



# Bethesda Community

G A R D E N C L U B

*"Ninety-five Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"*

[www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org](http://www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org)

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## All About All Things Monarch

If you went on the picnic outing last year to the Suitland Bog you may remember **Lisa Bierer-Garrett**, the naturalist who led us. Lisa is a Maryland Master Naturalist. She speaks frequently at Homestead Gardens and local garden clubs and is also a passionate birder. She recently took a position as Head of Community Conservation and Director of Eco-tourism for the town of North Beach, Maryland.

Lisa has an abiding interest in monarch butterflies and her talk on March 27 will lay out the requirements for monarch way stations and tagging projects. She'll share her recent experience visiting the El Rosario Biosphere Forest Reserve in Mexico where monarchs overwinter. She will also provide information on changes we can make to our gardens to improve the survival chances of these beautiful butterflies. We hope you will come and **find out how to attract monarchs to your garden plot** and to enjoy a sandwich luncheon. Do remember to bring a sandwich to share, and if you divide the sandwich into quarters, the lunch committee will thank you.

*—Jane Malish*

## Everyone Is Welcome at 10:00 a.m.

*Susan Lass*

Quite a few of you have told us, either in person or through our recent survey, that you wish for more time to talk with one another. At the March Board meeting, we decided that one way this can happen is to open our doors for the general meetings at 10:00am. As you know, the meetings officially begin at 10:30 and the speaker starts the presentation shortly thereafter. However, please feel free to arrive any time after 10:00 to socialize with old friends and make new ones. Find out what other members are doing for the club, what activities and committees they're working on, and get to know our new members. Welcome, everyone!

The meeting will be held on **March 27** at St. Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Road, North Bethesda.



Sharon Washburn  
Southerland used vin-  
tage china for her  
arrangements at the  
February meeting. See  
more on page

*All photos by Vickie Baily  
unless otherwise noted.*

## PAY YOUR CLUB MEMBER DUES BEFORE APRIL 1st

Lise Ringland, Treasurer

We're on the cusp of spring and before we know it, a new club year will begin, so it's time to pay your dues for 2019-20 and continue to enjoy all the lectures and activities that our dues make possible.

Dues for 2019-20 continue to be \$40.

Pay \$40 by check made out to BCGC, or use cash.

Remember to bring your check book or cash to the March 27 meeting.

Or snail mail a check for \$40, made out to BCGC, to treasurer Lise Ringland, 4622 Rosedale Ave, Bethesda Md. 20814. Deadline is April 1.

## Welcome new member Carol Ubosi

I am from Westchester County in NY. My interest in gardening began when the local garden club sponsored a yearly Flower Show for the children at my elementary school. I am a retired Montgomery County ESOL teacher who is a member of Altrusa of Montgomery County. I enjoy reading, biking, yoga, and visiting gardens when I travel.

## BCGC Volunteers at Work at Connie Morella Library

*Jeanne Weiss*

Some of the BCGC accomplishments include stabilizing the stone wall around the digital sign erected at the southern entry, re-cementing loose bricks to the right of the entry, and the stopping of buzz-cutting the winter jasmine, which were concerns addressed by the Leslie J. Clark, Property Manager II of the Montgomery County Department of General Services, Division of Facilities Management. Her crew, Al, Chris and Lionel, also repaired the broken gate at the southwest side of the library. It was BCGC which brought these concerns to Leslie's attention.

When the three willow oaks are planted in the northwest sector of the parking lot (soon), Linda Miller of Tree Montgomery will have helped us get 15 new trees for the library. BCGC has traditionally cared for the raised garden on the west side of the parking lot as well as an area on the east side of the library between the building itself and Arlington Rd. The members who did this work previously did an excellent job. Library patrons and even a professional landscaper responsible for various multi-dwelling units have commented positively on BCGC's work, and we will continue to maintain these areas as well as the planters at the front and on the west side of the building.

However, there are areas that look as if no one has thought about them, and it would be great if our volunteers cultivated an awareness of problem areas. One such problem is the "green" border around the parking lot. Two of the lots

are on the east side of Wisconsin Ave. and parallel to it, while the third is the library lot. We have never



taken care of the boundary at CM Library, but someone has to,



and right now, no one is paying attention. There are other, similar problem areas, e.g. islands in the parking lot. While there are some restrictions on what can be planted in the islands, and while we have to be mindful of watering needs and our budget, surely we can come up with some solutions (short mesic sedges?).

I think there are plenty of members who could both notice the remaining problem areas and

find the solutions. I propose two dates in April, possibly the 10th and the 17th, or the 11th and the 18th, as member volunteer days at the library when we can primarily spruce up the garden at the west of the lot and the one on the east. There will be an opportunity to sign up at our general meeting on March 27.

I should add that parking permits will be provided to volunteers at the CM Library, and that the hours will be 9:00 a.m. to noon, or as much of that time as a member can give.

## BCGC on Facebook

*Gail Henry*

If you have a Facebook account, please join us on our Facebook page! Just go on to your personal Facebook account. At the top of the page there is a box you can use to search for our page with the Facebook logo to the left and the search icon (a spyglass) to the right. Enter Bethesda Community Garden Club and click on the search icon. It will take you to our group—just click on the our name to get to the main pages. Just below the top picture and to the left you'll see the blue button +Join Group. Please click that button. One of our moderators will approve your membership within 24 hours! We try to post information of general interest to gardeners in the area, other meetings of note, and information on our upcoming meetings. You can also use this resource to ask questions about gardening. Questions about the Facebook page can be sent to Gail Henry, ghhendrydc@me.com.

## Environmental Concerns

*Barbara Collier*

### Garden Structure

Not structures, like a gazebo or arbor: no, I'm talking about structure, the combination of different types and sizes of plants in the garden. If you're interested in providing habitat for our heroic insect friends (described in my November 2018 article), birds, and other critters, checking out the varieties of structure in your garden plants is a useful step. The basic idea is to try to incorporate lots of structural

diversity to provide more niches for different creatures. Structural diversity is also one of those fundamentals of landscape design that one reads about all the time—so that's a bonus!

Structural variety can be thought of in different ways. Some refer to garden layers: tall trees, understory trees, shrubs, forbs (that is, other nonwoody plants), groundcovers, and vines can all be thought of as forming structural layers. Not all the layers may be present in a given garden (depending on, for example, how large it is), but analyzing an area with the layers in mind can give us a useful perspective.

Size is clearly a distinguishing feature in structural diversity, but we can also look at the different patterns of the plants themselves: their leaf and flower forms and growth habit. Trying to have a nice mix of foliage and form provides ecological diversity (as well as being a basic landscaping idea). It also leads rather inevitably to having a variety of plants from different families, which is also important for attracting diverse insects and other creatures who might use the plants for food and shelter. For example, many favorite pollinator plants are members of the aster family (*Asteraceae*), which generally have in common the ray and disk (daisy-like) form of flowers. Other pollinator favorites are members of the mint family or *Lamiaceae*, whose blooms are very different, with two-lipped tubular flowers. Even without studying botany, it's easy to see that members of these families will attract different creatures. Clearly, diversity in flower structures is another aspect to look out for.

Another structural layer, but one that we can't generally see by just looking, is the underground layer. Having a thought for the bulbs, corms, and tubers underground, interspersed with the deep tap roots, spreading fibrous roots, creeping rhizomes, and surface stolons, is another way to think about plant structure and variety. Which things will grow happily in the "same place" because their roots don't compete with each other? Certainly those spring ephemerals know all about making their splash and then disappearing as other plants emerge and mature. If you have Virginia bluebells in



your garden, you know that they can share space with things like wild ginger and hosta (if you don't have a deer problem, that is.) But there are also the large specimen plants that can hold their own even when surrounded by weed-discouraging groundcovers. I have Amsonia and goldenrod (along with and lots of bulbs) growing among golden ragwort, which (as you know if you have it) is a pretty aggressive groundcover.

Striving for diversity is an approach to landscaping that you have probably been doing all along, but looking around at a garden with an eye to different types of structure can help you figure out more possibilities. If you have a mature garden, you may start feeling that you're running out of room. Looking for places where, say, a tall, skinny thing might be nice could lead you to a vine or an upright forb, shrub, or tree. If you're just starting out or redoing an area, having a thought to choosing plants with different structures both above and below the ground can be helpful.

Of course, thinking about structure will never be the whole story. We still have to discover, in the particular conditions of our own gardens, how exuberantly a vine may spread up and outwards, a groundcover may creep, a perennial may expand, or an annual may self-seed. Gardening is an education that never ends.



Sharon Washburn Southerland did the flowers for the March meeting. The technique is called Kusamono.



Raffle tickets were sold for Betty Cochran's treasured plants, donated by her husband Art Pine. Above, Holly Joseph chooses a Christmas cactus.



Vickie Baily is adding to the collection of member photos printed in the 2018-2019 Yearbook. Please clip out and add the following photos to your Yearbook:



Hillary Fitolis



Janine Trudeau



Carol Ubasi



Bevan Shimizu of Shimizu Landscape Design spoke on Japanese gardens at the March meeting.

*Photo provided by Hillary*

## HORTICULTURAL NOTES

# *On Plant Habits and Textures*

Carole Ottesen

Different plant habits and textures are interesting and good, right? Until it comes to doing the garden cleanup around some of them. That's when the thought occurs that although a particular plant seemed like a good choice at the time, its habit or texture can become a truly annoying maintenance chore.

Two really handsome culprits, the prostrate and bushy plum yews (*Cephalotaxus*), are virtually deer-proof and look great the year around, with densely layered, overlapping foliage in a deep, almost lustrous green. Their great drawback is that leaves—lots of them—stick in between their lovely evergreen layers. Those dense overlapping and somewhat pendant layers trap leaves so surely that they can't blow out in stiff winds. Even a rake doesn't cut it. The leaves require hand picking.

Why can't plum yews be more like sweet box (*Sarcococca*)? This lovely little evergreen is just as deer-proof, but leaves and other debris just blow onto the ground, making cleanup around them easy.



Hakone grass (*Hakonechloa*) is a beauty. It flows gracefully, covering shady ground or edging a woodland. It's even better in early winter when it turns a striking almond color. And that's the problem.

Cut it back too early and you lose that gorgeous winter interest. Wait too long and the grass begins to wither and decompose and blow bits of whitish debris everywhere until it looks like your garden has been toilet-papered by elves.

The shrub that takes first place as a debris catcher is the cut-leaf stephanandra (*Stephanandra*



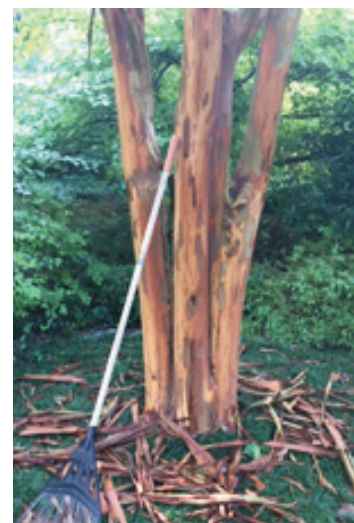
Plum yew, messy (left) and groomed.



*incisa crispata*). It roots along moist ground providing ever more of it to de-leaf.

Finally, there is the love-hate relationship with the Natchez crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia*). What is lovelier than that exfoliating orange bark? What is messier than the bark exfoliations lying under the tree?

If only we knew than what we know now about the efforts involved in cleanup. Would we have chosen more wisely? Probably not.



Photos by Carole Ottesen