



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-seven Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Member of
The National Capital Area
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Lois Brown, editor



Lois Brown's photo of trillium from her garden should inspire everyone to get out and dig plants from your gardens to contribute to the Plant Sale. See details on page 2.

Do you know where your BCGC directory is?

Due to privacy concerns the newsletter will no longer publish email addresses, phone numbers, or street addresses. Please keep your directory handy!

Climate Friendly Approaches to Residential Gardening

...by a speaker who's addressed the club before. Climate is a huge topic and it has a huge effect on our small (by comparison) garden plots. A bewildering climate situation we all face is whether a once-in-5-or-10-year aberration is a signal the climate is permanently and subtly altering and therefore we should also alter our gardening practices. On **Wednesday April 28, Dr. Sara Via** will share ideas about how to understand aspects of climate change and suggest gardening methods we can adopt to adjust to different and changing climate situations. She spent 30 years as a researcher at the universities of Iowa, Cornell, and Maryland where she currently educates Marylanders, through the University of Maryland Extension, about how to understand gardening problems associated with climate change and how to solve some of them. Don't miss this opportunity to gain some insight from a well-regarded and respected scientist in the field of climate on how to live in a changing gardening world. Be sure to look for your ZOOM invitation on Monday April 26 or Tuesday April 27! We'll see you there.

Jane Malish

Election of Officers at April Meeting

The Nominating Committee for 2021 is pleased to present the following slate to the board and membership for the 2021-2022 year:

President - Karen Fricke
Vice-President - Stella Gordon
Co-Secretaries - Betsy James and Venil Ramiah
Treasurer - Margy Tritschler

Voting will take place via Zoom at the April 28th general meeting.

-BCGC 2021 Nominating Committee: Susan Lass, Chair,
Carol Meyers, Lou Olin, Marge Pray, Sharon Southerland



Carolyn Randall identified a huge patch of blood-root in a neighbor's garden and got permission from him to free some. Plant Sale committee digger Nina Stark-Slapnik (left) helped her prepare it for the sale.

Upcoming Plant Sale News

Mary Horan

Members are digging and potting lots of great plants for the upcoming Plant Sale. So that our sale is pandemic-safe, we are using an easy online system to donate plants and to purchase plants, and prescheduled time slots for dropping off and picking up plants.

- Now is the time to dig and pot your plants. Before April 25, please list your plants for sale and schedule a time to drop them off, using the web links provided in an April 16 email blast.
- May 12: Drop off your donated plants at Hillary's house during your scheduled time slot.
- May 3-4: Purchase plants at our website storefront, and choose a time slot for pickup.
- May 13: Pick up your purchased plants at Hillary's house.

Plant donors:

- We will sell plants in three pot sizes: medium (6-8 inches diameter); large (10-12 inches) and "shrub" (larger than 12 inches).

- Label each plant with its name, flower color and light requirements.
- Members can pick up pots and plant markers at the homes of Barbara Collier, Susan Lass, and Judy Termini. Please contact them before showing up in person.
- Plant sale committee members can help members identify good plant candidates, as well as help in digging. Contact Judy Termini or Elaine Hope as soon as possible.

Plant buyers:

- The online store is only open on May 3- 4! You will receive an email reminder with the link.
- Plant pick up is May 13, at prearranged time slots.

Questions? Contact Judy or Elaine



Member Betsy White (above) offered gorgeous hellebores for the upcoming plant sale, and received help with digging and potting from Plant Sale committee digger Candy Kessel.



Looking Ahead to the Holidays

Patricia Pennington

Yes, it's spring, but not too early to think about signing up to serve on the BCGC Holiday Greens Workshop Committee this year. It's a rewarding way to be involved in an activity members look forward to every year. And it's an opportunity to get to know other BCGC members!

There are many ways Holiday Greens Workshop Committee members can use their skills to support this annual activity. Check out the list below that summarizes what committee members may sign up to do before, during, and after the Workshop.

- Write copy about the Holiday Greens Workshop for the BCGC newsletter—before and after the event.
- Create copy to send to members regarding the Holiday Greens Workshop. These communications start as early as late October, and end with an article in the January newsletter
- Encourage all members at BCGC meetings in the fall to participate in the December Holiday Greens Workshop
- Remind members to bring cut & conditioned greens from their gardens, or from the garden of their friendly neighbors
- Contact community organizations to confirm they would like to receive greens arrangements in 2021. Confirm arrangement size, quantity, address/delivery details, and the POC name & contact number of the person who will receive the arrangements the day of Holiday Greens Workshop.
- If needed, purchase oasis, bowls for the oasis, and the festive materials used to decorate the greens arrangements members create. (You'll be reimbursed.)
- Recruit BCGC members to sign up to load their cars on the day of the workshop with greens arrangements and deliver the arrangements to community organizations.

- Sign up BCGC members to participate with specific activities on the day of the Holiday Greens Workshop. They include:
 1. Soak the oasis the morning of the workshop, prior to members arriving
 2. Set up tables before members arrive
 3. Display all the “doodads,” ribbons, and other items members may use to embellish their arrangements
 4. Serve for half an hour during the workshop checking the arrangements members have created to ensure ‘no green oasis is showing’.
 5. Help with clean up after the event.

Contact Patricia Pennington to sign up to serve on the committee or if you have questions. Please consult the directory for her address.

Environmental Concerns

Ground Covers Revisited

Barbara Collier

Back in October 2017 I reported on my experience with several low-growing native ground covers that seemed to be relatively immune to deer. I thought I'd revisit this topic, since it's both perennial and evergreen (sorry, couldn't resist).

In fact, many of our shade-loving native ground covers are semi-evergreen: the leaves mostly hang on over winter, growing more or less battered depending on the species and the local conditions. In the wild, our Piedmont forests would have a cover of fallen leaves at this time of year. The leaf litter acts as a weed barrier, temperature regulator, and moisture retainer, making way for the unfurling both of the spring ephemerals and of the new leaves of familiar woodland ground covers, such as wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*).

In a wooded Garden of Eden (with no invasive species), leaf litter might be all the mulch needed. But for most of us, of course, this just isn't the case. Besides invasives, we have deer pres-

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sure, mixed sun and shade, compacted soils from construction or foot traffic, alternating downpours and droughts, and a lot of other challenges that point us to seek ground covers as green mulch, to be both a weed barrier and a carpet under other plants. So how nicely do these low-growing ground covers play with other plants?



The champion weed barrier / carpet maker is probably golden ragwort, *Packera aurea*, which not only grows thickly, but also remains fairly prominent in winter, which is great if you are under threat from lesser celandine. This plant has become very well known among native plant

enthusiasts—even if some are not so enthusiastic about its spready tendencies. It does self-seed prolifically, which is great if you need to cover a lot of ground (if you don't, you will have to supply the discipline to control it). It blooms less prolifically in shadier areas, but it is easy to speed up its spread by transplanting. I was delighted by how quickly it filled in under the shade of a yew hedge, when I replaced vinca with some of the excess ragwort from my garden paths.

As an underlying carpet, golden ragwort gets along fine with shrubs, larger bulbs, ferns, and large perennials, such as amsonia, boneset, goldenrod, Russian sage, and Joe Pye weed, to name a few. Smaller, shallow-rooted plants would probably be outcompeted, so keep your delicate little woodland flowers somewhere else. Golden ragwort is also pretty bullet-proof: when we had a nasty drought, I thought for a while that in the sunny spots, the dry heat had

defeated it. However, it sprang back when the rain returned.

Another semi-evergreen is Allegheny spurge, *Pachysandra procumbens*. A handsome plant with interesting flowers, it is a slow spreader (certainly compared to the traditional non-native *Pachysandra terminalis*), and it does not seem to be a robust competitor. Compared to a thick spreader like ragwort, it requires much more weeding as it establishes itself. In my experience, this pachysandra does not much like competition from other perennials, although it is fine with small bulbs and large woody plants. (Choose small bulbs, so that their leaves don't spoil the look of the pachysandra flowers and new growth in spring.)

Phlox is often recommended as a ground cover for sun and part shade, but in my garden several species have been browsed into oblivion by deer and rabbits. However, about 6 years ago, I planted *Phlox glaberrima* as a specimen in a partly sunny area, and to my surprise, it has spread since then to the point of being a decent ground cover. It is said to be less attractive to deer than other types of phlox (and maybe foxes ate all the rabbits?). It is now surrounding other perennials, which continue to come up through it. Some weeds appear too, such as tree seedlings, but it seems to keep most at bay.

Sedges are a versatile group, with species adapted to many conditions, and they are generally deer-resistant. Popular choices for ground cover include Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), creeping sedge (*Carex laxiculmus*), meadow sedge (*Carex flaccosperma*), tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*), and common wood sedge (*Carex blanda*). I have had good success with Appalachian or mountain sedge (*Carex appalachica*), which has very fine leaves and is relatively short (about 6 inches high, with a weeping habit). It does well in dry conditions, so I put it under a Japanese maple, where it spread nicely. When it began to spread into a nearby area with more sun and moisture, it did not suppress really aggressive plants

(like golden ragwort, for instance), but grew through them.

A sedge with more robust leaves, seersucker sedge (*Carex plantaginea*), gets a bit larger, and its puckered inch-wide leaves seem to do well in shading out competition. This is another woodland sedge, preferring light shade. The one specimen I put in has now multiplied and promises to be a good ground cover.

In my 2017 article, I discussed lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*), plantain-leaved pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*), and the notably thuggish woodland anemone (*Anemone canadensis*). I still have these in various places, but all three are now competing in one bed, along with some other aggressive plants, including bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), clustered mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), and the redoubtable obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*). I'm not sure if anyone's winning, but they're still gamely duking it out.

—Barbara Collier



Another lovely trillium from Lois Brown. We hope you are inspired now to contribute plants for the sale, particularly if you are fortunate to have the groundcovers described by Barbara Collier, and other plants that fellow club members treasure.