



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-nine Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Member of
The National Capital Area
Garden Clubs and
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Lois Brown, editor

Kathy Jentz, Pillar of Washington Gardening Community,

knows a lot about how Washington gardens grow. And she spends a lot of her time sharing her knowledge with fellow gardeners: she is editor and publisher of the online *Washington Gardener* magazine, editor of *The Water Garden Journal*, the *Azalean* and *Fanfare* (for the local daylily society) and host of the **GardenDC** podcast, as well as being the **Green Media** columnist for the *Mid-Atlantic Grower* newspaper where she encourages independent garden centers, plant breeders and others to make their products known on social media.

Kathy will join us in her usual capacity as disseminator of garden know-how to help us identify and deal with that universal scourge of gardeners, WEEDS. If you're feeling discouraged about losing your once identifiable plants to encroaching garden thugs and thriving invaders, I encourage you to join us on Wednesday morning, **October 25**, 10:30 AM when Kathy arms us with tools and knowledge to ban these uninvited intruders. And there will be a salad and dessert lunch provided by the club's board—a free lunch to entice all those superior gardeners who have already conquered the fearless weed, have triumphed, and don't need Kathy's information and who also know the value of a free lunch.

Jane Malish

Plant Sale News

Mary Horan

It's fun to dig in members' lovely gardens! Look for an email blast with details of our remaining autumn digs, and sign up to join us!

NOW is a great time to dig and pot plants from your own garden for the sale. Well-potted perennials will overwinter happily in shady spots in your yard, and they will look full and beautiful for the sale in May 2024. Check last month's newsletter for details on which plants to dig, and what size pots to use. Contact Judy Termini or Elaine Hope for labels, pots or advice.



Blanca Luisi shares photos and historical information about the Club's project at Connie Morella Public Library. See the article and more photos on pages 2-3.

Photo by Blanca Luisi



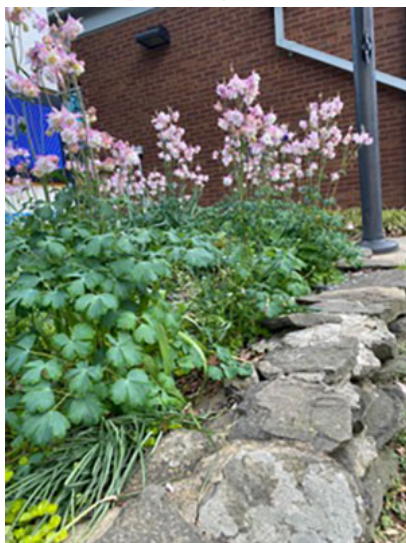
Digging and potting crew at a former member's garden, after preparing over 100 plants for sale.

BCGC at Connie Morella Public Library

Nearly forty years ago, the Bethesda Community Garden Club played its first key role in the design, planting and maintenance of the landscape at the Connie Morella Public Library in downtown Bethesda. The first and most significant “dig” took place between 1985-87, when BCGC volunteers helped to design and plant a mixed-shrub border along the west end of the parking lot, now simply known as “The Brick Wall.”

I recently read with much interest a detailed description of the initial project which was on display at our recent 100-year anniversary lunch. According

to this report, in 1995, about ten years after the initial plantings, the Club extended the project to the courtyard off of the children’s library. Overall cost to the Club for these plantings was approximately \$1,600 at the time. Club members accomplished this task almost entirely on their own, working in consultation with Montgomery County and library officials, with the exception of some help from a nursery employee who assisted with the plantings. In addition to the planting



project, BCGC had trees professionally pruned, at the Club’s expense.

“Nearly thirty people—a third of the membership—have contributed time, labor and ideas to the original project. Twice a year, Club members performed maintenance on the plantings”



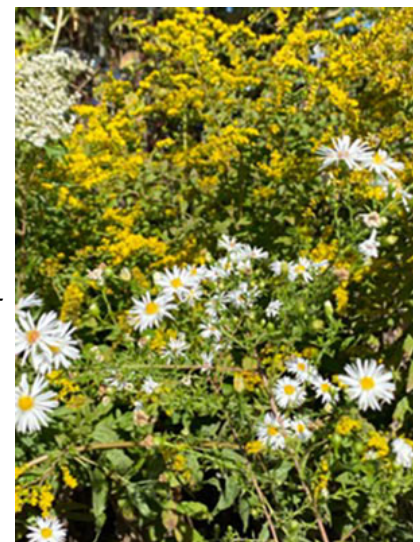
“...plants were chosen to give texture and interest, and at the same time not to attract too much attention in the hope of reducing the risk of theft. Thus a Hindi cypress was chosen over a Magnolia grandiflora or a holly. The Hinoki itself was stolen, however, and was replaced with a Viburnum torments. A miscanthus sinensis was stolen in 1987 and it was replaced the following spring with another plant of the same species, in the belief that the plant would be too large to dig by the time it became showy in the fall.”

Each shrub and its location is neatly documented in the report, and I am happy to report that one of these shrubs, the winter jasmine (or a descendant), is still thriving in the exact location it was first planted.

A couple of problems were reported at the time: “Stolen Shrub and Brutal County Pruning.” The more things change...

Present Day

Our dedicated work crew at Connie Morella Library worked consistently and extremely hard over the summer. Challenges included extreme heat and humidity, poor air quality, and poor soil in the shallow parking lot islands.



Challenging as well was the need to work in a very active parking lot: volunteers and their tools, buckets, lawn bags and other garden paraphernalia often work alongside moving cars, pedestrians, babies in carriages, delivery trucks and other activities in this busy public space. In addition to providing their own tools, volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and a unique camaraderie to whatever task we may face each week.

One of our biggest challenges was keeping new, mostly all native plants alive and watered throughout July and August. Garden hoses must be long enough to reach across the length of the parking lot. While this is excellent upper-arm

exercise, cars and heavy trucks driving over the hoses take their toll. These problems are minor and more than offset by the public's enthusiastic response to our work. Often library patrons stop to comment and express heartfelt gratitude to BCGC volunteers for working together to enhance a public space. If they stop to chat too long, we may try to recruit a new member or two.



The crew at Connie Morella library meets on Thursdays, the time depending on weather, and always welcomes more help. Our work mirrors the Club's mission in every aspect—to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening; to encourage the camaraderie of our shared interest in gardening; to aid in the protection of native plants and birds through promotion of sound environmental practice; and to carry out horticultural projects that benefit our wider community.

Blanca Luisi

A Message from our club president Jeanne Weiss

If you come to the October general meeting October 25, you can pick up your Yearbook/Directory as well as the 100th anniversary history booklet.

Please check your contact information in the Directory and let me know if anything is incorrect. All corrections to the contact information will be sent out via email. Please watch your inbox for these updates and make the changes in your Directory.

The dates of our general meetings through April, 2024, are:

For 2023 - Oct. 25, Nov. 15, Dec. 13

For 2024 - Jan. 24, Feb. 28, March 27 and April 24

We gather at St. Mark Presbyterian Church; 10701 Old Georgetown Rd.; North Bethesda, usually on the 4th Wednesday of each month. Many members arrive at 10:00 so they can have some time to socialize before the talk begins at 10:30. We have to adjust our meeting dates in November and December because of holidays with family gatherings and travel. The venue has plenty of parking and is handicap accessible.

Some of you will discover that your photo is not in the Directory, and that is because Dawn Landsman, our photographer, has not had a chance to take your picture. I will send a separate email to those of you whose photos are missing so Dawn can take them. Every effort will be made to publish your photo in the Newsletter and later in next year's Directory.

Finally, the big reason BCGC is able to accomplish what we do (see your Yearbook/Directory) is because of our volunteers, most of whom are performing tasks in which they had little or no previous experience. We welcome practiced as well as new volunteers. You may find in the current Newsletter a description of an area of club activity which describes that activity and solicits more members to join. I will name two areas here where we need volunteers:

1) Finance Committee - This may be a committee of one, but we need at least one person to perform the Finance duties. The Directory/Yearbook states the following: "Finance: This committee reviews the proposed budget and monthly treasurer's reports, alerting the treasurer to issues, as well as stepping in to make suggestions or frame a particular issue. At the end of the year, the committee audits the treasurer's account."

Our Treasurer, Margy Tritschler, prepares a monthly statement. She wants to be audited.

Our previous Finance Chair has done this for many years, and now it's time for someone new. The other committee member is moving away, and we will miss her. She contributed good information about how to digitize the 100 years of club records, for example. All we really need is the audit. We gladly welcome any volunteers for this task. We are not generally an overly critical bunch, so if you are just learning, you will receive help, not criticism.

2) The Listserv - Our previous Listserv volunteer has done the job for several years, and it's time for someone new. In the Yearbook/Directory the Listserv description is: "The committee manages the listserv and educates members on how to join or opt out. The purpose of the Bethesda Community Garden Club ListServ is to provide a forum for members to post and reply to plant/garden related topics and questions, announce garden related events, as well as other relevant plant/garden club topics."

To use our ListServ, go to Google Groups and click on Google Groups. You will see two club groups. Our very able previous manager (thank you Hillary Fitis) set up a group called "Bethesda Community Garden Club," and the 2nd club group is BCGC 2023-24. You will also see any other groups you belong to. For now, click on BCGC 2023-24, and then click on 'New Conversation' to start your own message to the group.

This ListServ, BCGC 2023-24, contains all club members. If you don't want to be contacted on this group, please let me know by email. I will add and delete members until we have a new manager. If you volunteer to be manager, you can always get help. It is not difficult or time-consuming.

Anniversary Celebration

On September 27, 2023 the Bethesda Community Garden Club celebrated 100 years of our club, its members, and its pursuits. We enjoyed a catered luncheon at the Chevy Chase Woman's Club. Sharon Southerland was the emcee and started our celebration off with a toast to all and recognized long-standing members of the club. During the lunch, we enjoyed music selections and a slide show of club activities that spanned the years. The tables were decorated with runners and small arrangements of flowers, appropriately cut from members' gardens.

Attendees were fascinated with the display of historical records that included timelines over the 100 years our club has been in existence. To mark the occasion, each member received a booklet highlighting the club's early days and the projects the club has supported over the years.



Left to Right: Blanca Luisi, Jeanne Weiss, Betsy James, Gwen Stewart, and Candy Kessel

Photo by Blanca Luisi

"Brightening Lives and Landscapes" is an appropriate title of the booklet compiled in honor of this occasion.

A striking characteristic of this Garden Club is how members work well together to accomplish a task. This was obvious again, thanks to the wonderful efforts of the 100th Anniversary committee: Sharon Southerland, chair, Jeanne Weiss, Judith Graef, Carolea Logun, Susan Lass, Gwen Stewart, Candy Kessel, Nina Stark-Slapnik, Carol Meyers and Mary Horan. A huge thanks to all who made our celebration so special and to all who were able to participate. It was a convivial party and an engaging way to begin our next 100 years as a Garden Club!

Carole Gelfeld and Margy Tritschler

Environmental Concerns

Kathy Benjamin and Barbara Collier

One word: plastics

As we contemplate the coming gardening season (and our annual plant sale), one aspect of modern gardening is hard to miss. Plastic is ubiquitous: bags of every kind of garden amendment, landscape fabric (ugh), tools, edgings, and of course pots. For the plant sale, we collect hundreds of pots, pretty much all reused (yay!), but we know that the ultimate fate of many of them is the landfill (boo!).

Continued on page 6

100th Anniversary Party - Sept 27, 2023



We are lucky enough to live in an area where our local recycling does accept plastic plant pots, but a little investigation reveals a disappointing reality. That is, much of our county's plastic recycling is sold to "brokers," who probably discard a lot of plastic that is unprofitable to recycle. This is highly likely to include all those black plastic flowerpots. Apparently black plastic is very hard to recycle because it can't be detected by most sorting machines, so there is no market for it.

So the best thing we can do at the moment is to reuse those plastic pots, especially the black ones, as many times as possible. Fortunately, two local native plant nurseries, Bona Terra and Earth Sangha, encourage gardeners to donate used pots; both try not to buy new pots. Bona Terra doesn't accept everything, but you can consult their website (<https://bonaterradc.com/plant-sales/>) for a handy graphic (with dimensions) of what they will take. Earth Sangha takes most pots but they prefer the larger ones.

Of course, with the plant sale in the offing, the club is currently gathering pots, not trying to dispose of them. But we may want to think about how to encourage or even help our customers

figure out what to do with the pots after they remove the plants. We would probably rather have them return the pots to Bona Terra or Earth Sangha than send them to the landfill. Could we provide the information to our customers or even coordinate with the nurseries? Another possibility, though difficult (impossible?) to coordinate, would be ask customers to return them to us for next year. It's something for us to work on.

In our individual gardens, besides recycling plastic pots when possible, we can also try to use alternatives to plastic. For instance, we can start seeds in egg cartons, plant fiber seed pots (like peat pots without the peat), or paper seed pots, and we can use planters made of fiber/cloth, metal, wood, and of course traditional ceramic and terra cotta.

On a wider perspective, we see encouraging efforts to develop biodegradable or compostable planting containers, using "materials derived from waste and organic biomass such as peat, cow manure, wood fiber, residual mushroom cultivation media, coconut fiber, banana peels, husks, palm oil fiber and straw." This is what will be needed to make the biggest difference.

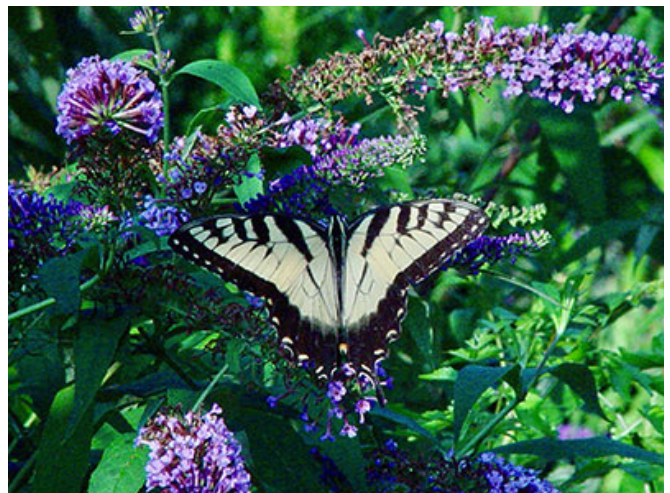
HORTICULTURAL NOTES

Late Purples

Carole Ottesen

Walking through the garden in October yields some unexpectedly lovely sights. Very often, whatever isn't red-berried or orange, is purple.

Butterfly bush is still blooming for the pleasure of the occasional butterfly, even though some of its leaves are shriveling. It's a tough hanger-on that simply won't give up. At seven feet tall and nearly as wide—so enormous that it requires twice yearly hard pruning (its exact ID is lost in the mists of time). If you are in the market, consider the smaller—under three feet—*Buddleia* 'Lo and Behold' or for dramatic color, deep purple, 'Black Knight,' reputed to be the most fragrant of all.



Beauty berries (*Callicarpa sp*) are well named. Their berries literally glow in the autumn sunshine. Of two species, American beautyberry (*C. Americana*) has larger berries that encircle the stems. *C. dichotema* produces fruits that droop gracefully on pendant branches. Both are attractive to birds and deer. Once established, American beautyberry will thrive in a hot place, self-sow, provide fruit for jelly (the berries) and is an old-time remedy for repelling mosquitos (the leaves), making it ideal for a spot next to the patio.



In part shade, toad lilies (*Trycyrtis*), bloom late and lustily with dozens of the spotted blooms along their low, arching stems. Combine them in late bouquets with the carefree lavender flowers of the soaring Tartarian aster (*Aster tataricus*).

Now is the time both to plant and to find the flowers and stamens of the saffron crocus (*Crocus sativus*). Yes, it's the same saffron that is outrageously expensive. That's because, though the red stamens seem large when ripe, when dry they shrivel to a fraction of their size.

There is still plenty happening out in the garden. It's not over until it's over.

Callicarpa Americana above; *C. dichotema* at right



Below: Tartarian aster



Toad Lily (*Trycyrtis*)



Crocus sativus

