



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

Vol. 51, No. 1 ■ September 2024

Member of
The National Capital Area
Garden Clubs and
The National Council of State
Garden Clubs, Inc.

President:
Gwen Stewart

Co-Vice Presidents:
Blanca Luisi & Carolea Logan

Secretary:
Betsy White

Treasurer:
Margy Tritschler

Bulletin Editor:
Margaret Hadley

Photographer:
Dawn Landsman

Send news to:
Margaret Hadley, editor



Cardinal flower has thrived in Barbara Collier's garden despite the drought. See how her other plants have fared on pages 2-4.

Photo by Barbara Collier

Wednesday, September 25, 2024 at 10:30 *Members' Round Robin*

As is our tradition for the September meeting, the "speaker" is anyone who would like to share your positive or not so successful gardening experiences. Please let us learn from one another about new plants, tools, products—what worked and maybe what did not work so well. Also, if you would like to bring your tool or gadget for show & tell, please feel free to do so. Share with the group what you now cannot garden without. This is a chance for anyone who would like to speak to share so we can learn from one another.

Plant Sale News

The Plant Sale Committee has started preparation for the **May 8, 2025 BCGC Plant Sale**. This is the only fundraiser for BCGC, therefore all members are needed to assist with the preparation and volunteer on the day of the sale.

Three ways each member can begin preparing for the plant sale at this time:

1. *Evaluate your garden* and note what plants need to be thinned or divided.

Start digging & potting fall plants in October and November. Also plan for the plants you will dig in the spring before the last frost, late March or April.

Plants that can be dug in the fall:

Perennials and woody plants overwinter well in pots, such as Joe Pye weed, daylily, black eyed Susan, hosta, aster, goldenrod and peony.

Plants that can be dug in the spring:

Ajuga, Japanese anemone, hardy begonia, *crocasmia*, native salvia, Solomon's seal, plumbago, irises, sweet box, coneflower and *pulmonaria*.

2. *Collect pots for the sale.*

Three pot sizes are needed: medium (6-8 inches in diameter) large (9-12 inches in diameter) and, for big plants or shrubs, extra-large (12-16 inches in diameter).

Save "mum pots" if you plant fall mums. Mum pots are typically 6-8 inches in diameter. Pots are always needed. If you have extra pots (*in the 3 pot sizes noted above*) please contact the Plant Sale Committee.



Continued on page 2

3. Seek advice on what plants to dig, divide, or arrange for assistance digging.

If you need input on what to dig, the Plant Sale Committee can assist you. If digging or potting poses a physical challenge, please reach out as soon as possible and the committee may be able to assist.

The proceeds from our May 2024 sale were \$7626. The proceeds support our work at Davis and Connie Morella libraries, pay for our meetings and events, and allow BCGC to donate to local horticultural and conservation organizations.

Thank you to all the members who assisted at the 2024 sale!

To reach the Plant Sale Committee, send a brief email to:

Elaine Hope: paris71197@gmail.com or

Mary Horan: mfhoran@gmail.com

Environmental Concerns

Drought Thoughts

Barbara Collier

When we garden, we try to choose plants that will be successful: right plant, right place, as the maxim goes. So most of us don't choose plants with water or other requirements that are unsuitable for our area. As an environmentalist, I want to minimize the resources (like water) that I have to import to my garden, and as a lazy person, I'd rather not have to do a lot of work.

But alas, things keep changing. The expectations for our weather that we learned over many years have come crashing into the new climate normal, including both torrential downpours, which challenge our gardens' ability to deal with runoff, and of course, drought.

So this unwelcome stretch of dryness forces us to think about the garden's drought resilience. My own garden has a lot of native plants (not always artfully arranged!), many of which are now well established. I also have a fair number of well-behaved nonnatives: some that will grow in tricky areas (hellebores and epimedium for dry shade, anyone?) and others that just work well and are nice additions to the garden.

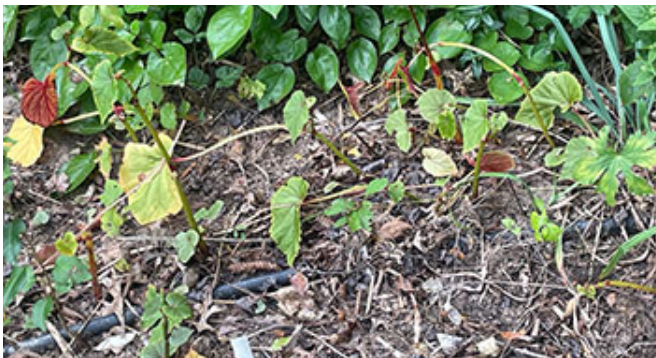
As a general rule, for natives and nonnatives alike, I try to avoid supplemental watering, unless there are new plants (especially woodies) that are still getting established. So my watering list this summer had a few new shrubs, along with my resprouting pipevine, *Aristolochia macrophylla*. (This had been well established, but was a victim of enemy action—while I was away on vacation, Pepco cut it down because it was growing up a telephone pole cable.)

Then the drought really started to bite. Two hydrangeas in dry-ish areas started visibly wilting. Ok, they got added to the watering list. Then a lot of leaves started crisping in the sun. Things were looking so sad I broke down and put the sprinkler on. But I couldn't keep up. The dryness was just too much for me (and them).



Sad
geraniums

Winners and losers: Nonnative *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Ingwersen's Variety' has really suffered this year. It's notably resilient as long as it's in shade, but this year it got cooked. Nonnative hardy begonia, a reliable volunteer in a shady spot, usually requires only the occasional spritz of deer repellent. This year, it's completely pathetic. The crispy astilbes reinforced my intention to move them to moister areas. The toad lily, which is not yet blooming, seems to be ok, but it's at least a third shorter than usual. The naked ladies had no problems blooming, but the flowers didn't last as long in the extreme heat.



Pathetic begonias

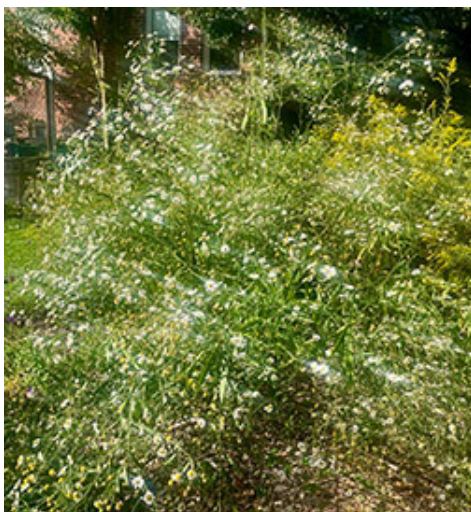
Most of the native plants seemed to do just fine, especially those that are well established (and of course the weedier ones). Now that it's less hot, although still dry, our stalwart fall plants are earning their keep and then some. Blue mistflower, black- and brown-eyed Susans, and obedient plant (much beloved by pollinators) are going full blast. The goldenrods and asters are coming along rapidly. The passionflower vine is full of fruits. The false aster (*Boltonia asteroides*) is a cloud of white flowers. Even the spikenard (*Aralia racemosa*), which used to wither prematurely in too much sun, is now sufficiently well established that it held up in the drought, and is only just beginning to senesce.



Blue mistflower



Obedient plant



Boltonia asteroides



Goldenrod and beautyberry

Photos by Barbara Collier

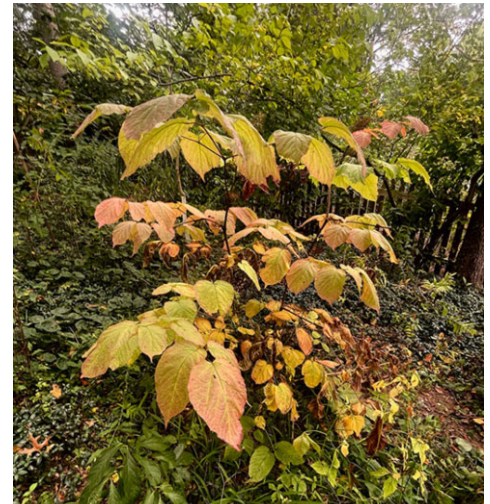


From far left:
White wood aster;
Solidago
'Fireworks'

Below: *Aralia*
racemosa fading

The cardinal flowers, too, seem unaffected by drought—maybe because they mostly plant themselves. They have been coming out gradually for weeks, which has made for a nice progression. It's been encouraging to see the early ones going to seed as the later ones are still blooming. Now is the time to clear some weedy stuff and lay down those spent flower spikes—cardinal flower does like to germinate in disturbed soil.

In general, most of the thickly vegetated areas, especially in the shade, stood up pretty well. Deep mulch helped, but plants covering the ground seemed to work best. However, since some of these were undesirable (ivy, euonymus, vinca, pachysandra), I tried enlisting the drought to help me knock them back a bit. Figuring that even these tough vines can't grow much without moisture, I pulled and cut back optimistically in areas where



there were desirable plants around to fill in. (I'll see if it works.)

The drought created (or revealed?) some problem areas. Now to figure out how to address them—while keeping in mind drought's opposite (torrential, flooding rain), which may show up with its own set of challenges. That's gardening for you.

Cardinal flower (left) and seeds ripening on the Cardinal flower