



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

"One Hundred and One Years of Brightening Lives and Landscapes"

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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One of the lovely
arrangements created at
last year's Holiday
Greens Workshop.

Photo by Dawn Landsman

But I LIKE My Nandina, Rose of Sharon, English Ivy, Pachysandra, etc.!!!

Do you love your invasives, their steadfastness, their resistance to bad conditions, their reliability, their abundant flowers and berries, their low-care characteristics, but feel vaguely guilty about it all?

Our speaker on **Wednesday, November 20 at 10:30am** is here to help. **Alex Dencker** worked at Behnke's Nursery of beloved memory for 27 years and knows a lot about what native plant could do the same job as any of those mentioned in the above title, could do it well and also benefit the soil, provide habitat, attract pollinators, and impress your neighbors. Alex grew up in Silver Spring and earned a degree in Horticulture/Plant Sciences from the University of Maryland. He is currently employed as the Horticulturist at the National Air and Space Museum on the National Mall.

Who better than Dencker, a Maryland native and a Behnke's graduate, to help wean us from our non-native choices of flora. His hands-on experience with growing plants in more or less the same soil as we all have, arms him with excellent information on what native shrub, tree, ground cover to choose and how to make sure it flourishes. Come and hear the good news Alex has to share.

And come for lunch, too. Debbie Shakelton and crew are serving up a hot lunch that, if past memory serves, promises to be delicious. We will have salads, hot entrées, and desserts. See you at the meeting

"SPREAD THE JOY" Holiday Greens Workshop DECEMBER 11, 2024

On December 11th at 9:30am we will gather for one of our favorite garden club events of the year, the Holiday Greens Workshop. This outreach to our wider community brightens the lives of countless others during the holidays. And to be honest, it brightens the lives of our members (old and new) as we work collaboratively to make these gift arrangements. This year we plan to make 130 to 150 arrangements.

Here is how the workshop will operate:

1. Plan to come at 9:30am to start promptly at 10:00am.
2. Be sure to bring your own tools including clippers (labeled) and perhaps gloves, an apron, a broom, and plastic bags to help with clean up.

3. Bring your own sandwich. Drinks and desserts will be provided.

4. Most important, please bring “conditioned” greens 6-12 inches long or longer. Cut/prune them from your shrubbery (or a friend’s yard) on Sunday or Monday before the meeting. Lay the greens in a laundry tub or bathtub in a mild solution of detergent (Dawn) and lukewarm water. Soak briefly, swish, and then rinse in cold water. Soak the greens in cold water until Tuesday evening, when you will lay them on towels or sheeting and bring them to the meeting the next morning in bags.

Greens can be the following: spruce, pine, boxwood, juniper, cedar, holly, [aucuba and Southern magnolia (only if leaves are small)], yew, nandina, dusty miller, cryptomeria, osmanthus, Goshiki, Viburnum Chindo, etc. In short, we welcome just about any greens tough enough to last several weeks in wet oasis. Just be sure the leaves are not too large for use in small arrangements.

5. There will be “roving advisors” who can help you with any questions/problems you may have regarding the mechanics of an arrangement and, in particular, will show you how to cover ALL your oasis.

6. There will be a number of cute “doodads” and bows to add a spark to your greenery. Many thanks to Diane Beverly for her talent and generosity in making and donating bows for the arrangements. Also big thanks to Carolyn Randall for printing and laminating “BCGC” labels with care instructions that are attached to each arrangement.

7. We can always use more volunteers to make the workshop go smoothly. Please email Carole Gelfeld at cgelfeld@comcast.net if you can help out.

8. Our greens arrangements will be delivered to many local charities including (but not limited to) the following groups: Wider Circle; Interfaith Works; Central Union Mission; Montgomery Coalition for the Homeless; National Center for Children and Families; Shepherd’s Table; and Whitman Walker Health Center. A sheet with the

full list of the charities to which arrangements will be delivered and the charity’s mission statements will be placed at each work table, and also printed on a large poster board at the workshop.



9. If you know of a member who may benefit from an arrangement, please notify one of our committee members before December 11. (Committee members are Lizzie Glidden-Boyle, Dawn Landsman, Karen Eppinger, and Carole Gelfeld)

10. The Holiday Greens Workshop committee is looking for new members. Talk to any one of the committee members if you think you might be interested. Please consider joining us in this rewarding effort.

Carole Gelfeld

Environmental Concerns *Septovember*

Barbara Collier

Perhaps it’s appropriate in this climate—a stretch of September weather in November—to think about resilience. We’ve had a hard time recently, what with one thing and another, but now we get a respite. Even if we can’t forget what the future may bring, let’s enjoy the current mild period.

We’re past the extremes of the summer’s heat, and the fall colors have been especially beautiful. The strange weather brought more late blooms than usual of azaleas, rhododendrons, and even cherry blossoms. And the recent half inch or so of rain has given hope that just maybe we can get beyond the “unusual dryness” we’ve been plagued with. But as in other areas of life, it’s a good idea to prepare ourselves and our gardens, mentally and physically, for the challenges to come.

To my mind, a thickly planted garden with a wide diversity of species and structure is the best bet for resilience to extreme weather, whether drought, heavy rains, or temperature swings. With enough diversity, different plants are available to flourish or pull back as conditions change. So of course this fall I've been planting up a storm (and taking on a heavy watering burden) in an effort to achieve more biodiversity, adding shrubs and perennials from pots, plugs, and bare roots.

I'm also scattering seeds as I pull unwanted creepers like euonymus, pachysandra, and ivy from the farther reaches of the garden. I gather the seeds from self-seeders like boneset, Joe Pye weed, white wood aster, and blue mist flower and toss them in the more bare areas, as well as in places where aggressive plants are becoming dominant. With luck the seeds will take hold and help cover the ground, along with the jumpseed, enchanter's nightshade, white avens, jewelweed, nimblewill, clearweed, and other volunteers that have seeded in. (Following the lead of our Howard County neighbor, the Humane Gardener, I try to welcome some of these less charismatic natives in my wild areas for the sake of the insects they support.)

Hmm. The alert reader may notice that in last month's article I was complaining about aggressive plants in the garden getting out of hand, and yet here I am inviting in more? Well, yes. But my theory is that in these wilder areas, I can permit and even encourage things to duke it out while covering the soil, improving diversity, and avoiding monoculture. Where I already have monoculture (say, in my lush stand of wood oats), I can use my string trimmer and garden fork to introduce beneficial disturbance, a concept I picked up from reading about rewilding.

Picking up this idea may seem odd, since a major tenet of rewilding can be summed up as "Don't do something, just stand there" (my tendency anyway). However, it seems that the right kind of disturbance is an important factor in promoting biodiversity. In rewilding projects, a lot of ecological work is done by herbivores (appropriately sized populations of cattle, horses, pigs, beavers,

and yes, deer). By providing various kinds of disturbance, these herbivores open niches for new plants and other creatures to move in. On projects with long time scales on large properties, the processes set in motion are allowed to proceed with minimal intervention. For small properties like mine, the suggestion is to increase diversity by mimicking herbivore disturbance, balanced with a wait-and-see attitude.

But it's so hard not to be impatient on the long road to resilience, that promised land of well-established biodiversity. In the meantime there are bad actors to resist and allies to recruit. (Yes, of course I'm talking about plants.)

Mentoring...

...AND PERHAPS YOU'LL BE INTERESTED!

Let's start off with the basics. We have a mentoring program. Its purpose is to pair an "experienced" member with one of our new members, with the goal of guiding the new member, or mentee, into BCGC by introducing them to other members, familiarizing them with our many activities and all the other things the club has to offer. Joining a large group like ours is much more comfortable if you know at least one other person to ease you into the group. The program is informal. Suggestions will be provided to each new mentor and the general expectation is that the mentor/mentee work together for about a year or until some comfort level is established. The actual time commitment does not have to be great. Keep in mind that a mentor can also be involved in many other club activities and may even have more than one mentee at a time.

All new members are invited to request a mentor on a totally voluntary basis. The process begins when our Treasurer receives dues from a new member and notifies various committees such as Membership and Mentoring that it is appropriate to contact the member. Being the Mentoring Committee of One, I will first attempt to reach the person by phone or in person at a meeting. The next step would be by email. I give a general explanation of what we offer and suggest they consider having a mentor especially if they don't yet have a connection with any other member.

Obviously, what comes next is finding a mentor. I hope it will be you! As membership has increased, the need for volunteers has also increased. I believe that most mentors would agree that this is a wonderful way to reach out to others and make them feel pleased they are part of Bethesda Community Garden Club. Helping someone new find the activities that would be of most interest to them, and meet like-minded gardeners is a benefit not only to the individuals but also to the Club as a whole. This is also a logical way to staff our committees and open ourselves to new ideas. "What's not to like?"

I would appreciate having anyone interested in becoming a mentor contact me at graefwkd@aol.com or by phone soon as possible. I will be happy to provide all the details you'll need. We need your help for the program to work well. Thank you in advance for considering this call to volunteer.

Judith Graef
Committee of One
(301) 652-0794