



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-seven Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

Vol. 47, No. 1 ■ September 2020

Member of
The National Capital Area
Garden Clubs and
The National Council of State
Garden Clubs, Inc.

Co-Presidents:
Judith Graef
Suzanne Grefsheim

Vice President:
Karen Fricke

Co-Secretaries:
Caroline Turner
Barbara Collier

Treasurer:
Margy Tritschler

Bulletin Editor:
Lois Brown
301-365-7419

Photographer:
Vickie Baily

Send news to:
dnleb@aol.com



Lois Brown shares
photos of her spring
garden in the Virginia
countryside (see page 5).

O Brave New World...

by Jane Malish

...that has such people in it who attend the BCGC 2020-2021 kick-off meeting via ZOOM. The meeting will be our traditional round robin format with members sharing their gardening accomplishments and disappointments, new discoveries of plants and tools, and whether they received a mystery packet of Chinese seeds—all information to be shared with each other by way of ZOOM. Information about joining the ZOOM meeting as well as how the meeting will proceed is included in this newsletter. On **Wednesday, September 23**, the meeting will start at the regular time of 10:30am with the round robin, then the business meeting, etc. Be on the lookout for an email with the link to ZOOM. So lively up yourselves and get ready to meet again.

BCGC 2020-2021 DIRECTORY/YEARBOOK

Because we can't give you your copy of the BCGC 2020-2021 Yearbook at the September 23 General Meeting, in keeping with our 2020's theme of "firsts"—something new! A team of dedicated, "masked" volunteers will do their best to hand-deliver your copy of the Yearbook to your home address, before September 23, if you are a local member. If you are out-of-town, delivery will be, as usual, by USPS. Our thanks to Barbara Shaw, who has patiently and professionally worked with us to prepare the Yearbook. We are grateful and know that we'll be referring to it throughout the year.

OUR FIRST MEETING ON ZOOM

Greetings to all! This is a year of firsts for BCGC—virtual meetings and lunches among them. To help you prepare, your new Co-Presidents (another first) are doing their best to become more competent in hosting meetings on Zoom. To be truly successful, however, we need your help. We need you to feel comfortable with using Zoom as well. To help those who may not have much experience in this world of virtual meetings, we are offering practice sessions. (**See below for details**). In the meantime...

IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY SIGNED UP FOR ZOOM

You will need to do so to attend the September 23rd meeting. There are several connection options, but we highly recommend that you establish a free Basic Plan account. This is done by getting the App for Zoom or going to the zoom.us website. You may use a desktop, laptop, tablet or phone (iOS and Android). **If you are not able to accomplish this, get in**

touch with one of us for help no later than Friday, September 18.

JOINING A ZOOM MEETING

You will receive an **Invitation to the September 23 meeting a few days beforehand**. All you will need to join the meeting is to **click on the link "JOIN ZOOM MEETING"** and then follow the prompts to connect to the meeting. You will first be admitted to a *Waiting Room* for a short time. This is a recommended security measure. A co-host will then admit you to the *Main Meeting*. This link to a YouTube video may help:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/hIkCmbvAHQQ?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1

DURING THE MEETING

Because our program, described elsewhere in this newsletter, involves member participation, please make sure that you are familiar with *Chat, Participants, Mute* and *Video* features. If you have not yet used these features on Zoom meetings, we suggest that you take time to explore the Zoom website (zoom.us) and YouTube for the many tutorials. You may want to Use Chat to provide a website address or to give more information on the garden item you are showing members at the meeting. Also, see the Raise Hand feature under Participants. This link to a practice screen also may be of help: <https://zoom.us/test>

The meeting will end with a **Virtual Lunch**—BYOL and we will break out into small groups for lunch and conversation.

Looking forward to seeing you,
Suzanne Grefsheim (grefshe@gmail.com)
Judith Graef (graefwkd@aol.com)
Co-Presidents

OPTIONAL ZOOM PRACTICE SESSION

Tuesday, September 22 at 1:00 pm
Sign-up no later than Friday, September 18
Contact either Co-President

Fall Plant Sale for Members

Barbara Collier

By now we hope most BCGC members will have received and read emails from the plant sale committee announcing the upcoming fall plant sale. This will be an online, members-only plant sale, planned to take place on October 15. An online store is planned to be open from October 6 to 10. Further details will be provided via email blasts sent by Karen Fricke on behalf of the plant sale committee.

We see this sale as a kind of pilot, to judge the feasibility of doing an online sale in the spring that would be open to the public. Of course, it's also an opportunity for members to thin their gardens of plants they would like to share. (I for one hope to seize this chance to do a bit of reorganizing in my rather overgrown garden.) We have worked out how to do a virtual sale that will allow everyone to maintain social distancing and other pandemic precautions. Yes, there will be the need to actually transport donated plants and pick up bought plants, but we hope most people have figured out how to do their outside errands safely. Obviously we would not ask anyone to do anything they feel uncomfortable doing.

Right now, if you think you would like to contribute plants, please get them dug by September 30. Members can pick up pots and plant markers, if they need them, at the homes of Barbara Collier, Susan Lass, and Judy Termini. Remember that we want to sell plants in three pot sizes only: medium (6 to 8 in. diameter—roughly quart size); large (10 to 12 in. diameter); and "shrub" (whatever pot size your shrub fits, probably larger than the "large" size).

You must label your plants with the following information: name of plant (this is vital!), color of flower (if applicable), and light requirements (sun or shade or part sun/shade).

From September 25 to 30, we will have a SignUp Genius page where you can enter information on the potted-up plants you are

offering for sale. (Directions will be provided via email and on the website.) You must list your plants during that time period, or they cannot be included in the sale. We ask you to deliver (or arrange to deliver) your plants to the sale site on October 13.

If you have any questions on any of this, please contact Judy Termini or Elaine Hope.

Environmental Concerns

Fall Lessons Learned

by Barbara Collier

This is the time of year to contemplate what the garden is telling us to do for next year. For example, after all the rain we've been having, one of my problems is that lots of plants are leaning over onto each other, into paths, etc. Although this doesn't affect my goals of providing good habitat for wildlife (while avoiding invasive nonnatives), I would also like the garden to look a little less unkempt.

One approach is to "cut back certain tall perennials in early summer to control height." I follow this advice, but each year I have to figure out how—which plants to cut, how short to cut them—or whether some things grow too tall because they don't get enough sun or are otherwise in the wrong spot (the soil is too rich or too poor, etc.). I have some "short" goldenrods (*Solidago shortii* 'Solar Cascade', *Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks') that now get taller than advertised (2.5 to 3 feet? I think not), so I have to add them to the list of things to cut back or move. Similarly, *Eutrochium* / *Eupatorium dubium* 'Little Joe', a dwarf form of Joe Pye weed, now grows tall enough that it is starting to flop: Cut back? Move? Surround with supporting clumps of grass?

On the other hand, sometimes it's not worth trying to convince a plant to do something it doesn't feel like doing. For example, if you grow the straight species of New England aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*), you know that this plant generally loses all the leaves at the bottom by the time it blooms. Alas, trying to cut it back has not worked for me. Now that

the tall ones in the back are starting to bloom, the poor cutbacks in front are a sad collection of short dried-up stalks with a few unhappy leaves clustered at the top, and no signs of producing flowers. Hopeless. Other asters respond better, such as aromatic aster (*Symphotrichum oblongifolium*).

One wrinkle in the "plants lying down" category is new this year: I would bet that some of my issues with 'Solar Cascade' stem from deer deciding to lie down in them. I may be wrong, but one day I found what looked like a deer-sized depression in the midst of the clump. So be warned.

On the deer damage front, I'm planning to keep growing things they don't like in hopes of shielding things they do like. It may be too early to declare victory (deer get hungry in the fall), but so far, I've had some success. I've found that various grasses (little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*, and some others) helped protect *Spigelia marilandica*, and flowering spurge (*Eurphobia corollata*) seems to lessen damage to my toad lily. A couple of aggressive natives, white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) and sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), can help protect lots of plants, but you may have to work hard to control them both. Plus, shielding plants from deer's mouths can also hide them from people's eyes, especially with something as solid as sensitive fern. Flowering spurge takes a lot longer to get to any kind of size, but it is very airy, so you can see through it.

And of course there's no substitute for actually carrying out the plans you make—I definitely need to cut back more of my cup plants...

HORTICULTURAL NOTES

*What I did last summer: A Cautionary Tale**Carole Ottesen*

We're all aware of the damage to the environment that invasive exotics cause, but, for most of us, other than the struggles against garlic mustard and mulberry weed, exotics don't wreak havoc in our home gardens. Certainly, I didn't think they did for me—until last Easter. On that day, my daughters, sons-in-law, grandkids, and I took a socially distanced walk to the back two acres of my property. It is a place I had not visited for almost five years for personal reasons that now seem irresponsible.

On that walk, we were flummoxed to see a high, homogenous groundcover that covered an acre and a half at the back of the property. Hundreds of barberry bushes between two and five feet high, grew cheek to jowl, forming a seamless blanket. It was not unattractive, but it was barberry.

Where did it all come from in the first place? Sensitized, I began looking around and started to find barberry shrubs everywhere—nearby, in long hedges along my street, on the way to Glenstone, and as landscaping in Potomac Village and Bethesda. Look around. Once you start, you will find them everywhere. They are enormously popular because they are colorful, grow fast, and deer won't eat them.

Many panicky, sleepless nights followed while I considered schemes to remedy such large-scale damage. Someone suggested bringing in goats, but upon reflection, it seemed they would eat only the leaves thus allowing the shrubs to re-sprout. I was dead set against using Round Up. It was my son-in-law who assessed the problem and came up with the best solution. A guy thing. He brought in a monstrous machine not unlike a backhoe. He was able to remove large swaths of the invaders. Unfortunately, the machine could not

get close to trees or large rocks.

Thereafter, in the cool of most early mornings, bug-sprayed, sheathed in denim, and wearing stout leather gloves, I attacked those hard-to-reach areas, aiming to remove at least ten or more of

those encircling trees where a machine could not reach. Happily, small barberry plants are easy to pull out if the ground is not too dry. Larger ones require digging, but are not deeply rooted. Over four months later, they are almost gone, and there is hope where there was despair.

Clearing barberry moved at a glacial pace. Getting the seedlings and stragglers will certainly continue well into fall and beyond. Each space that was freed was a small victory. Often removing a single one of these invaders uncovered a native beneath. One seven-foot holly was invisible inside a ring of barberry. Removing a single shrub almost always revealed a holly or jack-in-the-pulpit that was struggling to grow beneath. Sassafras, spicebush, and ferns are returning to the woods. To protect the newly discovered natives, myself, and others, I always brought along two spray bottles—deer repellent to protect desirable plants and Avenger to kill poison ivy.

I know it isn't over yet. Just as the experts say about COVID 19, there will very likely be another round.



Photo by Carole Ottesen



Photos from Lois Brown's garden in Round Hill, Virginia, spring 2020.