



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-four Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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

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Phyllis Daen created
this lovely and unusual
arrangement for the
speaker's table at the
February meeting.

*All photos by Vickie Baily
unless otherwise noted.*

Spring will have arrived when we meet on **Wednesday, March 28**. You may have whipped your gardens into shape or you could be like me, avoiding all work and waiting for your hydrangeas to bloom. Hydrangeas are for me the most reliable of my four shrubs—the other three being two azaleas and a straggling Carefree rose. My hydrangeas supply me with pretty blue or white flowers which are free, unlike the parsimonious bunches for sale at Trader Joe's and I'm thankful that the hydrangea flowers seem to be having a moment. Still, I'd like to know more about my loyal bloomer and our speaker for this meeting is Mr. **Les Rucker**, a master gardener who has studied this reliable bush and who will share his knowledge with us. He can advise us about hydrangea species that flourish here; how, when, and if we should prune; whether or not to fertilize; and many other hydrangea topics. Mr. Rucker loves hydrangeas and I feel his passion for them will inspire us. So do mark your calendars for Wednesday, March 28, bring a delicious sandwich, which you've painstakingly sliced into quarters, and come along to the meeting.

We begin promptly at 10:30, and meet at St Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Road, North Bethesda.

ANNUAL PICNIC INFORMATION

And now a note about the annual picnic. This year it will be at the Smithsonian Greenhouses, 4222 Silver Hill Rd., Suitland MD, on **June 13** and we will organize carpools. Currently we estimate we'll need about 12 cars and drivers. A box lunch is planned and costs will be announced. Details about times and directions will follow closer to the date, but if you're willing to drive three other people for a total of four in your car, please let me know. Other additional information will be sent out as the date draws nearer.

—Jane Malish

DUES DUES DUES

How to keep your treasurer smiling??? Pay your dues on time!!!

Due to the fact that the BCGC directory is compiled and printed over the summer, you need to pay your dues by the end May so that you will be listed as a current member in the 2018-2019 directory. Dues will be collected at the March and April meetings, or you can mail a check to Regina Fitzgerald. There is no general meeting in May.

Make check out to BCGC.

Regina Fitzgerald
4413 Windom Place NW
Washington, DC 20016

Kudos for Another Successful Silent Auction

Candy Kessel

We shared a lot at our February 28 meeting, getting rid of our own unwanted garden paraphernalia and bidding \$480 to take home new treasures. We sold 68 of the 113 donations during the silent auction. The lovely large glazed pots were the big attraction, all drawing bids from \$25-\$35. Sadly, more than 20 items had just a single \$1 bid but they all went to



grateful new owners. Most of the unsold items I delivered to Wagging Tail Thrift & Gift in Rockville, a huge and well-organized thrift shop which supports Montgomery County Humane Society.

Many thanks to the team who helped manage the auction—Diane Beverly, Regina Fitzgerald, Sue Gagner, Elaine Hope, Karin Kelleher, Carol Meyers, Sabita Sankaran, and Judy Termini. And grateful applause to all the members who brought donations and bid on the many offerings.

The revenue has gone into BCGC coffers to be used toward future club projects or contributions.

Plant Sale Sign-up for the 21st Century

Instead of passing around clipboards, at our next meeting the Plant Sale Committee will introduce Sign Up Genius for club members to first, identify tasks they can help with and then, make a commitment. SignUpGenius is an online application, but before you shudder and think “too complicated,” there will be 4-5 laptops at the meeting so you can get acquainted with the process and even sign up right then and there.

If this process goes well for Plant Sale sign up, BCGC will be using SignUpGenius for lots of things in the future. You will be getting an email with more information shortly.

It's Spring and Time to Dig!

One of the things almost every member can do to support the Plant Sale is share some of their excess plants from their own garden. Do you realize what we would have if each of you dug and potted just 10-12 plants from your normal spring garden maintenance efforts? The trick is to have pots and soil ready when you do your thinning and dividing of overgrown/over-sown plants.

Some things to keep in mind: First, “what emerges early, needs to be potted early.” So, as you read this, whatever is peeking through the mulch and leaves should be divided and potted NOW for the May sale. That way the plants will both look better and be healthier when sold. Second, if you are sharing multiples of the same plant, please pot them in the same size/shape pot. This will make them easier to price and provide a more uniform appearance when displayed. And if you need pots, Nina has them!

Finally, if you need help with thinning and dividing, let Nina or others on the committee know. While they will do the work, they do expect you to keep the potted plants until the day before the Plant Sale, when you will need to get them to Carolyn Kulik's for pricing.

So share your bounty and let's see what a thousand plants from member gardens looks like on May 10!

Environmental Concerns

Barbara Collier

Masses of Mountain Mint

The mountain mints—various species of the *Pycnanthemum* genus—are handsome native plants that are also champions for attracting pollinators. This is literally true: in scientific trials, the *Pycnanthemums* racked up more numerous pollinators and more different species than any other contender. Native bees, honeybees, butterflies, skip-pers, wasps, flies, beetles, and bugs are all attracted.

Although related, the mountain mints are not true mints (*Mentha*), but they have a strong scent and many are traditionally used for flavoring food and teas. Deer and rabbits don't touch them (hurray!), probably because of this strong flavor.

Although less aggressive than true mints, these are

vigorous growers “in ideal conditions” (which I guess I have), so plant them where you have room for them to stretch out, or in areas with other vigorous plants that can compete. Unlike most mints, they grow fairly tall: about 3 feet. They will attract loads of pollinators, so bear in mind that they will be buzzing with activity when in bloom. They like full sun or light shade, so they should do well at the sunnier edges of woods.

Several species are generally available around here. So far I have two: *Pycnanthemum muticum* and *Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*.

Pycnanthemum muticum has lots of common names: clustered mountain mint, short-toothed mountain mint, broad-leaved mountain mint, etc. Flat bracts surround the flower heads; the



bracts have a silvery cast and remain showy after the bloom is over. The tiny florets packed into the flower disk can be pinkish to white, but the plant's general impression is silvery because of the bracts. In four years, it has spread considerably for me, but I gather that in dry areas it is less vigorous. An interesting piece of advice I found online was to plant it with the ninebark cultivar *Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Summer Wine.' The color and form of the two plants go together beautifully.



Pycnanthemum tenuifolium, as its name suggests, has much narrower leaves than *muticum* (about ¼ inch across) and is a bit shorter—about 2 feet, although it can

apparently reach 4 feet in rich soil. It is said to be more drought tolerant than *muticum*. I have not found it to spread as vigorously as *muticum*, but it did form a nice clump for me, which I proceeded to divide. Its densely clustered flowers, smaller than those of *muticum*, are attractive, as is its narrow foliage, which has a look of thread-leaf coreopsis.

Other species that look likely are *Pycnanthemum incanum* and *Pycnanthemum virginianum*.

Pycnanthemum incanum, hoary or silverleaf mountain mint, gets its name from the hoary (whitish) color of the upper leaves and bracts. Like *muticum*, this species has a silvery look, and its dried flower heads make a nice winter display. The blossoms are said to be a bit larger than those of *muticum*.

Pycnanthemum virginianum looks more like *tenuifolium*, from which it differs by the presence of white hairs along its stems, and leaves that, though narrow, can be wider than ¼ inch across. According to a useful wildflower site (illinoiswildflowers.info), it also tends to be taller, stouter, and less branched, and it blooms a little later in the year.

Having an assortment of mountain mints should make both you and the pollinators very happy!

Photos in this article by Barbara Collier

A message from Suzanne Grefsheim, Club President

As many of you are aware from recent articles in the *Washington Post*, The National Capital Planning Commission and the Smithsonian South Mall Campus Master Planners recently settled on something called Plan F, which you can see on their website, www.ncpc.gov. Plan F preserves the Haupt Garden, but would require its removal, redesign and reinstallation when the repairs are made to the roof on which it sits.

Despite its approval of a plan that would preserve the garden, there is great distrust among historical and horticultural groups that, when the project is funded and undertaken, the Smithsonian will abide by its commitment. Hence we were encouraged to send a follow up to our original letter to preserve the Haupt Garden, expressing our desire and expectation that the Smithsonian will honor its commitment. (See below.) Individuals also can express their concerns by contacting the Commission at info@ncpc.gov or (202) 482-7200.

The next meeting of the Commission, which is open to the public, is April 5, 2018 at NPCP Headquarters 401 9th St, NW Suite 500.

[Editor's Note: Suzanne's letter to the Smithsonian appears on the next page]

March 13, 2018

Mr. Preston Bryant, Chairman
 Mr. Marcel C. Acosta, Executive Director
 National Capital Planning Commission
 401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500N
 Washington, DC 20004

Dear Messers. Bryant and Acosta,
 I am writing as president of Bethesda Community Garden Club, representing over 100 club members from Maryland and D.C. Founded in 1923, the Bethesda Community Garden Club has a long history of commitment to supporting and volunteering in public gardens. Among other things, our club played a leading role in the creation of Fern Valley in the U.S. National Arboretum through the contribution of time, money, and labor. We have continued our financial support for Fern Valley into the present. It is as donors and as gardeners that we wish to comment on the proposed changes to the Enid A. Haupt Garden.

First, we recognize that the Haupt Garden is a roof garden and the need to repair and possibly replace the roof on which it sits is the reason that the garden will be affected by the Smithsonian South Mall Campus Master Plan. We further acknowledge that the need to protect the two museums covered by the roof must be considered primary. However, this does not diminish the importance of restoring the Haupt Garden to meet the terms of the bequest Enid A. Haupt and Dillon Ripley agreed upon.

Therefore, we are asking for reassurance from you, the Commission, and the Smithsonian that the garden will be preserved and that Enid A. Haupt's intent will be followed. It is in the Smithsonian's own interest to respect the wishes of its previous donors, if it hopes to attract present and future donors for projects such as these. As frequent visitors to and supporters of the Smithsonian gardens, it is our sincere hope that, when the time comes for action, the Smithsonian will recognize its obligation to the public, its donors, and its own heritage by preserving both the spirit and character of the Enid A. Haupt Garden, so it can fulfill its promise be a "garden for the ages," which future generations can enjoy.

Thank you,
 Suzanne Grefsheim, President



Michael Szesze, proprietor of the Carnivorous Plant Nursery in Smithsburg, MD, was the speaker at the February meeting. His wife, Pamela, met him when they were both teachers more than 30 years ago. She has been working with the Carnivorous Plant Nursery since she retired from teaching grades 2, 3, and 4 in Montgomery County. One can only imagine how many times she has heard his (excellent!) talk. Or how many carnivorous plants she has lived with over the years. Growing requirements appear below:

Growing Requirements: a few simple rules.

- Mineral-free water
- Mineral-free soil
- Wet all of the time
- Lots of light



HORTICULTURAL NOTES

Carole Ottesen

It's catalog season! Can there be anything nicer than crawling into bed with a newly arrived plant catalog and falling asleep dreaming of wonderful new additions for the garden?

Perhaps because my experience with ravenous deer has created a taste for sharp spiny, pokey-leaf plants, one that I never before considered now cries out to me. It is the Asian bitter orange that goes by the name "Flying Dragon Trifoliolate Orange."

How about the following description by the Cistus Nursery: "Ancient Asian selection of the bitter orange with lovely twisted stems & wicked thorns... (A) deciduous citrus, best in winter when the green stems and huge thorns are exposed and large orange fruits hang on. In spring, white flowers with a sweet fragrance...Extremely frost hardy, to USDA zone 5."

Edible Landscaping in Afton, Virginia sells seedlings for \$6 and writes: "We make citrus-ade from the juice (of the bitter oranges), adding sweetener and water. Fruits are highly aromatic."

I have already ordered one of these fantastically thornful plants! Maybe you need to wear chainmail to prune it, but the deer will hate it.

A plant that has lived in my garden overlooked and under-appreciated by both the deer and me for years is the poet's laurel (*Danae racemosa*), a graceful filler for flower arrangements available year round. It is a small evergreen shrubby perennial with shiny leaves and arching stems, hardy in Zone 7. It will reach 3' tall by about 4' wide SLOWLY. It thrives in shade and, so far, has been untouched by deer.

On the Plant Delights website, Tony Avent says Danae's "first cousins...include ruscus (butcher's broom)...along with slightly more distant relatives, aspidistra (cast iron plant), rohdea (Japanese sacred lily), and liriopie (lilyturf)...branches emerge from the base in spring...after that, these branches never grow again...the tiny white flowers are...minute...starting in September and lasting through the Christmas holiday season, the branches will suddenly be covered in attractive orange-red, marble-sized fruit."

Either mine has not fruited or I didn't notice when it did. Nevertheless, I just bought two more. I found them (cheaper) in gallons at Woodlanders, a mail order nursery in Aiken, SC. As well as Plant Delights, Niche Gardens also carries them.

Pretty Bluebeard (*Caryopteris*), has a reputation for attracting butterflies, but resisting deer. Its cultivars add shades of blue to the garden. Wayside Gardens carries one called 'Longwood Blue,' a nice clear blue veering to the edge of lavender that will grow two feet tall but spread to four feet wide. It is somewhat drought resistant when established.

If it ever warms up, there will be that all too brief heavenly period in the garden when days are sunny, cooled by gentle breezes, and there are no gnats. It is a wonderfully sweet, but terribly short time. After that, you will have to do something about the bugs.

So far, my favorite repellent for those who wish to go Deet-free is Liquid Net. Liquid Net bills itself "the Ultimate Insect Repellent." Strosnidars carries it.

E & R Garden Supplies, Monroe, IN, carries Liquid Net, but this year is also offering a new Deet-free repellent in their spring catalog. Called "Best Yet," it "can be used on children of all ages and animals of any kind...It brings instant death to fleas, chiggers, lice or other targeted insects." Imagine, it will even get rid of head lice!

The E & R Catalog also sells mosquito coils in bulk at \$10 for six packs.

Order now and be armed and ready to dig in your newest acquisitions in comfort!



Danae racemosa

Photo by Carole Ottesen



Sylvia Diss (*right*) brought arrangements for the luncheon tables, featuring *Pieris japonica* (Andromeda) and pewter goblets belonging to her friend Beverly. She wrote that the *Pieris* bush is 50 years old, huge, pink, maybe 'Dorothy Wykoff'.



This colorful cake (*right*) was brought by Barbara Roberts.



A huddle over fantastic pots in the Silent Auction! Sharon Washburn, Zena McCallum, Sabita Sankaran, and Carolyn Randall. A charming birdhouse was also available for purchase.



Vickie Baily is adding to the collection of member photos printed in the 2017-2018 Yearbook. Please clip out and add these photos to your Yearbook:

Phyllis Daen created the arrangement shown on page 1, using *Helleborus* (Lenten Rose), one of the few plants flowering in February.



Priscilla Sabatelli



Christine Uffelman