



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-seven 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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RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW

It's time to send in your Garden Club membership dues for the upcoming 2021-22 year. Your dues also includes membership to the NCAGC (National Capital Area Garden Clubs, Inc.). We are required to submit our updated member list and dues to the NCAGC by May 1st. So, please send your check in now.

Payable to:	BCGC or Bethesda Community Garden Club
Amount:	\$40.
Due Date:	April 1, 2021
Mail to:	Margy Tritschler

Buxus

Jane Malish

...is a tropical or semi-tropical evergreen shrub. There are species native to western Europe as well as to northernmost South America, Central America and the Caribbean; however only the European and some Asian varieties are frost tolerant. There are diverse species found in Cuba (30 varieties) and in China (17). The genus is divided into three genetically distinct regions and they include Eurasia in the first section, northwest Africa and Madagascar in the second section and America in the third section.

Box is everywhere and our speaker, **Lynn Batdorf**, an international authority on the subject, seems to know everything there is to know about this stately (around here) shrub. Lynn has a B.S. in Ornamental Horticulture and was curator of the National Boxwood Collection at the U.S. National Arboretum for 36 years. He has been awarded honorary membership in all three national and international Boxwood Society(s). When he wasn't collecting honors he wrote *Boxwood: an Illustrated Encyclopedia* and four editions of *Boxwood Handbook* while composing 70 peer-reviewed technical articles on the topic.

He's been busy and we're lucky he'll be with us via Zoom on **March 24** at 10:30 to provide information and tips on how to make the most of the shrubs many of us grow in our yards. Or if we don't grow any, Lynn's talk will inspire us to seek them out.



Lois Brown captured an early sign of spring—winter jasmine in bloom. See her winter wonderland photos on page 8.

Plant Sale Plans

Mary Horan

This year's plant sale will be an online member-only event, with plant pickup held on Thursday, May 13. Before pickup, you will be able to choose and pay for your plants using an online store. Last fall, we tried this style of plant sale, and it proved to be both pandemic-safe and successful. Karin Kelleher designed a beautiful SquareUp website storefront for sales and a SignUpGenius site for contributing plants. To maintain distancing, members dropped off and picked up plants during specified time slots. The plan for the spring sale is similar.

If you would like to contribute plants to the plant sale, please dig and pot them by late April. We will sell plants in three pot sizes: medium (6 to 8 inches diameter, roughly quart size); large (10 to 12 inches) and "shrub" (whatever pot size your shrub fits, if larger than the large size pot).

Members can pick up pots and plant markers at the homes of Barbara Collier, Susan Lass, and Judy Termini. Please contact them before showing up in person.

In late April, we will ask for information on the potted plants you will offer for sale. Instructions for listing your plants will be provided via email blast and in the April newsletter. If you have any questions about the plant sale, contact Judy Termini or Elaine Hope.

And remember, as mentioned in last month's newsletter, if you need help making decisions on what to dig or with digging and potting, please contact Judy or Elaine.

Do You Remember Open Gardens?

Judith Graef

Now that more and more of us have completed Covid vaccinations and the CDC is relaxing a bit on gathering in groups, the BCGC Board is expecting to get back in the swing of organizing Open Gardens again. If you can't recall our

Here's how to prepare your plants for the plant sale:

- Water the plant to be dug the night before.
- Dig your plant by removing the full root ball.
- Look at the foliage and root ball to determine what size pot to use. One full pot is better than two skimpy pots.
- Pot the plant by placing some dried, Fall leaves in the bottom of the pot. Then cover with a little soil.
- Loosen the roots gently and shake away excess soil. Place the plant at the same soil height as it was growing. Fill the sides of the pot with soil and press down.
- Water well and keep the plant until the sale.
- Label each plant with the following information: name of the plant (this is vital!), flower color (if applicable), and light requirements (sun, part sun / part shade, shade).

Open Garden program or are entirely new to the concept here's what you need to know: In pre-Covid times, BCGC members invited members to visit their garden at a specific date and time. The host sets the schedule for the 2- to 3-hour event. Aside from the opportunity to meet in person, the wide variety of gardens we have and the new ideas we take away from the "tours" make for pure pleasure.

We are not expecting to see something off the pages of "Fine Gardening" so whether you have a yard that's large or small, well-established or a work-in-progress, we are always looking for volunteers to host a morning or afternoon visit. Just let me know if you're interested and I will give you details. My contact information is in the directory / yearbook.

Obviously, we will keep Covid restrictions in mind, but we believe that we can have a plan to minimize exposure to the virus. We are envisioning the usual 2 to 3-hour time frame but will set up a schedule in order to be certain that we don't all arrive at the same time. Masks and social distancing will be necessary, at least at this point. We can begin as soon as we have a volunteer, but we need to be mindful not to interfere with the May Plant Sale preparations. In the past, Open Gardens have been held from April through October, although summer heat and humidity sometimes result in a grinding halt.

Thanks for considering participation.

Tree Programs in Montgomery County

Maj-Britt Dohlie

You are a knowledgeable group! That includes knowledge about trees and all their benefits—to the environment as well as to human health and wellbeing. What you may know less about is the tree planting programs that exist in Montgomery County. These programs provide one or more free or discounted trees to residents and have to-date provided thousands of trees to replace our disappearing tree canopy.

Generally, the programs are part of the Department of Environmental Protection. Common to all are their popularity, a waiting list, and the emphasis on native trees. There is a spring and a fall planting, with some winter planting taking place if weather permits. I have found that program staff offers excellent help with getting the right tree in the right place, and I have worked with most of the programs to plant trees in my old and new neighborhoods, on public property, and along streets. The program websites have a wealth of information. Below I will provide the websites and very briefly summarize each program, but I suggest you review each website if you want to apply because the trees offered and the rules vary. Let's start with the program you may be most familiar with:

In Memoriam:

Elizabeth Allen and Ann Zahn

Irene Sinclair

When I joined the club in 1969 Elizabeth Allen was one of my inspirations. She and her husband Henry, the author of the Washington Garden Book, lived on Brite Drive at the end of the cul-de-sac. The home had a small front yard but the back yard went on forever. In those early years the club had summer horticultural sessions in her garden. I remember one on plant propagation. There was nothing that she had not tried, and was always very happy to encourage you. She was 103 when she passed away on December 11, 2020. It shows gardening pays off!

Ann Zahn passed away on December 20. She was my neighbor in Battery Park. Ann was an artist and constantly experimented with plants, be it varieties, placement, or other uses. By that I mean she often made paper from different plants and would use the paper for one of her prints.

Tree Montgomery offers free shade trees throughout Montgomery County in a variety of locations (single family and multi-family homes, congregations, parking lots, libraries, etc.). For example, Connie Morella Library with the help of the BCGC has received 14 shade trees from Tree Montgomery. On its website, the program shows an impressive list of shade trees, describes the process for getting the tree(s), and provides advice on the care of trees. (Note that many incorporated towns have their own tree programs.)

You can request a free tree here:

<https://treemontgomery.org/request-a-tree/>

Montgomery County Street Tree Program

(Montgomery County Department of Transportation) plants hundreds of street trees

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every year. Whether you want a new street tree or a street tree to be replaced, you submit a request online. Alternatively, you can contact the Division of Highway Services by calling MC 311. With this program, there are relatively fewer options for trees; it depends on availability. Generally, smaller trees go under power lines and shade trees are placed where there are no power lines. A county arborist determines whether a tree can be planted in a specific location and what type of tree is likely to thrive there, but you can express your preferences. The choices depend on availability. (MCDOT also provided trees for Connie Morella Library along Arlington Rd.)

<https://www3.montgomerycountymd.gov/311/SolutionView.aspx?SolutionId=1-EBMIV>

The RainScape Program offers a rebate of up to \$7,500 for a residence that uses specific gardening or design techniques to reduce storm water runoff from the property. This can mean rain gardens, conservation gardens, green roofs, water harvesting, pavement removal, or permeable pavement. Participation in this program involves close adherence to the rules such as application and approval of the project before it is initiated. You can find more information and an application form on the following website:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/water/rainscapes/index.html>

Reforest Montgomery offers several options to participate in the program. One program initiative provides free urban shade trees. The program works closely with Tree Montgomery. Other initiatives include reforestation of parks, conservation easements, and the Agricultural Reserve. One recent nearby park reforestation initiative includes the planting of over 60 shade trees in Little Falls Park in Bethesda this winter. If you want to learn more about such public reforestation efforts, you can read more about them on the website below. Also keep in mind that if you know of a public area that is “screaming for trees,” you can contact the program and make suggestions.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d95dd74d39f74d1e8b03c17c925c8554> and for more general information:

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/environment/forest-conservation-and-trees/reforest-montgomery/>

(Shades of Green, the precursor to Reforest Montgomery, planted a maple in the Connie Morella Library parking lot at the request of BCGC about 3 years ago).

Free shade trees—I will focus the information on what may be most useful for BCGC members under Reforest Montgomery. The free shade tree program takes applications from October 1 and February 1, and the slots disappear very quickly. Because of its popularity, there is currently a limit of six trees. What is interesting about this program is that it provides not only shade trees but also (native) understory trees. For example, the Connie Morella Library will receive six understory trees this spring (American holly, hornbeam, and flowering dogwood).

You will see the application form on the website below. In addition it has a list showing the types of tall, medium and small trees available. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/environment/forest-conservation-and-trees/reforest-montgomery/free-shade-tree-form/>

Native tree discounts are also part of the program efforts. This option gives you a larger selection of trees of different sizes (although the great majority are shade trees). On the website below you can download a **\$40 discount** coupon on qualified native trees costing \$75 and up. The website also has a list of participating nurseries that accept the coupon. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/environment/forest-conservation-and-trees/reforest-montgomery/native-trees-discount/>

This coupon may be combined with an additional **\$25 coupon from the State of Maryland** on qualifying trees from participating nurseries.

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/MarylandersPlantTrees/Introduction.aspx>

Even if you do not want or need a tree for your property, please make sure to spread the news. Many do not know about these programs nor about the importance of planting preferably native trees.

No, Joe!

Karen Fricke

Spring will bring a proliferation of yard signs promoting pesticide spraying for mosquitos. While we might all appreciate fewer summer bites, the efficacy of these programs is questionable, and the damage to our environment is profound. The Greater Farmland Garden Club would like to encourage neighbors to understand the cost of spraying for mosquitoes, and suggest alternatives that don't harm our already fragile environment.

First, are barrier mosquito controls effective? Will they rid my yard of mosquitos? Probably not. Mosquito control companies spray the pesticide pyrethroid onto vegetation around your property, where mosquitos rest, usually during the hottest times of the day. To coat the plants, the spray must be a very fine mist, but that also means the slightest breeze will carry the pesticide away from its intended vegetation. If you hope to spray just your non-flowering vegetation, and avoid your flower garden, that's not likely, unless the technician is meticulous, and the day is dead still and remains that way while the pesticide dries. It takes up to half an hour for the spray to dry and adhere to the foliage, which means there can be no change in the breeze for that period of time. And not all vegetation can tolerate the spray. The foliage of Crepe Myrtles, for instance, can be scorched by

this pesticide. It is poisonous to fish and amphibians (which do their part by eating mosquitoes!), so any drifting mist must be kept away from ponds and streams. It should not be used anywhere around edible plants, including vegetable gardens, fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, and herbs. And none of this does much good if your neighbors have sitting water on their property, the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes, since they travel up to three miles for a meal. Mosquitoes also adapt genetically to the pesticides, mutating quickly to become resistant to the pyrethroid and creating a new generation of pesticide-resistant mosquitoes.

Contact with this pesticide kills the mosquitoes, but it also kills any other insect that comes in contact with it, including bees, caterpillars, and butterflies. While the companies advertise by saying that the chemicals found in pyrethroid are similar to naturally-occurring compounds found in chrysanthemums, and therefore safe, the synthetic compounds that are used are manufactured to be more toxic and longer lasting. The companies claim to never spray on flowering plants, or after 10am, when pollinators are present, but, again, that requires absolutely no breeze to disperse the spray, and a promise from any non-targeted insects that they will stay in their designated areas before 10am, and steer clear of the treated foliage. Birds can fly away when the technician is near, unless they are fledglings in the nest or a parent bird that refuses to leave her chicks. It is not clear how direct spraying affects birds, but ingesting insects that have been treated must certainly pose risks.

What can I do to decrease the mosquito population without using chemical pesticides?

Eliminate Standing Water: Flower pot saucers, sandbox toys, even the lid of a jar in the recycling bin, can hold enough water for mosquitoes to lay eggs, and larvae to hatch and turn into adults, which takes about 7 days.

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Mosquito Dunks: These contain a bacterium that will only kill mosquito larvae. Place them in areas that hold standing water, such as a birdbath.

Repellants: Sprays that are made of oil of lemon eucalyptus have been shown to be just as effective as DEET products.

Fans: Mosquitoes are weak fliers, and will have a difficult time fighting the current of oscillating fans set up around your patio.

The Greater Farmland Garden Club would like to encourage you to be informed about the risks involved in using chemical pesticides, and to consider less invasive methods for fighting mosquitoes. Here's to a bite-free summer!

<https://mygreenmontgomery.org/2020/an-interview-with-experts-are-backyard-mosquito-sprays-safe-and-effective/>

<https://www.beyondpesticides.org/programs/mosquitos-and-insect-borne-diseases/overview>

<https://www.beebetternaturally.com/blog/2019/11/8/mosquito-control-is-there-really-such-a-thing>

Volunteers Needed

The membership committee is looking for someone to make name tags for new members. This should be relatively easy using a computer program and would require making only a few tags over the course of the year. The committee has all of the supplies needed thanks to our previous and loyal tag maker Judy Vasolotti. Please contact Marge Pray or Dee Lertora and let one of them know if you are interested.

Work on Website?

Are you interested in joining a new committee to work on the BCGC website?

This new committee is to update and maintain the website and includes both those primarily interested in content (editing, curating, and so on) and those interested in the hands-on side: that is, working with the WordPress software that powers the site. (These are not necessarily the same people.) If you are interested in joining the committee or finding out more, please get in touch with co-chairs Barbara Collier and Mary Horan (contact information is in the year-book directory).

In particular, if you are willing to commit to working on the tech side—learning and using the software that runs the site—please get in touch by March 16 to join a training session on Friday, March 19, through a Zoom session from 9:30 to 11:30. We need your early reply so that the webmaster can set up an account for you to use during the training and in any further work.

If you are more interested in the editorial side (writing, editing, evaluating, and curating content), you don't need to worry about this upcoming training, but we hope to hear from you, too. More ideas make for richer content!

Background: As you may recall, as chair of the ad hoc committee to evaluate the club's website, I sent out a report with recommendations in an email blast on February 16. The BCGC board has now voted to accept the report recommendations. Among these recommendations was that the club recruit more members to work on the website.

Finally, I would like to thank the other members of the ad hoc committee (Mary Horan, Suzanne Grefsheim, Megumi Lincoln, and Venil Ramiah) for their work; many thanks also to Jane Boynton for the work she has performed on the website over the last several years, as well as for agreeing to continue to assist with future posting.

Barbara Collier

Environmental Concerns

Barbara Collier

Welcome Spring Ephemerals

A little story: A major event in my development as a gardener occurred when my mother cleared a tangle of rampant vines and other vegetation from the wooded part of our back yard, which backed onto Rock Creek Park. This might have been in 1964; when our family visited the New York World's Fair, she had a terrible case of poison ivy from pulling vines and had to wear damp compresses on both forearms—maybe soaked in calamine lotion?

But it wasn't the poison ivy that made the most lasting impression. It was what happened the spring after the big clear-out: spring beauties sparkled into bloom all over the wooded area, even into the lawn. This so delighted my mother that it inspired her to new heights of effort in the garden—despite the poison ivy, mosquitoes, heat, and other things that she as a transplant from England was not used to. I, too, was captivated. I found a Zen-like absorption in gently clearing grass and other competitors from around those delicate little flowers.

Spring beauties (*Claytonia virginica*) are only one of the many spring ephemerals native to our area. If our gardens have deciduous shade, we can also hope to grow trillium, bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), dutchman's breeches and squirrel corn (*Dicentra cucullaria* and *D. canadensis*), trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*), hepatica, and bleeding heart (*Dicentra eximia*)—all of which are spread by ants collecting and eating the eliaosomes on their seeds (see sidebar). Other spring ephemerals may lack eliaosomes but are no less beloved, including Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), may-apple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*), rue anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*), and many others.

Because ants don't travel great distances, most ant dispersal of seeds (myrmecochory) occurs relatively close to the parent plants.

An elaiosome is a structure on some plant seeds that contains lipids and proteins that ants eat (see my article in November 2018 on our invertebrate garden friends). After taking seeds back to their nests, ants eat the elaiosome and discard the seed with other waste—ideal for germination. Some nonnative spring ephemerals also have eliaosomes, including snowdrops and some crocus species.

Besides encouraging ants (or at least not killing them), another important thing we can do for our spring ephemerals is to leave the leaf litter so that it can turn into the rich humusy soil that these plants need. And, of course, if you have any particularly precious specimens, you would be wise to mark them so you don't disturb them later in the year.

As gardeners, of course, we also want to use later-emerging plants to fill in bare spots after the ephemerals have disappeared. Since some of them last longer than others and everyone's conditions differ, this takes trial and error. I've had good results growing wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) and Virginia bluebells together—and the bluebells self-seed, so you may find them popping up in other places. Ferns are useful companions for ephemerals, although you probably don't want to use aggressive ones like sensitive fern or hay-scented fern. I've found that Christmas fern coexists well with other plants. Another suggestion I've seen, big-leaf aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*), is one I would love to use more. However, my few seed-grown plants are still too small and sparse to draw any conclusions (I live in hopes of observing its ability to spread).

To end with the story I started with: My mother isn't the only person to discover that desirable native plants have been struggling along under an overgrowth of undesirables (whether invasive nonnatives or unwanted natives like

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poison ivy). One thing that conservation landscaping and habitat restoration work has found is that consistently removing competitive invasive plants is essential to allowing our natives to get established. So although I can't guarantee that clearing out invasives will unleash a hidden population of desirable spring ephemerals or other natives, it can't hurt, right?

Winter Wonderland

Lois Brown shared photos of a winter snowfall at her home in Round Hill, Virginia.

