



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-five Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Plant Sale 2019

The 2019 Plant Sale was a great success thanks to the participation of so many of our members. We were particularly thrilled to have many of our newer members involved as well as plant donations from so many of us. With participation in the digs, pricing, sorting, labeling, transporting, even tidying up plants, members did it all with only minor grumbling despite repeated calls for more help.

We were aided in our efforts by decent weather, an amazing Big Dig, and the traditional donation from Brookside Gardens. We were well fed and energized thanks to the efforts of Kathy Benjamin and Yvonne Orkin. As she has for many years, Carolyn Kulik once again allowed



us to use her property to stage the plants. Though we were temporarily concerned we didn't have room for them all, we did, thankfully.

The gross proceeds from the sale were close to \$11,000. We shared our love of gardening with the community, we saved plants that would have been destroyed, we got to know each other better and we had fun!

Crunching the Numbers: Plant Sale Preliminary Results

Lise Ringland, Treasurer

Total pre-sale and plant sale day: \$11,028.52.

6% sales tax (not on herbs and vegetables): \$635.79

Plant sale expenses: \$959.46

Net number to date (subject to members submitting more receipts for plant sale expenses): \$9,433.27



Debbie Shakelton, Marge Tritschler, and Jane Malish wait to take money



The 2019 Plant Sale was a grand success.

All photos by Vickie Baily unless otherwise noted.

The Garden Club's Big Dig

By Carol Meyers and Candy Kessel

Did you ever wonder what good publicity will really do? It's why A-listers all have publicists. And the Bethesda Community Garden Club does too! John Kelly's column in the April 3 *Washington Post* describing our club's plant rescue work at a Chevy Chase teardown generated lots

of interest. Many of us heard from old friends and acquaintances when they saw our pictures and read about our unusual work. We were invited to save huge aging azaleas and pachysandra. But the stunner was an invitation to save plants at a “mini-arboretum.” Though the house was some 40 minutes away in Spencerville, Maryland, curiosity and plant lust prompted Nina Stark-Slapnik and Janine Trudeau to reconnoiter the property. Their conclusion: this huge treasure trove was well worth rescuing, but would be a gigantic undertaking.

Thus began the Big Dig Adventure. Already, during April, the Plant Sale Committee had organized club volunteers to join in ten digs and potting sessions. Further digging and potting risked losing willing bodies and backs. Moreover, the window for the Big Dig was narrow. Digging could not start until the property sold on May 1, and all the plants had to be potted before Plant Sale staging and pricing began at Carolyn Kulik’s May 4.

So Nina and Elaine Hope put their itchy fingers together and designed a two-day schedule for a



large work force to dig, transport, and pot the Spencerville plants. An email blast and subsequent pleas rounded up nine diggers for May 1 and 2, twelve transporters to deliver the unpotting plants to Carolyn’s, and a total of 20 potters to work for two solid afternoons, playing in the dirt. While the diggers kept shoveling and loading plants for three hours straight each day, the transporters would arrive at the site about 15 minutes apart, helped load the plants and then ferried them to Bethesda. Even members who hadn’t signed up showed up to help and ferry plants. After each day’s effort, the nearly exhausted diggers would also load and transport plants in their own cars. At Carolyn’s, the potters worked diligently in two shifts at two long tables on Carolyn’s patio, and Plant Sale Committee members Marty Fears, Barbara Collier, and Karin Kelleher finished potting and pricing the new finds through the weekend and into the next week.

The result: hundreds of plants, including multiple varieties of ferns, astilbes, pulmonaria, dwarf conifers, and more hosta varieties than most of us had ever seen, were saved, potted, and SOLD! Even more impressive, we showed we are a COMMUNITY garden club—energetic, organized, and committed. The Big Dig was an excellent adventure and success. As Judy Termini mused, “I am constantly amazed by these women.”

Leftover Plants Went to Good Homes

Although we sold a huge number of plants—I’d bet close to 2,000 if 500 came from dig—we had some leftovers. As in past years, we had arranged for them to go to organizations we support.

Since we had such a plethora of hostas and hellebores, we set aside some in advance for planting at Connie Morella and Davis libraries. We usually wait until afterwards to see what’s unsold that our libraries could use.



The natives that remained were once more given to Audubon Naturalist Society for Woodend and kindly delivered again by Kathy Benjamin, a Master Naturalist who's a volunteer there. The remaining perennials and herbs were again picked up by 11th Street Bridge Park. They will help support the seven beehives (!!) thriving in that Anacostia project.

The few remaining shrubs and dwarf conifers were given to our fellow gardeners at the Potomac Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society and sold at the big Green Spring Gardens plant sale May 18. Sharon Washburn and Janine Trudeau picked up and delivered those again.

So nothing was abandoned or composted at the market, as far as BCGC knows. Rest assured your plant donations are in the ground again.

Bare Facts

Barbara Collier

Although the Web offers gardeners a wealth of information and advice (I suggested some good sources in the January 2018 newsletter), it is also a great place for propagating misinformation—on gardening and otherwise. For fact-based gardening information and myth-busting, I can recommend “The Garden Professors,” a group of horticulturalists who provide science-based answers to gardening questions based on peer-reviewed research (see gardenprofessors.com and an associated Facebook group). If we are interested in environmentally sound gardening, we want to avoid wasting resources on techniques and practices that are unnecessary, ineffective, or even harmful. (Want to know why you shouldn't use Epsom salts, vinegar, and so on on weeds? Check out the professors!)

In my own gardening, I have benefited from the professors' advice on best practices for planting trees and shrubs. The professors point out that the forms in which woody plants are often sold—either in pots or “balled in burlap”—can lead to the development of bad roots and thus eventual failure. The professors' Facebook page provides a photographic chamber of horrors

showing the state of roots revealed when various woody plants were removed from their pots or burlap. Several tales of woe feature pots that turn out to contain one (or more!) smaller pots left in place when the growing plants were transferred to larger containers. Even without the nesting pot problem, a shrub that has been growing in a pot for a long enough time can not only be pot-bound, but also develop circling roots that prevent the plant from ever becoming well-established.

The solution: root-washing and bare-root planting. First, take the plant out of its pot or burlap and remove all the potting medium; use a hose and a bucket or wheelbarrow (depending on the size of the specimen) to wash the roots. This may be a major undertaking requiring a long soaking if the plant is really pot bound. You can then evaluate the roots and correct any that are circling; if the root is too tough to be straightened out, it can require pruning. (It is remarkable to see the drastic root pruning recommended in particularly bad cases posted in the Facebook group.) The idea is to be able to spread the roots out radially from the trunk. You want to dig a hole for the plant that is just big enough to accommodate the roots—excessively deep or wide holes unnecessarily disturb soil structure. So don't dig your hole till after you have seen and corrected the roots.

When planting, make sure the root flare or crown (where the stem or trunk turns into roots) is not too deep: another reason not to dig an excessively large hole is to avoid having the soil settle and sink the root flare. Fill the planting hole with the soil you removed while digging and firm it with your hands. Do not add anything to the soil. Amending the soil in a planting hole is generally a waste of time and resources and may even be damaging. You can use the potting medium as top dressing or just water the plant with the water from your root washing bucket or wheelbarrow to get all the benefit of any nutrients in the potting medium. Then generously mulch the area, preferably with arborists' wood chips (whose virtues are another frequent theme of the Garden Professors).

Root washing and bare-root planting solve several problems. First, of course, you have a better chance of a successful planting if root problems are corrected. But I found another immediate benefit last fall when I bought some small shrubs and trees. When I did my root washing, extra plants were revealed: instead of two sumacs and one *Diervilla lonicera*, I had three sumacs and two *Diervilla*. I admit I watched the sad little twigs all winter, wondering whether the theory and my execution of it would work—and lo! All five leafed out nicely in the spring. I will see how they do next year.

I have also used this technique with perennials to protect myself against unwanted stowaways in plants obtained from plant swaps and, yes, our own plant sale. If you remove the soil and set it aside, you can check it for suspicious extraneous plants before you decide to use it elsewhere.

Yes, since reading the Garden Professors' advice, I have changed my planting practices. As for the various woody plants that I may have killed in the past, naively following bad advice on plant labels and elsewhere—maybe I can give myself retroactive absolution?

A Note and Invitation

Susan Lass has mailed the following self-explanatory note to Chris Keller, hand-written on a floral note card (as seemed appropriate). She will pass on any response she receives from

him and perhaps he will come to one of our meetings.

Dear Mr. Keller,

The recent article in the *Washington Post* by Adrian Higgins has prompted me to write this note on behalf of the Bethesda Community Garden Club (BCGC). We were sorry to read that the Metropolitan Washington Garden Club is no more as it is a great loss to the community overall. Thank you for many years of gardening in our area, beautifying our neighborhoods and supporting local wildlife.

BCGC celebrated its 95th anniversary last October. Our meetings are open to guests and we would be happy to welcome you. Please see our website, bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org, for details. BCGC has quite a large Garrett Park contingent and I understand that you know many of them.

Sincerely,
Susan Lass
President, BCGC

Vickie Baily is adding to the collection of member photos printed in the 2018-2019 Yearbook. Please clip out and add the following photos to your Yearbook:



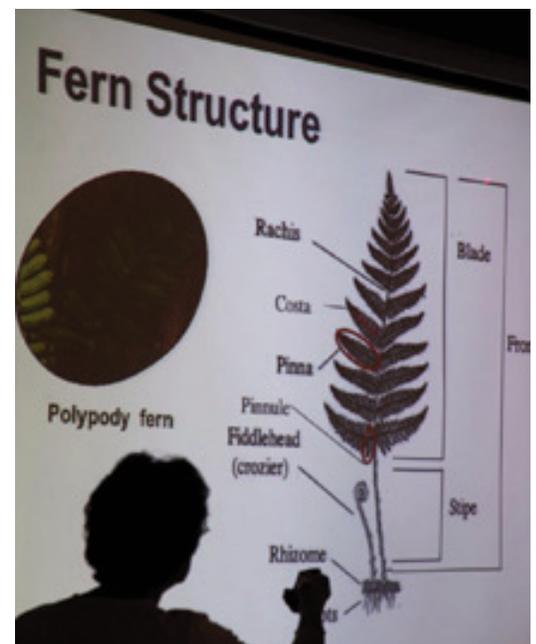
Joyce Mulcahy



Venil Ramiah



Mary Stanley



Dr. Paulette Royt spoke on fern structure and identification at the April meeting.



Speakers table flowers at the April meeting were arranged by Regina Fitzgerald. For the first time, tables were marked for particular conversations.



Caroline Turner with her neighbor who was a guest at the April meeting, Janet Georgatsos, and Marty Fears come out of the meeting into a beautiful day. Marty made the plant sale street signs this year. This one (at right) is in front of Vickie Baily's house in Garrett Park.

As Horticultural Notes enjoys the summer holiday, here is a lovely poem sent to us by Sylvia Diss.

Counting Out Rhyme

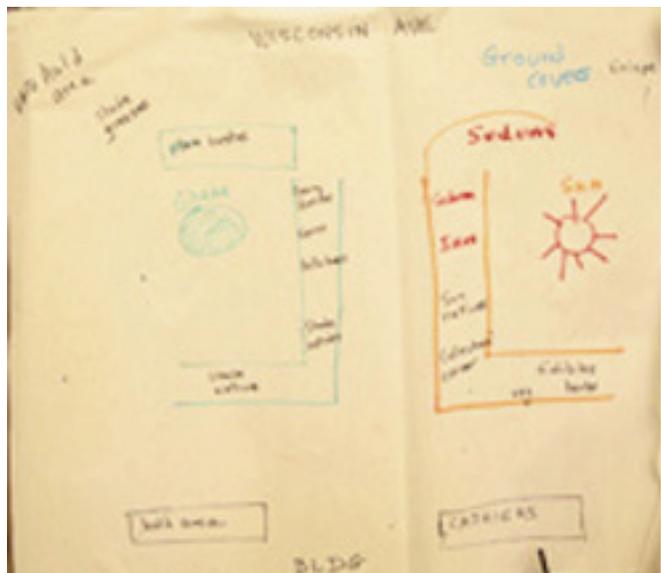
Edna St. Vincent Millay

Silver bark of beech, and sallow
 Bark of yellow birch and yellow
 Twig of willow.

Stripe of green in moosewood maple,
 Color seen in leaf of apple,
 Bark of popple.

Wood of popple pale as moonbeam,
 Wood of oak for yoke and barn beam,
 Wood of hornbeam.

Silver bark of beech, and hollow
 Stem of elder, tall and yellow
 Twig of willow.



This plan for the Plant Sale layout was displayed at the April meeting to let members know where to place plants on the day of the sale.