



# Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

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

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## 2019-2020 Meeting year commences Wednesday, September 25, 2019

The new meeting year is beginning with our traditional round robin. We pass the microphone around and members share garden tips, dos and don'ts, new plants they've had success growing, new tools they now can't live without, gardening debacles they'll warn us to avoid, etc. It's a great time to get together, renew friendships, and catch up. So as many of us as possible can share our news, please limit your time speaking to 2-3 minutes, as we want to fit everyone's information into the hour before our regular business meeting and lunch. And lunch is salad and dessert provided by board members. So come and get into the autumn mood as BCGC embarks on a new year.

The meeting begins at 10:30 and is held at St. Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Road, North Bethesda.

### NEW COURTESY CHAIR

Please note that Caroline Turner has graciously agreed to serve as our new Courtesy Chair. If you are aware of an event in a member's life that should be acknowledged by the club, please let Caroline know; her contact info is in the directory.

A heartfelt thank you is due to Betty Bartky who served in this position for several years. She wrote many notes to members, expressing both congratulations and condolences in her thoughtful and considerate way.

### Welcome Back From The Luncheon Committee

*Yvonne Orkin, Chair*

*Committee Members: Joyce Casso, Amy Prywes, Lynn Lichtenstein, Marilyn Tanenbaum*

BCGC members have a vast knowledge of gardening from all of our years of education and experience. And yet, at each meeting we are provided with a program that teaches us something new or gives us a different perspective. This is followed up with a fabulous luncheon provided by many of you. It is an opportunity to spend time eating and talking with old friends and making new friends.

I will chair the committee again this year. The new members of our Luncheon Committee are Joyce Casso, Amy Prywes, Lynn Lichtenstein, and Marilyn Tanenbaum. I hope that one or two of them would like to co-chair. It is rather easy because we have about ten additional cooks helping with each luncheon and they are usually people who have been helping for years.

People who know how to grow food are quite often excellent cooks and that has certainly been the case at BCGC. We have delicious salads, hot entrees, a variety of sandwiches, hot and cold soups, and always a wonderful dessert. The food is so good that every month somebody requests a recipe or two to be published in our newsletter.

Helping in the kitchen is an easy way to contribute and one of the ways to make our monthly meetings the event that we all look forward to. It's fun and by working with other members, it's a way to become friends with new people. There is always a Volunteer Coordinator present to guide the process. We arrive around 10:00 to retrieve the BCGC supplies from the basement, set the tables, and have the drinks ready and be sure the food is prepared to be served. By 10:30 we are ready to enjoy the morning's program. After lunch we make sure the tables are cleared, the kitchen cleaned up, and our supplies are returned to the basement.

Please consider making the Luncheon Committee one of the ways in which you will help to make BCGC such a great success by volunteering for at least one month's luncheon. The Luncheon Committee's clipboard will be circulated every month and we hope you'll sign up. Thank you so much for volunteering!

### Welcome new member Ann Zahn

Ann has been a gardener and artist from the 60's to now. She makes paper from plants and prints images carved from linoleum blocks on the paper of trees, plants, and insects, some of which will be exhibited from Sept. 18 - Oct. 20, 2019 at the Kaizen Rotunda Gallery at The American University with Group 93. She joined the club hoping to meet other gardeners who share interests and ideas. She has lived in Bethesda, with a few years away during WWII & between 1949 - 56, since the 30's.

### It's Not Too Soon to Think Plant Sale

*Barbara Collier*

Yes, the sale is not till next May, but fall is a good time to start thinking about it. This year's plant sale committee decided that some regular updates would not be amiss—hence this article. As you can guess, we are encouraging you to look at your garden for plants that could be thinned, divided, dug up, or otherwise earmarked for the sale. (Make a list!) Most perennials and woody plants do pretty well in pots over winter, with appropriate attention to watering (and maybe protection from critters). In fact, if you've ever helped on a plant sale dig in the fall, you already know that lots of plants can be dug in this season. In particular, if you have peonies to divide, plan to do those in the fall—they do better being dug in the fall than the spring. So if you have too many (or even just a few spare) coneflower, Joe Pye weed, daylily, hosta, aster, goldenrod, and so on, do consider potting them up.

Other than the peonies, if you aren't ready to take action now, you can always wait till spring. (Maybe add to your list as you plan next year's garden?) For instance, digging hosta just as they are beginning to emerge makes it a little easier to see the structure if you want to divide them. And some plants, such as iris, prefer being dug in the spring (although iris will be all right as long as they don't stand in water). Then there are those that you really should dig in spring, as in our experience they are difficult to winter over in pots:

Ajuga	Japanese anemone
Hardy begonia	Crocsmia
Native salvia	Solomon's seal
Plumbago	Pulmonaria

If there's a particular type you are not sure of, we can let you know if we have relevant experience.

If you need assistance, please contact the committee to see if we can arrange for helpers at your place. Committee member Carol Meyers coordinates these requests, so let her know

what you need. Exactly what kind of help is up to you: do you need someone to dig, or is it the potting and labeling that gets you down? Some gardeners prefer to dig at least some things themselves, but others are happy to delegate. Whatever you choose, you commit to keeping the pots watered until the big day.

One thing to be aware of, if you're giving away plants, is their patent status. Yes, those plant labels with patent numbers and "do not propagate" are serious. Much as we are reluctant to believe it, it is not legal to propagate a patented plant—even for our own use (see sidebar). So if you're planning to divide a plant for the sale, please note the label or look it up online and see if it is a patented variety: the garden club really does not want to take the risk of selling contraband! If it is patented, don't try to get around the problem by labelling it generically. Especially if the plant is very distinctive, a sophisticated gardener could easily recognize it and blow the whistle on us.

So let's take care and confine the whistle-blowing to the literal kind—the one Nina blows to open and close the sale.

Barbara Collier

## Environmental Concerns

Barbara Collier

### Near and Deer

If you are not among those who contend with our near neighbors the deer, you are indeed fortunate. In our area, many of us face the problem of sharing our habitat with these beautiful but often destructive creatures. We soon find that we can't avoid trying a lot of options—probably several times.

*Fencing and barriers:* I'm including in this category everything from 12 foot fencing surrounding an entire property to small cloches: anything that excludes deer from reaching your plants. Cost, space, convenience, aesthetics, and opportunity all affect our choices in this category. I have appropriated a discarded lampshade and a small wire garden table to use as cloches, others have repurposed wire harvest baskets,

### Really?

#### *I'm not allowed to propagate that?*

Really. But note that if plants reproduce sexually by setting seed, genetic variation means that the offspring are not identical to the parent. (So you don't have to worry about the volunteers that your patented aster seeded all over the place.) On the other hand, if you use asexual, vegetative means—dividing a plant or rooting a cutting—on a patented plant, such as *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost', for example, that is illegal. Strictly speaking, even home gardeners are not allowed to divide their specimens (until the patent expires on May 25, 2021: mark your calendars!).

Practically speaking, however, most plant patent owners are not patrolling home gardens inventorying the plants. If your 'Jack Frost' grows like crazy, spreading it around in your own garden, though not actually legal, is unlikely to get you into trouble. But sharing it with neighbors would not be recommended. And it should be obvious that offering to sell a patented plant like 'Jack Frost' would definitely be illegal and could have consequences.

and we have all probably fashioned chicken-wire or deer fence "exclosures" of various sizes.

For real deer fencing, lots of design information and advice are available (search on "effective deer fencing"). For example, you must decide whether to make penetrating a fence impossible or just unattractive: deer are said to be able to jump over 8 feet high, but they do not like to jump into areas they can't see or that look obstructed. This means that choosing a solid fence or having shrubbery along the fence could send deer looking for other options.

Fortunately, not only do many woody plants become less palatable to deer when they are mature, larger plants can better withstand browsing. In our yard we routinely erect tem-

porary fencing around new trees, shrubs, and sometimes perennials so that they can become established. Sometimes we lay deer fencing on the ground, which discourages deer from walking near enough to browse.

However, an important consideration for all the barrier methods is how inconvenient it is for *you* to penetrate the barrier. Removing or getting inside barriers to weed, mulch, or water can be annoying. (Hint: if you can, when mulching a new tree or shrub, extend the mulch zone well outside the barrier.) If your problem is winter browsing of evergreens, a temporary barrier could be just fine.

*Aversives:* I include repellents and deterrents in this category. You can buy repellent sprays and granules (research their effectiveness before you buy), and these can be excellent if you can use them consistently and you don't mind a little stink. But you can also deter deer by planting things that they don't like along their habitual paths. Deer are opportunistic browsers, so your aim is to get them to move along past your more delectable plants. This is a matter of some trial and error; for example, in my experience deer do not eat daffodils, columbine, amsonia, penstemon, poppies, baptisia, bleeding hearts, euphorbias, hellebores, ferns (although the internet tells me they browse on bracken fern), Virginia knotweed, cleome, boneset, white snakeroot, helenium, mist flower, or yucca, and they avoid plants with fuzzy leaves and those with strong scents, such as lavender, agastache, mountain mint, monardas, alliums, and herbs.

The dilemma with this approach is how to hide your vulnerable plant effectively enough that deer bypass it, but not so effectively that you can't see it and enjoy it yourself (or get at it for maintenance). I have a corner that I have to pick my way into to see some little treasures; so far the deer have not noticed them.

Another challenge with this method is to work out which plant combinations will work in which seasons. Early in the year, some foreground barrier plants may be too small to act as deterrents, but they do allow early-blooming background plants to be seen; thus the sprays

and granules may be needed until the barriers grow up sufficiently to protect later bloomers. Larger plants like amsonia, boneset, and helenium grow big enough to make a physical barrier later in the season, while the strong scents of agastaches and mountain mint can reduce the incentive for deer to push through.

Deer seem to be especially hungry in the fall, when many things have reached their full size. In principle, this should make it a bit easier to protect fall-bloomers like chelone (loved by deer) and toad lilies (falsely reputed to be resistant; sorry, not in my garden). These need to be surrounded profusely either by things deer hate (so they are overlooked) or love (so the favorites are eaten first). This does mean planning for sufficient depth around vulnerable plants; learn from my mistake of planting them too convenient to paths. (I have a lot of transplanting to do.)

*Sharing the wealth.* If you decide to simply share your garden with wildlife, you could concentrate on planting a combination of things deer don't like (the list is pretty long) and robust plants that you are happy to let deer chow down on. This requires avoiding the prized "deer candy" plants altogether or keeping them strictly confined to protected areas.

You can also enlist the deer to keep enthusiastic spreaders in check. In the spring, I find that deer helpfully browse robust plants such as New England asters, which I might otherwise have to cut back myself. If they do that while ignoring the Joe Pye weed sprouting a few feet behind, so much the better. Of course, I may need to go behind them to neaten up their work (what *is* that one tall sprout doing there?).

A few years ago I scattered jewelweed in a far corner to help keep down weeds and act as a ground cover. It's a prolific self-seeder, but deer really like it. Thus, in some places it stays short, whereas in overlooked corners it gets tall and lush; this means that the deer and I will probably never be without it.

But sometimes the deer do fall down on the job: I had some plants I thought the deer were

going to love to death, but after a certain point, the plants got well enough established that the deer no longer made a dent in them (I'm looking at you, *Helianthus divaricatus*). An opportunity for science: will cutting the plants back a few times next spring and summer keep the leaves tender enough to tempt the deer to help me control them? It's the least they can do to thank me for all the food.



In June, members were invited to an open garden at Carole Ottesen's house. These photos of Carole's lovely gardens were taken by Lynn Lichtenstein.



## HORTICULTURAL NOTES

*Shadows on the Sundials*

Carole Ottesen

“Lord: it is time. The summer was immense.  
Lay your long shadows on the sundials,  
and on the meadows let the winds blow free.”

—*Autumn Day*, Rainer Maria Rilke

Although the coming of autumn always carries with it a sense of melancholy at the passing of summer flowers and soft summer nights, it can also be a time of jubilation. At no other time of the year is the sky so endlessly blue, the air so heady (and free of bugs), the foliage so flamboyant, and the temperature so delightful for work in the garden.

To make garden chores even more pleasant you might consider new products/tools to celebrate the season. The following are tried and true.

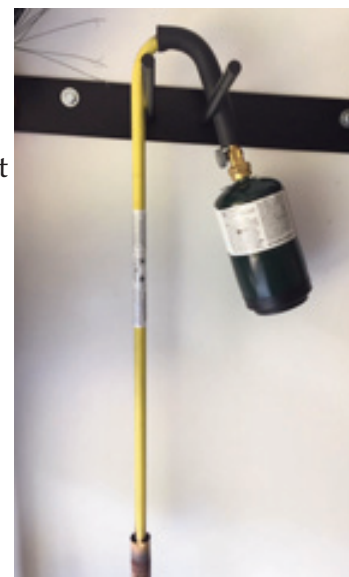
Fall, before weed seeds develop and blow around the garden, is a good time for one last application of organic weed killer. Avenger Weed Killer is made from citrus oil (d-limonene) that works by stripping away the plant cuticles. A 32 oz. bottle of concentrate costs about \$28.

If you don't already own one, a Japanese garden sickle is a must-have. Lightweight, hand held, and inexpensive (around \$14 on Amazon) it requires little effort to slice under and uproot weeds.



A propane torch may strike you as an unlikely acquisition, but this wonderfully effective tool is perfect for ridding gravel drives and sidewalk cracks of unwanted greenery. Used at the right time (and optimally after spraying with Avenger), it not only eliminates weeds, but destroys their seeds as well.

Some torch heads are short for close-up work, others are mounted on long rods to eliminate having to bend over while torching. The best models are those that fire at the touch of a button. They are more expensive (\$35-100) than those that require a spark lighter.



Finally, you might equip yourself with a blower—but not one of those huge, heavy, gas-fired monsters that are the devil to start and emit an ear-splitting din. Smaller, quieter, lighter electric models make quick work of blowing leaves and debris from the garage, driveway, or lawn. For larger properties, a battery-operated blower is slightly heavier, but farther ranging (\$150 and up).

The right tools make for quicker, more efficient use of your energy. There is also the pleasant bonus of a job well done in the beauty of an autumn afternoon.

*Photos by Carole Ottesen*