



# Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

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

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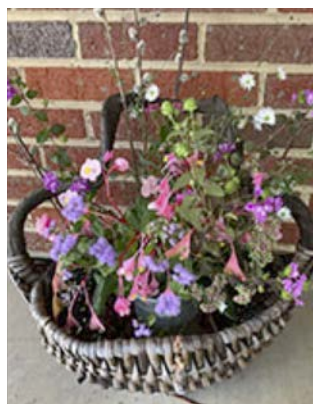
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From Judy Termini: "I keep this basket outside my front door all year. Except for the pussy willow, which is always the background, these flowers are what's blooming in the garden right now." See other photos from members on pages 3 and 6.

## Thrillers Fillers Spillers

All tucked into a container, chasing the sun. Or tomatoes, bell peppers, garlic that's not supposed to be grown in a pot but grows anyway and produces small heads you're delighted to harvest. Containers are as varied as your imagination, from your old hiking boots to Behnke's-of-beloved-memory flower bed—a wrought iron bedstead blanketed with multicolored annuals. Our October speaker **Dr. Martin Goldrosen**, now retired and a master gardener since 2017, has sown his own seeds and grown vegetables for the last 40 years. He's a composter and a devotee of the raised bed. But he's also very successfully grown vegetables, flowers and herbs in containers and he will share his scientific approach to container gardening. Using his tips and recommendations will inspire us to improve our own container gardening technique. Be sure to join the ZOOM meeting for his presentation on Wednesday October 28, 10:30am.

*Jane Malish*

## First-Ever Online Plant Sale

The Plant Sale Committee is happy to report that our first online plant sale has been a success! In all, we had about 20 members donate plants, and 20 members who made purchases (not all the same people, we're happy to say). We also made over \$1000 for the club—a lot less than our yearly sale has made in the past, but a heck of a lot more than nothing, which is where we were after cancelling the May sale. It's also not half bad as a proof of concept for the future.

I think all of us were impressed by the SquareUp site that the invaluable Karin Kelleher created to allow us to shop for our fellow club members' donated plants. Karin also set up the SignUpGenius sites that we used to offer plants and to volunteer to help with the sale. All of us, especially those of us on the committee, have to thank Karin for her unfailing energy and good humor as she set up the sites, entered data, performed trouble-shooting, and generated emails and reports. Trying to pull this off without Karin would have been a huge challenge.

The financial benefit is only part of the story, of course. A major aim of holding this fall plant sale was with an eye to the future. We don't know how soon it will be feasible to do an in-person plant sale again, so the committee is thoroughly reviewing how everything went. There were a lot of lessons learned, such as the logistics of running the drop-off and pick-up site. If you are interested in providing suggestions (or perhaps joining the committee?), please let us know. The committee membership is on page 2 of the yearbook/directory, which also has all the contact information.

*Barbara Collier*

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

### Jumpy about Worms

Perhaps many of you have read about the spread of jumping worms, invasive earthworms originally from Japan and the Korean Peninsula, which are reported to have been in the United States for over a century. In fact, they have various local names like “Alabama jumpers,” and have apparently been favored by fishermen because their lively thrashing makes them appealing as bait. In the last 15 years or so, though, they’ve started to spread more widely, according to *Science News*, which tells us that “they’ve become well established across the South and Mid-Atlantic and have reached parts of the Northeast, Upper Midwest and West.”

The main bad news about these particular alien worms (most earthworms are not native) is their voraciousness: they damage soil structure and chemistry by rapidly destroying leaf litter and other organic matter on the surface, which normally breaks down slowly, adding nutrition to the soil. Living and feeding near the soil surface, these worms denude the soil and turn it into coffee-ground-like crumbles that erode away without nourishing plants. Although it’s not clear how much these changes to the soil structure affect cultivated garden plants, they have been shown to be extremely detrimental in wild areas, affecting both native plants and animals. The other bad news is their reproductive habits, which are very fast, and sometimes parthenogenic (self-fertilizing). Although they are annual, dying over winter, they create minuscule cocoons (1 to 3 mm diameter) that overwinter and hatch in the next spring.

Recent publicity about these worms (yet another bit of unpleasant news bombarding us in 2020, our *Annus horribilis*) led many of my Garrett Park neighbors to start reporting sightings on the neighborhood listserv. So it was with some foreboding that I began paying much closer attention to the earthworms I came across in my own garden.

Alas. I found them. Not, I’m happy to say, a massive infestation like those I read about in the papers. But some undoubted specimens. The fully adult ones can be easy to distinguish by their appearance: not only the violent thrashing when they are disturbed, but also the clitellum (the band around the worm’s body), which is milky white to gray, smooth, and not raised above the body. It also completely encircles the body (on European earthworms, the clitellum does not wrap entirely around). A quick web search will find lots of pictures and videos (see below for an example). But identification can be tricky, especially with smaller, immature worms, on which the clitellum may not have developed. Another problem is that the characteristic violent wiggling does not persist indefinitely after the initial disturbance.

I have no way of knowing if I have been harboring these pests for years or if they just arrived. Fortunately, I have not (yet) seen the worst effects: they are not present in enormous numbers; they have not driven out other earthworms, centipedes, millipedes, and other decomposers; I have not found the coffee-grounds texture that they leave behind. I’m hoping, judging by the little excavations I see, that the local squirrels and chipmunks are digging up and chowing down on worms. If you have chickens (or are visited by wild turkeys), these also like to eat worms, so with any luck, they are finding the big juicy jumpers, too.

So what to do? The first issue for me this year was the plant sale. I had already dug and potted up my plants when I learned the Horrible Truth. So I had to unpot, root wash, and repot all my plants in clean potting soil. Otherwise I risked spreading the problem by including either the worms themselves or their cocoons. (This process gave me a new appreciation for the distinctiveness of different plant roots, if nothing else.)

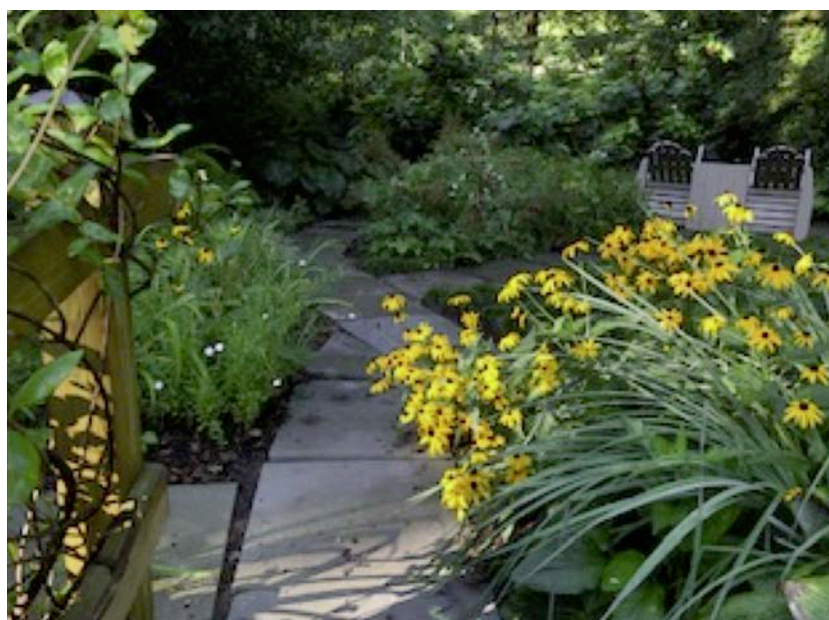
The primary advice at this point, if you find you have these worms, is to prevent spread by not moving earth, compost, or other gardening



materials unnecessarily. Since the high temperatures achieved in commercial composting kill both worms and cocoons, compost from reputable sources should be safe. Generally, planting seeds and bare root plants is the safest way to add to your garden.

## Photos from Caroline Turner's garden:

Clockwise from top left: Ligularia, Phlox, Rose of Sharon/Althea, Black-eyed Susans





## HORTICULTURAL NOTES

*The Color Purple*

Carole Ottesen

Spending an hour or two in the garden on a sunny fall afternoon is a perfect way to destress by savoring the last gifts of the growing season. Some of the most spectacular late flowers happen to come in various shades of purple. It is a color that seems oddly apt in this worrisome present with an uncertain future. Purple can be either solemn or bright. Either way, it is a stunning contrast to the flaming oranges and buttery yellows of the season.

*Salvia* 'May Night'.

One of the longest-flowering, hardest-working purples is 'May Night,' a salvia that begins flowering in May and reblooms into fall if consistently deadheaded. May Night grows to two feet tall in average to dry, well-drained soil. A member of the mint family, it isn't bothered by deer.

*Buddleia* "Lo and Behold Purple Haze"

Another deer-resistant long bloomer, Lo and Behold Purple Haze butterfly bush produces gracefully pendant, fragrant purple flowers that attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Flowering is most abundant in full sun. Unlike its other more buxom buddleia cousins, this shrub reaches only three feet tall but spreads wider than tall—up to five feet.



Photos by Carole Ottesen

*Callicarpa americana*

All summer long, American beautyberry's foliage and lavender flowers are pleasantly plain and utterly unremarkable. It isn't until fall that this shrub undergoes a transformation. Non-toxic berries circle the stems like spectacular, bright purple bracelets. *Callicarpa americana* quickly reaches its full height of a bushy five feet. In the perfect site—sun, rich soil, and consistent moisture—it can grow even taller—up to nine feet. There is also a white berried form.

**Callicarpa (Beautyberry)  
and Toad Lily**



### *Lorapetalum* 'Purple Pixie'

For a permanent purple accent, the deer-resistant *Lorapetalum* 'Purple Pixie' is a dwarf weeping form of the towering (up to 15 feet tall) straight species. This unique, ever-purple ground covering shrub reaches only two feet in height, but spreads to five feet wide. Its fuchsia flowers rebloom in bright contrast to the deep purple deer-resistant foliage.



### *Trycyrtris* 'Sinonome'

Lovely in concert with beautyberry is the toad lily, *Trycyrtris* 'Sinonome,' a reliable flowering subject for a shady site. In fall, purple spotted orchid-like flowers arch over the plant on long, graceful, three-foot stems. Carefree, Sinonome thrives in moist soil and part to full shade, spreading nicely but not invasively.

### *Verbena bonariensis*

Popping up everywhere in sunny places throughout the garden, *Verbena bonariensis* self-sows. Its purple rosettes mix happily with other inhabitants of the flower beds, where its flowers sway gracefully on top of tall, willowy—up to five feet—stems from summer until frost. Sometimes called "Brazilian," "Argentinian," or the more inclusive term "South American" vervain, just plain "tall ver-bena" is an easy flower that adds verve to late beds and bouquets.

Solemn or bright, late-flowering purples are appealing eye candy. They enhance our beds, provide for bouquets, and are all the more valued in this strange year when, more than ever, our gardens are havens from the worries of the world outside.

### Editor's note:

Since we don't have our usual photos from previous meetings, we're asking members to share pictures from their gardens. Please email them to Lois: [dnleb@aol.com](mailto:dnleb@aol.com).



## Photos from Jane Boynton's garden:



From Top: Weeping cherry,  
camellia, pink dogwood,  
magnolia blossoms, and  
daylilies.

