



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-five Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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President:
Susan Lass
(301-656-1893)

Vice President:
Judy Termini

Co-Secretaries:
Judith Graef
Carol Meyers

Treasurer:
Lise Ringland

Bulletin Editor:
Lois Brown
301-365-7419

Photographer:
Vickie Baily

Send news to:
dnleb@aol.com



The delicate flowers of
Fall made a lovely
arrangement at the
October meeting.

All photos by Vickie Baily
unless otherwise noted.

Who knew there was a rain garden on Rte. 1, more or less between Costco on the east side of Rte.1, a little north and Aldi and Panera on the west side and a little south. **Carol Allen** knew and it's worth a look if you happen to be shopping at any of these places. (Park in the Aldi/Panera lot). Carol Allen knows a lot about horticultural things and she's adept at enthusiastically sharing her knowledge. She's an orchid expert, has been a supervisory horticulturist at the US Botanic Gardens, teaches horticultural and biological sciences at local colleges and is a dynamic speaker. She's going to share her broad knowledge of shrubs: specifically which ones grow well in our area. This subject is timely for those of us who like to stand upright in front of our shrubs with a hoe and expect them to deliver instead of kneeling and praying and grubbing around our perennials. Lunch will also be served and it will be hot, so you have every reason to join us on **November 28** at 10:30. See you then...at St. Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Road, North Bethesda.

—Jane Malish

You Don't Want to Miss the December BCGC Meeting!

Holiday Greens Workshop Committee: Patricia Pennington (chair), Belva Finlay, Sabita Sankaran, Debbie Shakelton

If you've participated in a BCGC Holiday Greens Workshop, you know firsthand why members look forward to our December meeting. If you haven't, we hope you'll join us at the December 12th meeting and take part in the festive activities.

In addition to making 150 arrangements and delivering them to organizations that assist the less fortunate, after a tasty soup luncheon everyone is invited to participate in a **gift exchange**. To participate in the exchange, bring a wrapped, garden-related gift (\$10 limit) to the December meeting.

How can you be involved in the **Holiday Greens Workshop** this December? Lots of ways!

• Plan now to attend the December 12th meeting. It starts promptly at 10 am!

The Holiday Greens Workshop committee hopes you'll join in the spirit of the season and participate in making the arrangements that bring joy to others in our community. We will meet – rain, shine, snow or sleet - Wednesday **December 12th promptly at 10 am** at our regular meeting place, Saint Mark Presbyterian Church. Bring pruners and/or clippers and wire cutters. Also, gloves, if you want to wear them when handling greens. Put your name or identifying mark on the items you bring.

• Sign up!

There's a lot to do on December 12th, so your help is needed! At the November meeting we'll circulate sign-up sheets for workshop tasks. Sign up to arrive a half hour early to help with a variety of set up activities. Or be part of the

cleanup team. Or help load arrangements into the cars of the club members making deliveries. Or assist new members who are participating in a greens workshop for the first time.

- **Determine what greens you can contribute to the workshop**

We can't have a greens workshop without greens! So look in your garden *now* (or a friendly neighbors' garden) and identify what greens you can cut in December and bring to our workshop. The greens need to be healthy and able to hold up for several weeks. For obvious reasons, avoid all prickly plants!

Examples of greens that work well in arrangements are spruce, pine, balsam, boxwood, juniper, aucuba, cedar, holly, yew, cryptomeria, Southern magnolia, nandina, winterberry, rosemary and lavender. Other live plant material can be included in arrangements, as long as the material is tough enough to last several weeks in well-watered floral oasis.

- **Cut and condition your greens December 9th or 10th**

Follow these simple steps:

1. Cut your greens Sunday December 9th or no later than Monday December 10th.
2. They should be between 6" to 12" in length. If you have larger branches, bring them to the Holiday Greens Workshop to be cut onsite.
3. *Conditioning your cut greens is a critical step in ensuring arrangements stay fresh and attractive for several weeks!*

First, lay them 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, then dry on old towels or sheeting and bring to the 10 am meeting Wednesday, December 12th.

Making holiday greens arrangements has been a BCGC tradition for close to 60 years. Join in the fun this December and enjoy the pleasure of giving to others! The organizations receiving greens arrangements in 2018 are: A Wider Circle, Bethesda Cares, Bethesda Police Station, Catholic Charities, Central Union Mission, Coalition for the Homeless, Cornerstone Montgomery, Interfaith Works Women's Center, National Center for Children &

Families, Rainbow Shelter, Saint Mark Presbyterian Church, Shepherd's Table, Stepping Stones, Waverly House, Whitman-Walker Health.

Honoring our Members

Suzanne Grefsheim

At its November 7 meeting, the BCGC Board voted to honor deceased members who have belonged to the club for at least five years with a donation of a tree to the Audubon Naturalist Society's Woodend Sanctuary. This decision was occasioned by the recent death of Sandy McKnight. The Board wanted to recognize Sandy, a member who over the years contributed much to the club through her knowledge, skills, and fellowship, but there was no stated policy about how or whether to do this. The Board's decision now makes this clear.

Once this policy was adopted, Judith Graef made a motion to similarly recognize Gretchen Minners. At the time of her death, the club did nothing in her memory. Judith wanted us to rectify this oversight. Gretchen is legendary to anyone associated with BCGC during her many years as a member and President. Contributions from her garden often "accounted for half of what was sold at the Plant Sale" and "she was involved with just about everything that went on" according to Lou Olin. The Board unanimously approved Judith's motion, so two trees will be planted at Woodend sanctuary, one in memory of Sandy and one in memory of Gretchen.

Welcome new members Lynn Barclay and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Glidden-Boyle

Lynn Barclay volunteers four afternoons a week as the writer-editor of the twice-weekly newsletter *Neighborhood News*, put out by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, a unit of county government. [Anyone can sign up to receive the newsletter by email.] She also writes and edits a bimonthly newsletter for the age-in-place village she belongs to and writes a neighborhood newsletter. Lynn loves to travel to places overseas where she's never been and most recently returned from Iran. She is a down-home gardener, nothing fancy, but does "try to keep my garden areas alive and interesting. I find doing all my own yard work keeps me in touch with what's happening around me and

what needs attention, plus it's great exercise. I'd be quite willing to work at the Connie Morella library weeding or whatever else needs doing."

Elizabeth Glidden-Boyle grew up in Connecticut and Arizona. Her mother was a gardener and enjoyed bringing small arrangements from her garden or grasses from the prairie to sitting areas in the house. "I've always remembered these beautiful little offerings and the joy flowers bring."



Elizabeth worked as a nurse's assistant at the Grenfell Mission in her teens in Labrador, Canada for 1-1/2 years, then went on to become a nurse at Middlesex Hospital in London, England. She has two children and four grandchildren. "Grandmothering is the best job I've ever had." She was in charge of Flower Guilds at two churches for 17 years and is "now gratefully retired. I love learning about my garden. I have nowhere to go but up."



Lou Olin delivered the yearbook to our member, Elizabeth Allen, and had such a nice visit with her. Elizabeth joined our club in 1949. She lives at Grand Oaks in DC and celebrated her 101st birthday in March.

Environmental Concerns

Barbara Collier

Spineless Heroes

We don't like our politicians to be spineless, but a lot of our best friends in the garden definitely are. We all recognize the importance of pollinators, and even the least experienced gardener knows that bees and worms are the gardener's friends, but there are plenty of other invertebrate heroes that help us in the garden.

For instance: ants. Did you know that many of our favorite native spring-flowering plants are spread by ants? Examples are spring beauties, trillium, bloodroot, dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, trout lily, wild ginger, hepatica, and bleeding heart. The seeds of all these plants have a structure called an elaiosome, which contains lipids and proteins and is very attractive to ants. Ants are attracted by the elaiosome to gather the seed and take it back to their nests. After they eat the elaiosome, they discard the seed where they discard other waste—which just happens to be an area ideal for seed germination.

Besides helping your flowers spread, ants can also help control pests by eating them (they eat fleas, fly larvae, and termites, for example) and by disturbing and attacking pests while the ants roam around plants looking for nectar. Those ants on the peonies? They protect the buds from other insects while enjoying the sticky nectar they find there. They also improve pollination, aerate the soil, and serve as food for other creatures.

In view of all their ecological benefits, ants should be welcome in our gardens (though admittedly they can become a nuisance in houses and other structures). It is true that some ant species will "farm" aphids (protecting them to feed off the sweet honeydew they excrete), but the advice on that is usually to remove the aphids by spraying with water. The ants depart when the aphids are no longer there. So if you can, try to overlook those anthills that pop up in your garden.

(Of course, if climate change brings us fire ants—either the native or the imported red ones—we will have to learn about avoiding and controlling them. In that sad eventuality, it will be important to identify the kind of ant we're dealing with.)

Another large category of invertebrate hero is the decomposer. This category is composed of little recyclers that include a lot of your less charismatic garden creatures, like millipedes, centipedes, sow bugs, pill bugs, mites, snails, slugs, springtails, beetles, flies, nematodes, and of course earthworms. Even though they don't have the star power of the bumble bee or the monarch butterfly, they are vital to the health of our soils and gardens. For instance, if (like me) you have a lot of deer visiting your garden, the decomposers are helpful in returning all that deer poop to the soil, not to mention all the

other garden debris that they take care of. We don't usually think about attracting decomposers the way we think about attracting pollinators, but we can do things to make them welcome: piling up our garden waste instead of having it hauled away, letting leaves lie where they fall (or under nearby shrubs), and using natural mulches. All these will repay us by encouraging decomposers to do their important work building the soil.

After the ever-popular pollinators, the other invertebrate heroes with the most star power are probably the predators. During bad weather when you can't get into the garden, you can do worse than while away the time reading up on predatory insects. Some of these—like praying mantises, dragonflies, and lady beetles—get a lot of good press. But there are a whole host of other fascinating predators out there, from the striking assassin bugs to the little bug that's so tiny and fierce that it is called the "minute pirate bug." An assassin bug relative is the "ambush bug," so called because it stays motionless waiting for prey, unlike the assassin bugs, which generally roam while hunting. The ambush bug is brightly colored and hides in flowers, particularly goldenrod.

This leads me, finally, to general advice on attracting all kinds of beneficial insects. Plants with small flowers in large clusters are particularly attractive to beneficial insects, since many of them are small and prefer seeking pollen and nectar in small flowers. Not surprisingly, then, three plant families especially popular with beneficials are the carrot, mustard, and aster families. Having flowers from these families in varying sizes will attract insects that favor different conditions (from the sunny tops to the shady bases), and of course we want things that bloom at different seasons from early spring to late fall—both for our own sakes and for the benefit of our little invertebrate heroes.



Carole Ottesen shared these photos: a Fall hike through a high bog, birches, and an autumn bouquet.



Who knew we could eat our hostas? (Certainly everyone else in the garden does!) At the October meeting, speaker Marianne Willburn showed us that we can also eat day-lily roots, black walnuts, chickweed, and dandelion greens. Autumn olives were a surprise to most of us, as was the line of the day "Eat your invasives!"



For the October meeting members often dress up for Halloween. But this year the meeting followed closely on the 95th celebration, which was also a dress-up event. However, there was still a good sprinkling of Orange and Black.



Tools for foraging, with a special shout-out for the mason's trowel.



Regina Fitzgerald can always be counted on to look classy—as well as festive.



Carolyn Kulik wore a scarf to delight us all. Candy as a Silk Purse...



Who knew? Turquoise must be the new orange! (Karin Kelleher, Barbara Roberts, Diane Beverly, Irene Sinclair, and Bebe McMeekin)

HORTICULTURAL NOTES

Fall's brave and often fleeting gems

Carole Ottesen

Spring brings the promise of a thousand beauties to come. The other end of the garden year is fall—the growing season's grand finale. Fall's fewer garden stars are all the more treasured for their scarcity and flamboyance.

Relatively few are the pale pinks or baby blues that inhabit the fall garden. The last hurrahs of the growing season tend to go out in glory, brilliant in deep and vivid oranges, red, bright yellows, and purple.

Of the purples, the deep tones of the native beauty berry (*Callicarpa Americana*), appear to grow more vibrant in contrast with leaves that slowly fade from grass green to chartreuse as the shrub inches toward dormancy. After the leaves drop the naked, berried stems provide handy material for Thanksgiving bouquets.



Fall is rich in yellows. The green blades of Hakone grass (*Hakonechloa macra*) go through a spectrum of shades before turning winter

beige. Big leaf magnolia's giant foliage presents an eye-pleasing range of hues that range from chartreuse over pale gold to butterscotch. The flowers of Mahonia 'Winter Sun' welcome bloom a very late, deep, and fresh yellow.



Some oranges are as fleeting as they are vibrant.

Among the brightest is the blazing crown of the Asian spicebush (*Lindera angustifolia*). Its flaming orange leaves illuminate the garden for a short week before fading to a pale rust that hangs on throughout the winter. The



perennial bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) serves as the perfect partner to Asian spicebush as its foliage flares and fades in tandem with that of the small tree.

The red berries of winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) sparkle in the garden, outliving their brilliant neighbors to span the gap between fall and winter—until the robins arrive.



Photos by Carole Ottesen