



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-six Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Why Do We Have Lawns and What to do About It

—Jane Malish

It's been suggested we grow lawns because blank and bare open spaces fronting our domiciles enabled our ancestors to spot invaders and do them damage before they did damage to us. But now lawns are mostly tranquil expanses that rest the eye and flatten the pocketbook, destroy the spinal column and rob us of our weekends. Still we continue to cherish atavistic impulses to achieve the perfect plot. Here today to help us do the best by our yards, **Mary Travaglini** will bring us up to date on creating and maintaining healthy lawn soils organically. Mary is the sustainable landscapes program manager for Montgomery County and is responsible for oversight and outreach on the County's pesticide laws. She is a landscape architect with a background in restoration and invasive species management. As a county employee Mary has asked if the club would allow her to extend an invitation to the public to hear her presentation and as the club's meetings are open to the public, the club has said yes. So you might see some not-familiar faces on Wednesday. And the lunch committee will serve a delicious hot lunch to warm us as the cold season is beginning—just one more reason to join us on **Wednesday November 20**.

The meeting will begin at 10:30 at St. Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Rd., North Bethesda.

The 2019 BCGC Holiday Greens Workshop is just around the corner

—Holiday Greens Workshop Committee: Patricia Pennington (chair), Sabita Sankaran, Hillary Fitis

Creating holiday greens arrangements has been a Bethesda Community Garden Club tradition for close to 60 years. Whether you've been a member for decades or have recently joined the BCGC, plan now to join in the spirit of the season and participate in making the greens arrangements that bring joy to others in our community. The BCGC Holiday Greens Workshop will be held this year on **Wednesday December 11th** at our regular meeting place, Saint Mark Presbyterian Church.

Promptly at **10 am** on December 11th we will create holiday arrangements using the conditioned greens that were brought by club members. Be sure to bring pruners and/or clippers and wire cutters. Also, gloves, if you want to wear them when handling greens. It's helpful if you put your name or identifying mark on the items you bring.



The October meeting always features inventive costumes like this one worn by Sharon Washburn Southerland. See more on page 6.

All photos are by Vickie Baily unless otherwise noted.

Once we've created all the arrangements needed and the room has been cleaned up, we'll enjoy a tasty soup luncheon. Following lunch everyone is invited to participate in a **gift exchange**. To participate in the gift exchange, bring a wrapped, garden-related gift (\$10 limit) to the December meeting. After the gift exchange, members will deliver the greens arrangements to the organizations that assist the less fortunate.

Your participation is needed before, during, and after the greens workshop. Please plan to sign up!

The greens workshops are a lot of fun, and there's a lot to do. So consider the ways you can pitch in! At the November meeting we'll circulate sign-up sheets for workshop tasks. Here are some of the things you can sign up to do:

- Deliver arrangements to some of the various community organizations
- Bring conditioned greens to the workshop
- Arrive on December 11th at 9:30 am to help with a variety of **set up** activities
- Assist new members who are participating in a greens workshop for the first time
- Be part of the cleanup team (bring a broom and dustpan)
- Help load the greens into the vehicles of those delivering the arrangements

Your cut and conditioned greens are essential!

Go through your garden now and decide what greens you can bring to our workshop. The greens you cut and condition need to be healthy and able to hold up for several weeks. For obvious reasons, avoid all prickly plants!

Here's a list of greens that work well in arrangements: aucuba, balsam, boxwood*, cedar, cryptomeria, holly, juniper, lavender, Southern magnolia, nandina, pine, rosemary, spruce, winterberry, yew. Other live plant material can be included in arrangements, as long as the material is not prickly and is tough enough to last several weeks in well-watered floral oasis. *Boxwood is great for covering oasis, but

please make sure if you bring boxwood that it is green and free of disease.

Cut and condition your greens December 8th or 9th

Follow these easy steps:

- ❑ Cut your greens Sunday December 8th or no later than Monday December 9th.
- ❑ Each piece you cut should be between 6" to 12" in length. If you have larger branches, bring them to the Holiday Greens Workshop to be cut on onsite.

In order for the arrangements to stay fresh and attractive for several weeks, it is imperative that your cut greens have been conditioned!

Here are the 3 easy steps for how to condition your cut greens:

- ❑ Lay the greens in a laundry tub or bathtub or extra-large container in a solution of mild detergent and lukewarm water. Soak briefly, swish and rinse in cold water.
- ❑ Soak in cold water until Tuesday evening
- ❑ Dry the greens on old towels or sheeting and bring to the 10 am meeting Wednesday, December 11th.

How About Lunch?

—Judith Graef

Is lunch at general meetings a main attraction for you? Isn't it a pleasure to sit down to good food and conversation and not always have to clean up the kitchen, clear the table, or leave a tip when lunch is over? Now, this is a really good deal. We have the Lunch Committee (Chair, Yvonne Orkin, and members Joyce Casso, Lynn Lichtenstein, Amy Prywes, and Marilyn Tenenbaum) to thank.

The Committee works hard each month to coordinate everything from start to finish, including signing up members to provide the food. The system is well organized but here is the message: **It has become more and more difficult to find volunteers. We need you. We should all consider helping the Lunch Committee at least once a year.** Our growing membership requires increased participation, for example,

November's Hot Lunch involves **14 volunteers**, in addition to the 5 committee members.

The next time you see the monthly sign-up sheet for lunches, send Yvonne and her crew a "Thank You" by *committing to help*. Please note that you'll be working under experienced leadership, in a small group. It's a wonderful way to get to know other members.

Thank you in advance.

Environmental Concerns

—Barbara Collier

The Glittering Goldenrods

Goldenrods: these wonderful late summer / fall bloomers are vital for late color and for so many insects and pollinators—but should we fear their thuggish tendencies? Well ... it all depends. Here your gardening personality (not to mention your acreage) really comes into play. Generally the thugs are those that have aggressive rhizomes, especially in rich garden soils. If you are good at confining or pruning out rhizomes where you don't want them, or you have lots of space to fill, you can let them go to town. But if you're more of a laissez-faire, "I wonder what happens if I do nothing" type of gardener, you may discover that these eventually require a major effort to keep them from taking over. Seedlings may also be an issue if you don't use deep winter mulches or cut off flower heads, but in my book, the rhizomes are the real issue.

Fortunately, goldenrods include over 100 species, of many different personalities. In my garden, I have found some species that are thuggish, but others are just a bit enthusiastic, and some are positively well-behaved. It also depends, as so often, on the particular conditions.

Among the thuggish ones is *Solidago canadensis* (Canada goldenrod), which has a reputation for being so aggressive that apparently even people doing native plant restoration avoid it. My problem is that I planted a cultivar, *Solidago canadensis* 'Baby Gold', before I knew about the risks of the straight species. I believe my 'Baby Gold' is behaving itself, but I feel the need to watch like a hawk for the straight species,

which has attempted to seed into my garden in a few places (see sidebar).

I have also tried *Solidago nemoralis* (gray or field goldenrod), one of the shortest goldenrods (up to 2 feet); this one is also said to be aggressive, if less so than *S. canadensis*. However, in my garden, I have not found it so; possibly I gave it too much competition. However, as a rule, I am told you probably don't want it in a rich garden soil. But if you have a large sunny area with poor soil that you need to fill in, it might be just the ticket.

The nice, well-behaved goldenrods include goldenrods for shade. On a trip to the Shenandoah Valley this past September, I was very admiring of the displays of white wood aster and goldenrod in the woods. The goldenrods found in the woods, *Solidago caesia* (wreath or blue-stemmed goldenrod) and *Solidago flexicaulis* (zigzag goldenrod), both bear flowers in the leaf axils (see photo next page). Both will spread, but in my garden I would be happy if they spread a bit more.



Canada goldenrod ID. This species is the one that is most likely to volunteer in the garden, so it is worthwhile to spend some time learning to recognize the leaves, which are notable for having three prominent veins. In addition, the leaves are all about the same size and generally only along the stem (large basal leaves form early but then fall off). In their first year, they do not usually bloom or form spreading rhizomes, so it's safer not to wait for flowers to form to confirm your ID.

Photo from Wikimedia Commons

One goldenrod cultivar, *Solidago shortii* 'Solar Cascade' is relatively short in stature (30 inches) and is also said to spread less aggressively than other goldenrods, having shorter rhizomes. I can attest that it will spread (especially into paths, of course, those tried and true nursery areas). It remains relatively short, but if, like mine, your garden has more shade as the autumn sun gets lower in the sky, you may find that it leans over as it gazes longingly toward the light. Moral? Move it toward sunnier areas or plant something it can lean on (easier said than done).

Solidago rugosa 'Fireworks' (rough goldenrod) is another fairly enthusiastic sun-loving spreader that has a tall, handsome form. Put down some logs or other border markers around it so you can dig out roots that extend too aggressively. This one seems to lean less for me, but this may be a matter of where it is planted.

Now if could only I could get control of all my asters...



Eurybia divaricata (white wood aster) and *Solidago caesia* (wreath goldenrod) growing in the wild.

(Photo by Jonathan Paul)



We have a new co-chair of the Flower Arrangements Committee—Phyllis Daen joins Kasia Massie who continues her wonderful work



Our membership continues to grow and grow! At the September meeting, we had to create a double circle on both ends—we no longer fit into a single one!



Our October speaker may be the only speaker ever to provide two dishes for lunch! A Garlic Scape Pesto and a Garlic Confit.



HORTICULTURAL NOTES

Winter's Compensations

Carole Ottesen

Every time of the year has its exaltations. In early spring, there is the (wildly anticipated) return of life, maddeningly quiescent when you search for it, popping up magically the minute you turn your back. First come the winter aconites and snowdrops appear and, finally, the daffodils! The long wait is safely and surely over.

May follows as the flowery queen of the growing season. She erupts in one glorious explosion after another until the green world is dense and complete.

Fulsome summer swiftly overachieves overwhelming density. Heavily green and flowerful, summer crowns its abundance with the songs of frogs and crickets.

Fall follows and, bit by tiny bit, the green world begins to retreat. As fall's foliage diminishes, the trees more than compensate for their balding canopies with exuberant color.

And then comes winter. Suddenly, the evergreens that were overlooked move to center stage, setting off grey bony shapes and textures of deciduous trees and shrubs.

Not all evergreens are green. Those that aren't, such as variegated yuccas, golden threadleaf false cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera Nana Area'), and variegated Pieris, bring brave color to gray winter days.

Some plants are at simply their best in winter—and not only those with enduring foliage. Consider hellebores, the bleached foliage of *Hakonechloa*, the stems of red and yellow twig dogwoods (*Cornus stolonifera*), the branches of the coral bark maple (*Acer* 'Sango-Kaku'), standouts after leaf fall, and the berries of winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*).

In the lushness of other seasons, ornamental aspects of some trees and shrubs such as shape



Big leaf magnolia (top),
Hakone grass (above), and
coral bark maple (right).

Photos by Carole Ottesen

and bark can go unnoticed. With its giant leaves, the shape of the big leaf magnolia (*M. macrophylla*) is invisible. When its branches are outlined by snow, it is majestic. A crape myrtle with showy bark is another example. In summer, this plant is valued for its foliage and flowers, but may be ignored for its showiest attribute, its bark.

The bark of *Lagerstroemia* 'Natchez' turns it into sculpture in the winter garden. Likewise, the curling, coppery bark of paper bark maple (*Acer griseum*) and the white and chestnut exfoliating bark of river birch (*Betula nigra* 'Heritage') turn pleasant summer trees into eye-catching winter stunners.

Continued on next page



Photos by Carole Ottesen



Cold, gray, and long, winter offers compensations. Some are subtle. Others are spectacular.



Vickie Baily (far left) has sworn to wear a different sloth shirt to every Garden Club meeting this year. For Halloween she picked Slotherine—the fierce descendent of Wolverine. Not only did Sharon Southerland send Vickie the link for this t-shirt, but she also took the photo!

A subtle headband of flora was the perfect Halloween touch for Carolyn Randall.

Candy Kessel wore a Lifesaver costume (Candy—get it?)



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:



Sally Dabbah



Liz Edlund



Ann Labriola