



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

“One Hundred Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes”

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Member of
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The National Council of State
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Photographer:
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Lois Brown, editor



Anemone virginiana, tall thimbleweed, is one of the native plants seeding freely in Barbara Collier’s garden. Learn more in her article on page 3.

Photo by Barbara Collier

The (Eastern) Bluebird (*Sialia Sialis*) of Happiness...

...flies over the rainbow, somewhere, and the white cliffs of Dover, but hasn’t flown over the state of Maryland too much lately. And that’s because its nesting sites have been almost completely eliminated. Bluebirds live on the edge in more ways than one. Their preferred habitat is on the edge of open fields giving onto forests and although they have been known to inhabit parks, orchards, and golf courses, they prefer field-fading-into-forest. They’ll eat anything—bugs and all sorts of berries, and if you want to feed them, dried worms (according to my friend in Tennessee whose yard is festooned with bluebirds-as-ornaments) are preferred.

Since 1982, Mike Bishop, a native Virginian and life-long Virginia resident, has helped form purple martin (*progne subis*) colonies and bluebird trails on his family’s property in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. After a 37-year career in Public Safety, he became a Virginia Master Naturalist and worked part time as a naturalist for the Fairfax, Va. County Park Authority. In 2015 he founded the Northern Virginia Purple Martin initiative which, in addition to helping form purple martin colonies, established 4 bluebird trails. In 2022, the bluebird trails fledged almost 100 birds. Mike has lots of information on how we might be able to coax these desirable pops of blue into our yards and onto our patios, so be sure to sign onto our ZOOM meeting on **February 28 at 10:30** to learn how.

PS: my next door neighbor recently reported there are many bluebird houses set up in the bluebird trail area at Brookside Gardens, around Pine Lake. If you build it??....

Jane Malish

BCGC Plant Sale

When: Thursday, May 9,

Where: the Farm Women’s Market, downtown Bethesda.

Our Plant Sale is the club’s biggest event of the year, and we need your help to make it successful.

What is the Plant Sale?

Every May, the garden club holds a unique public Plant Sale that features over a thousand plants that we know will thrive in the metro area. That’s because club members dig, divide, and pot these plants from their own gardens.

Proceeds from the Plant Sale are used to continue the club’s historic tradition of community service. We provide thousands of dollars to support local public gardens, horticultural and conservation organizations, our Holiday Greens Workshop, and our own gardening projects at the Connie Morella and Davis Libraries in Bethesda.

How can you help?

The Plant Sale needs your plants! What plants can you share from your garden? You probably have plants that need dividing or that have spread more than you'd like. Late March and April is the best time to pot up these extras for donation to the Plant Sale.

Our March newsletter will have lots of specifics about how to choose and dig plants from your garden for the Plant Sale.

Would you like to donate plants from your garden but find digging and potting physically challenging? We may be able to help. *As soon as possible*, please contact Elaine Hope.

Questions? Talk to Plant Sale committee members or other long-time club members. Watch for updates and volunteer opportunities in upcoming newsletters, at our meetings and through email blasts.

Plant Sale committee

Judy Termini, Co-chair
 Elaine Hope, Co-Chair
 Joan Black
 Barbara Collier
 Mary Horan
 Karin Kelleher
 Susan Lass
 Carolea Logun
 Janis Long
 Pat Robinson
 Janine Trudeau

Luncheon news:

Since our February meeting is a Zoom meeting there will be no luncheon.

March will be a sandwich lunch and we have enough salads and desserts at this time.

April will be a hot lunch and we will recruit a few more volunteers in March.

Thanks to everyone for supporting our luncheons!!

Debbie Shakelton

Volunteer Opportunities at Connie Morella Library 2024

For nearly 50 years, Club volunteers have supported landscaping projects at the Connie Morella (CM) Public Library. We work in small groups throughout the summer, in coordination with Montgomery County Library staff and volunteers. Specific tasks include maintaining and replacing existing plants and bushes, weeding, landscaping, pruning, and keeping the public areas both attractive and clean.

In addition to our regular landscaping of the public areas, this spring, BCGC volunteers will be working closely with CM Library Staff on sprucing up an area to be potentially used for a "story walk" in the space behind the library. Some of you may be familiar with this area, which is accessible from inside the library or from the SW corner of the main building. The idea of a story walk is to attract young readers

from the playground at Caroline Freeland Urban Park, now under reconstruction and temporarily closed,

In addition to working on projects that benefit the wider community, volunteering at the CM library provides BCGC members with opportunities to learn new skills and share their knowledge and love of gardening.

We will meet at the library on Thursdays, at least once a month beginning on March 21, throughout the summer into late fall, weather permitting. Following is a tentative schedule, to be confirmed approximately one week before via email:

March 21
 April 18
 May 23
 June 20
 July 25
 August 22
 September 26
 October 24

New club members are especially encouraged to try this out—no previous gardening experience is necessary, and there is no need to sign up or respond. Just meet us at the library on the last Thursday of the month at 10:00AM for approximately two hours of gardening in a public space. BCGC will provide the expertise and camaraderie.

Many thanks in advance for your willingness to help.

Blanca Luisi

Silent Auction March 27: Share Your Stuff

By Candy Kessel

Donate unwanted garden-related gear, help the club's treasury, and enjoy some retail therapy at our March meeting. BCGC will offer a sizable pop-up shop if members start their spring cleaning early and donate their unwanted garden-related gear.

No doubt you have potential auction donations. So, please check your basement, garage, attic, closets, shed, etc., and pull out all those garden gizmos you no longer use or want. Then bring them March 27 — garden art, plant stands and stakes, nice pots, tools, interesting décor pieces, tchotchkes, etc. Your castoffs will be raffled off in a silent auction to the highest bidder or tagged for instant purchase. In previous years we've raised as much as \$500 for the club. And even better, many members go home with new accoutrements and a feeling of satisfaction from their clean-up efforts.

Please **do not bring** garden books, common plastic pots or terra cotta pots. Vases are welcome but not florist vases. It seems most everyone is overloaded with those items.

Environmental Concerns

Barbara Collier

February gold

If there's a month less popular than January, it's probably February. Then when we get a beautiful blue sky in this often gloomy month, our enjoyment can be tempered by foreboding thoughts of global warming. (Like clouds and silver linings, these things go together.)

Fortunately, welcoming the earliest flowers in our gardens (most of which tend to be nonnative) isn't incompatible with maintaining a garden ecosystem that allows native plants and wildlife to thrive (see March 2023 newsletter). At least the occasional mild day gives me the chance to pull out more of the pernicious creeping euonymus, ivy, and vinca that I am slowly eradicating. We gardeners of a certain age know that gardening is full of tradeoffs and ups and downs, don't we? It's all about finding the right balance.

So let's forge ahead and look for the ups. At the moment, my snowdrops (nonnative) are putting on a brave display, along with winter aconite and crocus. Snowdrops are among many plants spread by ants attracted to the elaiosomes on their seeds (ants collect and eat these fatty structures and then discard the seeds). So I'm not just indulging my desire for early blooms, I'm feeding our friends the ants! And I like to think they return the favor by also spreading the seeds of such native ephemerals as trillium, bloodroot, dutchman's breeches, trout lily, and bleeding heart, all of which have elaiosomes.

A native plant currently dispersing its seeds in a different way is *Anemone virginiana*, tall thimbleweed. Its typical anemone flowers develop thimble-like seedheads, which picturesquely dissolve into fluff. With flower stalks up to 3 feet tall, it adds an airy accent to areas with partial shade to sun, and if you are willing to let it seed around (as I am), it adds some nice winter interest as the seedheads senesce.



Anemone virginiana

Another native that is pleasing me these days is my *Yucca filamentosa* 'Color Guard'. The species is native to the southeast, but it can now be found naturalized along the Atlantic coast. Like *Opuntia humifusa* (prickly pear cactus), these desert-looking plants are a surprising but fairly common sight in our local forests. I recently read an interesting discussion of the tiny moths that pollinate yucca flowers, but, alas, my cultivar has never



Anemone virginiana

bloomed. To flower, yuccas may need more sun than I provide—and back in 2013 I moved mine just to give it more sun! At least it is now big and bold enough to be a golden winter accent, even from a distance. Maybe it will oblige me with a bloom, one of these days.

On the habitat front, I'll be interested to see if the "dead hedges" of sticks that we built last winter (February 2023 newsletter) start showing signs of exploitation by insects when the weather starts warming up. We now have a few piles of winter trimmings—water sprouts, suckers, and other debris—to build them up (or out) some more. (Water sprouts especially make nice straight stakes.) I'm thinking of adding stalks from trimmed perennials as they collapse or are cut later on. Hollow stalks especially should give the hedges more openings for cavity nesting bees.

And no, if you're asking, my 'February Gold' daffodils don't seem to be up yet.



Yucca filamentosa 'Color Guard'

Photos by Barbara Collier

PAY YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES NOW – It is time to collect dues for the upcoming fiscal year of **July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025**. Your dues includes membership in the NCAGC (National Capital Area Garden Clubs). It also covers our meeting and speaker expenses; the printing of our club directory; and administrative expenses. **DUE DATE IS APRIL 1ST**

Membership dues are **\$45.00** – payable to **Bethesda Community Garden Club**

- Payable by Check – Mail to:

BCGC

c/o Margy Tritschler

P.O. Box 25

Garrett Park, MD 20896

- Payable Online – Visit the website **bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org**

Click **JOIN**

Click **PAY DUES**

Click **SHOP NOW**

Click **JOIN/RENEW**

Click **CONTINUE TO CART** (cart is in top right-hand corner and should have a "1" in it) Complete your transaction.

Please note that if you have more than "1" in your cart, use the trash can icon to the right to delete and enter only 1 purchase of a membership.

HORTICULTURAL NOTES

Garlic Mustard

Carole Ottesen

A member of the brassica family, garlic mustard or “hedge garlic” (*Alliaria petiolata*) was brought to North America from Europe where it was long used for food and for medicine as both an antiseptic and a diuretic. Even though it is undesirable here because it is invasive, it has long been a favorite food of springtime foragers.

Despite the recent snows, garlic mustard is popping up now. This early emergence is only one reason why this plant is considered undesirable. Its quick growth in early spring harms later-growing natives by crowding them out.

In addition to hogging space, garlic mustard’s roots release allelochemicals that can hinder the growth of neighboring native plants, eventually discouraging pollinators.

Finally, as a biennial, in its second year, garlic mustard sends up flower stalks that produce *hundreds* of long-surviving seeds.

Fortunately, garlic mustard has redeeming qualities. It is not only edible, it can be healthful, containing vitamins A, C, and trace minerals. When you pull it up to eat it, you’ll be getting rid of an invasive by turning it into something delicious. The best part is that you don’t have to harvest sparingly. Take as many whole plants as you can carry—even if you only cook a few stems or leaves. You’ll be doing your garden, your neighbors, or your local park a giant favor.

Before you start, there are two important things to know about garlic mustard. First, what it looks like. Be absolutely sure that what you harvest *truly is* garlic mustard. Second, know that the plant’s young leaves contain cyanide (as do many other brassicas) something that declines when it is cooked or crushed.

Although foragers have been eating garlic mustard for centuries, if you are trying it for the first time, do so sparingly, using it as a spice in soups, pestos, or carb dishes.

GARLIC MUSTARD MASHED POTATOES

Use your usual recipe or:

about 2 lbs. peeled and quartered potatoes

1 clove garlic, peeled, or to taste (optional)

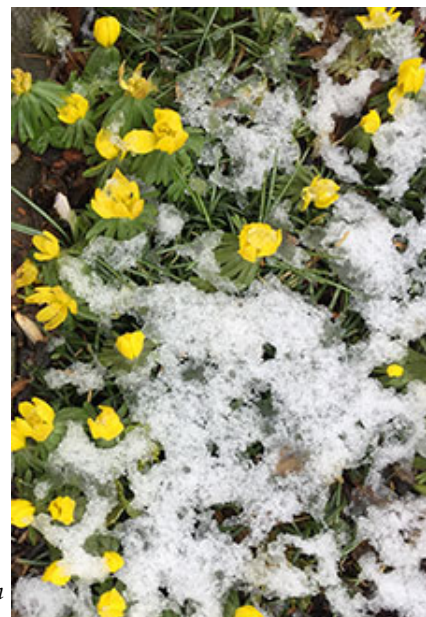
1 cup milk

2 tablespoons butter

¼ cup garlic mustard stems, chopped and boiled for one minute.



Garlic mustard leaves



Winter aconite flowers peek through the recent snow.

Photos: Carole Ottesen