



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

“One Hundred Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes”

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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The National Capital Area
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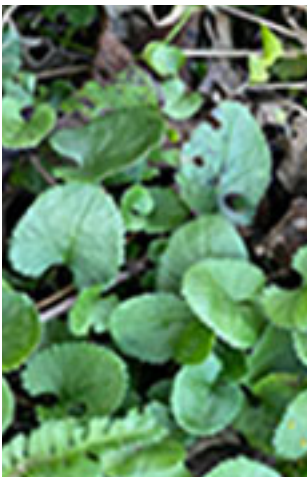
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Learn to distinguish
between the leaves of
Packera aurea (above)
and those of the inva-
sive lesser celandine in
Barbara Collier’s article
on page 3.

Photo by Barbara Collier

Waging the War on Weeds

Those dreamy, rolling green sculptures that landscape highways are the enemy. Although the mounds and obelisks are camouflaged as beauty, they are lethal vines, choking trees and native plants alike. They are non-native and they change the culture of plant-animal associations that have evolved over thousands of years, shading out native plants that attract butterflies, and strangling and smothering trees. Non-invasive shrubs displace native shrubs that furnish birds with food and shelter.

All these non-native invasive plants grow fast, mature early, spread quickly, thrive almost everywhere, reproduce profusely, survive under adverse conditions, and have few pests or diseases.

How do we combat these destructive plants?

One way is to engage volunteers to pull the thugs out of the soil and one person who is doing just that is this month’s speaker, **Corinne Stephens**, the Weed Warrior Program Coordinator for Montgomery County Parks. Ms. Stephens has a bachelor’s degree in animal science with a minor in environmental policy from Rutgers and a masters in animals and public policy from Tufts. She has been a longtime advocate for the health of Sligo Creek and its environs.

Weed warrior volunteers can register for 2-hour long work sessions held throughout the year at various Montgomery County parks. (Go to Montgomeryparks.org, then click on View the Events Calendar.) Participating in one of these sessions is an excellent way to learn to identify weeds, weedy vines, and shrubs. And although Ms. Stephens will supply us with identification of many non-native invasive plants, hands-on experience provides a depth of knowledge obtainable no other way. And it may be the weeding experience that teaches you that that Japanese knotweed, which looks-just-like-what-you-thought-was-redbud, is a noxious pest! Be sure to take this opportunity to learn something about identifying and controlling weeds at our upcoming **March 27** meeting when Corinne Stephens is our speaker. The meeting will be held at St. Mark Presbyterian Church and will begin at 10:30.

March Luncheon

This month we will have a sandwich lunch plus salads and desserts. Please bring a sandwich to share that you have cut into quarters and leave it in the kitchen. The luncheon committee will take it from there. Thanks to everyone for making the luncheons such a yummy success!

Debbie Shakelton

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.

UNLOAD EXCESS GARDEN GEAR MARCH 27

Get rid of those tools, pots, and assorted gardening items you no longer use or want at our March silent auction.

Use this opportunity to check your basement, garage, shed, etc. for the extras that other members can use and enjoy. It might even inspire a bit of spring cleaning!

Please bring your donations early, by 10:00 a.m., so there’s time to organize all the goodies and we can start our meeting and speaker presentation on time.

PLANT SALE NEWS

Mark your calendar for the BCGC Plant Sale on May 9, held in front of the Farm Women’s Market in downtown Bethesda.

The sale is open to the public. It’s the club’s biggest event and only fundraiser. Enthusiastic buyers arrive early and plants sell out quickly.

The more plants we have to sell, the better.

How can you support the Plant Sale?

The best way is to donate excess plants from your own garden. When you thin or divide your overgrown plants this spring, please pot and donate your surplus.

Plant Sale Tips will arrive regularly in email blasts. Closer to the Plant Sale date, sign up to help with the sale.

Digging and potting your plants for the sale

Pot up plants in early April or as soon as new leafy growth appears. *All plants* are best potted by late April, so they are well-established when sold.

Gather your pots, soil and plant labels to be ready when you do regular spring maintenance. Pick up pots and plant labels at the homes of Barbara Collier, Susan Lass, and Judy Termini. Please contact them before showing up in person. We will sell plants in three pot sizes: medium (6-8 inches diameter); large (9-12 inches) and “shrub” (larger than 12 inches).

- 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 how to divide the plant and what size pots to use. Full pots sell better than skimpy pots.
- Use a sharp spade to divide the plant into pieces.
- Place some leaves in the bottom of each pot, then cover with a little soil. Transplant each piece into the a pot, surrounding with potting soil to the same height as when the plant was in the ground. Fill the sides of the pot with soil and press down.
- Place the plants in shade for the first few days after potting, and keep them well-watered.
- Label each plant with its Latin and common names, flower color and light requirements, as shown in the photo (next page). If you know the plant is native, add that to the label.

Would you like more help?

Many members have beautiful gardens and would like to donate plants. If you find digging and potting physically challenging, then volunteers may be able to help you. If you're in need of plant ID or a demo of digging and dividing, ask us. Contact us as soon as possible to get on our schedule.

Questions? Contact Judy Termini (judytermini@gmail.com) or Elaine Hope (paris71197@gmail.com)

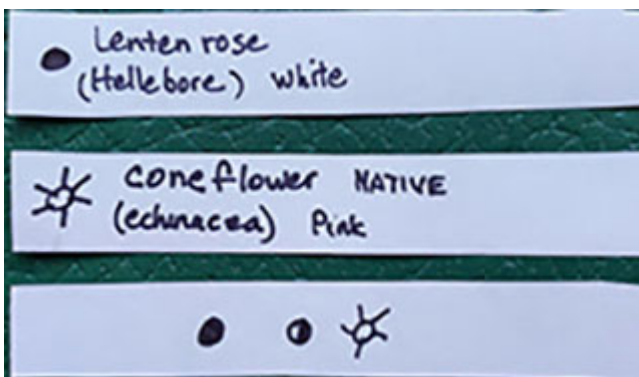
Which plants to donate?

We aim to offer interesting plants that fill a variety of garden niches, including plants that spread well in your garden or that you may consider run-of-the-mill.

We *cannot* accept:

- Non-native invasive plants like English ivy, common orange daylily, pachysandra, and vinca minor. Aggressive *native* plants are fine to donate.
- Plant cultivars that are still under patent protection. It is illegal to resell them.
- Unidentified plants.
- Plants that are wilted or in poor condition.
- **New this year: We cannot accept more than 5 each of green hostas, day lilies, and liriopse from each donor.**

If you don't know what it is or if it's a good candidate for donation, ask us!



Top two examples: Plant labels include common and Latin names, flower color, and light requirements. Note if plants are native to the eastern U.S. Please use a weatherproof pen!

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Barbara Collier

Forward March

Traditionally we talk about lions and lambs in March, but this year we seem to have rapidly run the gamut. We started with the usual March questions. (What should I do now? Is it too soon to plant? Is it too wet to plant?) And then we got a burst of glorious spring weather, the flowers bursting into bloom, and the weeds roaring out of the ground. It's enough to make your head spin—and your knees ache.

Even if you're trying to postpone the full-scale cleanup to give the insects a chance, you can always do light-touch tidying of broken stalks and fallen sticks, or a bit of gentle moving of dead leaves to uncover emerging plants or cover bare areas. Another task is sedge primping: battered sedges can be trimmed back so that only green is showing. Not only does the cut make the sedges look better (and maybe reveal lurking weeds), the chopped leaf ends are instant mulch. And if you have a patch of moss, this is the time to go and find all the tiny weed seedlings that are trying to sprout. A little moss grooming is a pleasant thing to do on a nice day. Eventually, you will see your moss looking the better for it.

But we all know the most obvious March task: attack the winter weeds. Many weeds show up nicely this month because they green up early. The nastier vines, like honeysuckle, ivy, vinca, and creeping euonymus, can be easy to spot, especially when they start sprouting new leaves (or blooming in the case of vinca). False strawberries also are good to try to nip in the bud (or rather, tear out by the roots) before they can start spreading. Even if it's too wet to dig, it's probably not too wet to pull. You do have to be careful not to compact your soil when you're going on the hunt. This is where having paths and the odd stepping stone is really useful. A sheet of plywood is a good tool to lay down to minimize compaction where you want to work.

Another obvious weed to attack is hairy bittercress, now merrily blooming. When going after hairy bittercress, remember that although it can become big, bushy, and obvious, it can also start sending out a single bloom as a minuscule plant-

let, growing in cracks, crevices, and moss. And although generally it is quite green, it can disguise itself by being reddish brown, so be alert. (I did try it in a salad the other day. It works pretty well, though it is tangy, so make sure you have other greens. It usually pulls up easily, but if you want to eat it, I advise clipping it to have less mud to wash off. You can pull out the roots later, but in any case, you've removed the seedy part.)

But the worst, in my book, is the dreaded lesser celandine, *Ficaria verna*. March is a good time to find this spring scourge, as its color and leaf shape are distinctive, and it's now starting to bloom, making it even easier to catch. The more you get now, the fewer bulbils the plants can make for next year (bulbils are the nasty little bulblets that form in the axils of older plants, drop off, and roll downhill to make new plants).



Lesser celandine leaves

The leaves are a bit similar to *Packera aurea* (golden ragwort), but the color and shape are both different (see leaf pictures). Violets can also resemble lesser celandine, but normally a good peer will tell you the difference, and if not, the fat violet rhizome is very different from the lesser celandine tubers. And after all, if you dig up either golden ragwort or violets by mistake,

there's no harm done. *Packera* is so prolific you will hardly make a dent in the population, and if you just put a violet back, it won't even notice.



***Packera aurea* leaves (top) and Violet leaves (bottom)**

There are a couple of tacks to take in the war on lesser celandine. I use a weeding tool and get underneath it, turn it over, and then poke through the dirt to make sure that I've picked up the attached tubers (see tuber pictures). If it's an older plant, it will be surrounded by lots of little babies from the previous season's bulbils. Fortunately, these are usually shallow, so if you're careful, it's not hard to get the tiny bulblet at the base of the stalk. The sprouted bulblets hold on pretty well despite their tininess. If you're dealing with a big mass you may not want



Lesser celandine sprout with bulblet

to take so much trouble, but I prefer not to lose too much dirt.

In a lawn, if the desirable plants are tight, it may be possible to pull them aside so that you can put them back after you've removed the lesser celandine. (I particularly like to put violets back, because they will rapidly fill up the space where the lesser celandine was.)

If you are unfortunate enough to have a major infestation, you may have to follow the example of the Park Service and resort to chemical means. (For more information, see "Saving Floodplain Flowers in Rock Creek Park" and numerous discussions of lesser celandine control on the web.) But no matter your method, it's worth removing as much as you can before the bulbils start forming for next year's crop.

Vigilance! Doing regular patrols of your weed hot spots in the spring can make a big difference. You may not be able to eradicate your enemies, but you can reduce them, and it's a good excuse for a nice walk in the garden on a sunny spring day, with April just around the corner.



Lesser celandine tubers

Photos by Barbara Collier