



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"Ninety-eight Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Photos by Jane Boynton

One of the many lovely
arrangements created as
part of the Holiday
Greens Workshop. See
pages 2 to 4 for more
photos.

The Exceedingly Curious Tale of a Curious Herbal

It isn't exactly curiouser and curiouser that here we are again, meeting via ZOOM to avoid COVID-19. There are a few advantages to ZOOM meetings amidst all the disadvantages...you can see the presentations more clearly, you can more or less hear the speaker better, you don't have to fight traffic to attend a meeting and you don't have to wear your best casual clothes. AND you can hear a speaker from Scotland without battling security lines at the airport.

Our speaker is fellow gardener and retired journalist **Nancy Stevens** who gardens in Glasgow, Scotland. She served as Chairman of the Baldernock Gardening Club for 7 years, she has been a flower show judge, and has been a panelist at gardeners forums. She has spoken on garden topics from Scotland to Australia to California.

Nancy's subject today is 18th-century Scottish author and illustrator Elizabeth Blackwell who compiled and illustrated a book of plants that cure and heal for the use of medical professionals. Her nostrums include cures for lice, what to use to tighten up your loose teeth, how to find the right hallucinogen to perfect your spells, etc.

Be sure to join us 10:30AM via ZOOM on **Wednesday, January 26, 2022** for more useful information on how to combat plague (COVID-19?) and how to restore the appetite lost by drinking. You won't be sorry!

2021 BCGC Holiday Greens Workshop

Patricia Pennington, Chair

What a difference a year makes. In 2020 BCGC members couldn't meet at the church for the annual Holiday Greens Workshop. So we had a modified Holiday Greens Workshop outdoors. Members dropped off their cut & conditioned greens in Patricia Pennington's driveway, and while socially distancing, members gathered the greens, materials, and doodads they would use to make two arrangements at their home. This year despite the pandemic, 40 masked members were allowed to get together at St. Marks church on December 15th to create holiday greens arrangements. We were pleased that every member who wanted to participate this year was able to do so.

Members made the Holiday Greens Workshop happen this year. New member Susan Gorman took on the task of collecting newspapers that we placed on all the tables. Katherine Wood arrived extra early the morning of December 15th, and she and Diana Hudson-Taylor started soaking the oasis that members would use to create their arrangements.



As members arrived they helped set up as well. Diane Beverly brought a bounty of beautiful bows. Yet again this year Carolyn Randall made laminated tags that are attached to each arrangement with watering information and a reference to the Bethesda Community Garden Club. Even though she couldn't attend, Janet Fernandez dropped off cut and conditioned greens at the church. Lou Olin and Lois Brown once again organized all the arrangements that organizations would receive that afternoon. Candy Kessel recruited the members who delivered the Holiday Greens arrangements to 11 organizations in Maryland and 2 in DC. At the end of the workshop Barbara Collier, Susan Lass, Dee Lertora



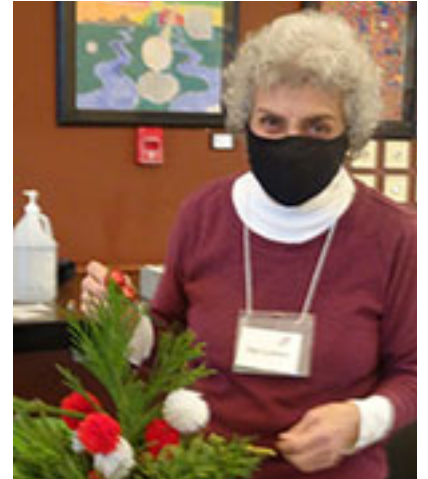
and others pitched in to clean up the expansive area full of bits and pieces of greenery.

2021 Holiday Greens Recipients

A Wider Circle
Bethesda Police Station
Catholic Charities Men & Women's Shelter
Central Union Mission
Coalition for the Homeless
Cornerstone Montgomery
Interfaith Works Women's Center
National Center for Children & Families
Rainbow Shelter
Shepherds Table
Stepping Stones
Waverly House
Whitman Walker Health

When Patricia called the organizations to let them know that the club would be delivering arrangements this year, they were so happy and appreciative. She informed some of them who in past years received huge numbers of arrangements that we couldn't provide the same amount this year. They said they were thrilled to get whatever we gave them. Most of the organizations got the same quantity they received in past years.







Environmental Concerns

Barbara Collier

Winter Inspirations

Several years ago I bought a book called “Use What You Have Decorating,” which provides useful suggestions about home decor based on the idea in the title: basically, look at your stuff and arrange it to achieve a pleasing result (while also fixing or avoiding common mistakes)—easier said than done, obviously.

It occurred to me that this idea sums up much of my approach to landscaping, except of course that I can’t just move trees and shrubs around the way one might rearrange furniture (alas). But even assuming that a lot of the garden structure is fixed, we can still make decisions about pruning, cutting back, letting things spread, removing or moving volunteers, and generally trying to figure out how to make the best of the materials at hand.

Winter is the traditional time to prune woody plants, of course, and the moment when branches are conveniently bare is the easiest time to see and adjust structure. But as I suggested last month, winter is also a good time to contemplate garden design in general, when so many other outdoor tasks may be impractical.

With the melting of our recent snow, I wander around my yard looking at all the bent and broken stalks left behind by its weight. The Christmas ferns and the hellebores are all hunkered down in their flat winter posture, but they’re still mostly nice and green. I see that the epimedium leaves still stand out, having changed to their dark red or coppery winter color. Some nearby evergreen sedges have spread nicely. They are starting to colonize a stepping stone path, so I see an opportunity to move some to new homes. Elsewhere, other sedges have turned all or mostly brown, but they are still visible and give me a good idea of their coverage. Since carexes are cool season growers, early spring would be a good time to move or divide them to adjust the borders of their spread or start new patches. For these

base-layer plants, I’m looking for bare spots in the carpet, so to speak, or maybe a place for a new throw rug?

I can also see rosettes of leaves at or near the base of the broken or flattened stalks, showing where things will be reemerging in the spring. There is a lot of common evening primrose, *Oenothera biennis*, which can be 6 feet tall and is much beloved by birds. I see where it wants to form large patches just by the road (must remember to cut it back before it can block the sight lines from the driveway). Hunting more attentively, I detect the reddish brown leaves of heuchera, the mottled green of *Phacelia bipinnatifida*, and other biennials or perennials that do not die away completely in the winter. I resist the temptation to clean up all the broken stalks to expose more emerging plants, especially since more snow is in the forecast. Instead, I keep looking for possible places for transplants when the time comes. Maybe target a remaining patch of pachysandra or vinca for some new carpet? (Hmmm... Not a perfect analogy: floors won’t generally reject carpets, not even the most tasteless.)

Some bulbs have sent up leaves by now, especially the grape hyacinths, whose leaves are green all winter, and starflower, *Ipheion uniflorum*, which not only comes up in winter but has a distinctive onion scent (my husband considers it a weed). If you don’t want them, removing their leaves won’t kill them but will discourage them over time. Maybe they can be crowded out by some sedges? More desirable bulbs, which may be just poking up their leaves, indicate where to be careful when doing spring transplants. If you carefully label all your bulbs, you already know that; for those like me, every spring holds some surprises, since the squirrels and I apparently collaborate to move bulbs around.

There’s a useful reminder: in the garden, I need to take into account my fellow designers—birds, ants, squirrels, and even deer. Fortunately, they often enhance my decorating ideas as much as they undermine them.

HORTICULTURAL NOTES

To Everything a Season

Carole Ottesen

Every season in the garden has its particular delights. Winter is no exception. Perhaps the pleasures of the cold months are even more prized because they are fewer in number. As with every other part of the year, winter's fleeting glories bring moments to be savored before they pass into memory.

Some perennials and deciduous shrubs go so gracefully into dormancy, they might be considered at their peak *after* frost. Among these are the grasses, especially broom sedge (*Andropogon virginicus*) which spends the cold months a stippled orange. Hakone grass (*Hachonechloa*) is showy the entire winter when its cascading almond-colored foliage serves as a bright foil to evergreens.

A shrub that takes an especially graceful exit from the growing season is winter hazel (*Corylopsis pauciflora*). Its leaves pass gently into mid-winter, coloring the softest ginger before finally dropping in anticipation of its coming yellow blooms.



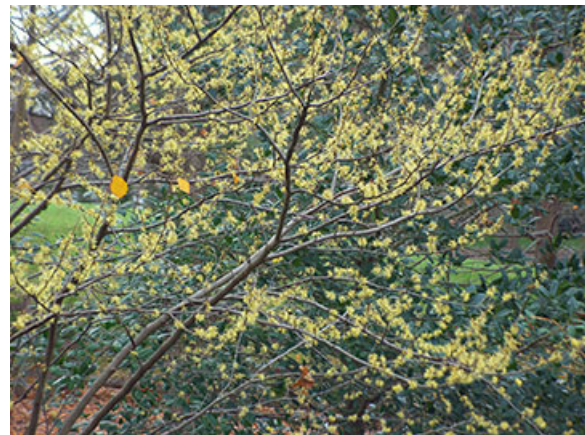
Some plants ease us into winter by blooming at its early edge. This year, American witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) bloomed from November through December. Mahonia followed, still holding on to its dangling yellow flowers in January.

Some plants defy the very worst that mid-winter bestows by becoming even more attractive in the teeth of adversity. The limbs of coral bark maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Sango-Kaku') will glisten brilliantly after an ice storm.



The trunks of the Natchez crape myrtle become even more spectacular against the snow, turning what might be a drab scene into a winter fairyland.

As winter ebbs, edgeworthias produce their fragrant yellow and orange blossoms despite February's temperatures. When Edgeworthia blooms in consort with sweet box (*Sarcococca hookeriana*), whose tiny flowers are powerfully scented, the entire garden is perfumed.





And then, before you know it, the winter aconites and hellebores appear. Winter is over. The year's peaceful hiatus in the growing season has exhausted its few but splendid and very memorable delights.



Photos by Carole Ottesen