to Launch

*Survey committee (Barbara Collier, Suzanne Grefsheim, Judy Termini)*

At the January meeting, we plan to announce the launch of the BCGC's first member survey. Why are we doing a member survey? Two reasons: to find out more about what our membership would like the club to do, and to discover the kinds of things our membership would be able and willing to do to support the club. Because we are trying to find out who is interested in what, this is not an anonymous survey. But don't worry! We don't ask personal questions.

After the meeting, all members will receive an email that will include a link to the survey. We are asking members to complete the survey in two weeks; the date will be included in the email.

To fill out the survey, click the link, and you will be taken to the first page. Like all web pages, how much of it fits on the screen depends on your device. We recommend using a larger screen (you can answer the survey on your phone, but you might find it inconvenient). You will know you are at the end of a page when you see the "Next" button, which takes you to the next page. Similarly, all the pages except the first have a "Back" button to return you to the previous page.

The last page has a "Finish Survey" button. When you are sure you have finished with your answers, click this button, and a screen appears that says, "Thanks for doing the survey! Your answers have been submitted."

This survey does not allow you to do part of the survey, close it, and come back later to finish it, so leave it open on your device until you are finished. If you do exit the survey before you finish, clicking the survey link again will bring you to a new blank survey, and you will have to start over again.

However, even if you do not finish the survey, the responses you do give are saved. So if you were thinking about writing jokey responses and then not submitting them—that won't work!



**Holiday Greens Workshop Committee: Belva Finley, Sabita Sankaran, Patricia Pennington, and Debbie Shakelton**



**Lou Olin and new member Hillary Fitis filled boxes for delivery**



**Jane Boynton in a beautiful Christmas sweater**



**Cathy Wolf**



Christine Uffelman



New this year—the cart! Here with Kathy Benjamin and outside with Jackie Leung.



Carolyn Randall printed and laminated the tags that were included with each arrangement.



Vickie Baily and Carolyn Kulik designed beautiful bird arrangements. *(photo by Sharon Washburn Southerland)*



Janet Fernandez focusing



The Clean-up Volunteers—Janet Fernandez, Lizzie Gliddon-Boyle, Maggie Banuls, Margaret Edison, and Dee Letora

## HORTICULTURAL NOTES

# Catalog Dreaming

Carole Ottesen

What could be finer on a snowy/sleety/rainy afternoon than sitting by the window with a cup of hot tea and a stack of the newly arrived plant catalogs?

Featured in a number of catalogs is this year's Perennial Plant of the Year *Stachys* 'Hummelo'. Among its many virtues are its resistance to deer and rabbits, its support of pollinators, and its winter interest. The crinkly leaves stick around through most of winter especially if you bulk up the plant's stamina by regularly dead-heading the flowers. Rosy, *fragrant* summer flowers start blooming at 18 inches in midsummer and last for a decent period either as cut flowers or in the garden.



Often seen in the meadow plantings of Piet Oudolf, 'Hummelo' thrives in sun with good drainage. It will tolerate a dry spot.

Last year's Perennial Plant of the Year *Allium* 'Millenium' is thriving in my garden in part sun. Planted last spring, I divided them in fall to double the number of these floriferous plants. Think rosy globe flowers that bloom for a long time, attract butterflies and pollinators and require almost no maintenance.

Another relatively new critter-resistant and pollinator-friendly perennial is *Solidago* 'Little Lemon.' Unlike its many tall relatives, this native goldenrod is a dwarf—about a foot tall and wider than tall, spreading to about 15 inches. Like most goldenrods, it needs full sun where it will serve equally well as a colorful ground cover or as a single specimen in a rock garden. Late summer finds it covered with flowers of a more lemony than gold color.

In case you haven't heard this *ad nauseum*, goldenrods do not cause hay fever as their seeds are not air borne. The culprit is ragweed.

For shady spots in a deer-ridden garden, sedges are a good bet. Seersucker sage, *Carex plantaginea*, planted early last spring in my garden sailed through last summer unscathed for as long as there was plenty of other more palatable nosh for the deer. Recently, however, the broad leaves present evidence of browse, albeit unenthusiastic.



Another sedge, new in catalogs this year, is the native Appalachian sedge, *C. appalachica*. Fine wiry blades grow to about 18 inches long, but weep gracefully into clumps that reach only about six inches high. The blades are so fine they blow in the breeze. Being wispy, they are far less palatable to deer.

We are fortunate to live in a climate that affords a respite from active physical gardening every winter. During this welcome break, this year's catalogs should keep us scheming and dreaming until the forsythia fades.

Photos by Carole Ottesen