



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Member of
The National Capital Area
Garden Clubs and
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Margaret Hadley, editor



Violets can play an important role as green mulch in the garden. Learn more in the Environmental Concerns column on page 3.

Photo by Barbara Collier

The Deadly Nightshade... *Atropa belladonna*

April's speakers **Andrew Bort** and **Caleb Stoltz**, an energetic and enthusiastic gardening duo who like to shake things up and nudge folks out of their happy little ruts, have a gardening business called Nightshade Urban Gardens. But before you shudder, remember tomatoes, potatoes and eggplants all belong to the *Solanaceae* family. They're here to share their gardening manifesto: to help you provide produce for *you* and, at the same time, create habitat and forage for birds and pollinators, mitigate soil loss and reduce runoff, increase nutrient density, add beauty to your garden with "show stopper" species, and overall advance your confidence and empower you as a gardener.

Don't miss this opportunity for a booster shot to your gardening chops!

BCGC's officers for next year will be elected at the April meeting. Here is the slate of candidates:

President: Carolea Logun
Co-President: Barbara Collier
Vice President: Blanca Luisi
Treasurer: Gwen Stewart
Secretary: Betsy White

Plant Sale Time!

Thursday, May 15, from 9:00 to noon
Montgomery Farm Women's Market, downtown Bethesda.

Our biggest annual event, a chance to share our love of gardening with the community. We sell interesting plants that fill a variety of garden needs. Plants sell out quickly!

How can you help?

■ *Donate beautiful plants from your garden.*

- Divide and pot your plants NOW. Your plants need time to recover
- Assure that each pot is labelled with the plant's name, flower color, and light requirements
- Keep the pots watered, especially as the weather warms

■ *Sign up to volunteer. There is something for everyone!*

- Put up flyers in appropriate public places.
- Load and unload cars at the donation drop off site

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- Transport plants from the drop off site to the sale
- Provide food for volunteers at the sale
- Set up and cleanup at the sale

How to sign up? Upcoming email blasts from the Plant Sale Committee will link to SignUp Genius.

■ ***Spread the word!***

- A printable copy of our flyer is included in this newsletter.
- Pick up printed copies of the flyer at the April general meeting.
- Tape the flyer on your car window.
- Post this on your neighborhood listserv:**

Please share the short announcement, in bold below. Post it on your neighborhood listserv or email it to book club members, a knitting club, a pickleball group, a friend group, retirement group, Facebook, other social media or a group or any organization you might belong to.

*By sharing this announcement, just once, it could greatly increase our sales for BCGC The Plant Sale.

Thank you kindly for your time and efforts.

Announcement to share:

Bethesda Community Garden Club Plant Sale

When: Thursday, May 15, 2025

**Where: Farm Women's Market
7155 Wisconsin Ave
Bethesda, MD 20814**

Time: 9 a.m. to Noon

A unique public plant sale that features over a thousand plants that will thrive in the metro area.

■ ***Not sure how you can help?***

Contact any committee member:

Elaine Hope, co-chair	Mary Horan, co-chair
Joan Black	Elizabeth Bonardi
Barbara Collier	Janice Fischer
Karin Kelleher	Susan Lass
Carolea Logun	Janis Long
Judy Termini	Janine Trudeau

Another wonderful event you will not want to miss.....

Alex Dencker has kindly invited us to visit the Smithsonian Gardens May 28th at 10am. Save the date. Alex was our guest speaker at our November 2024 meeting.



Alex Dencker, horticulturist, Smithsonian Gardens

BCGC Picnic Set for June 10

Mark your calendars before your spring gets any busier. The success of last year's adventure in Garrett Park prompted the board to say, "Let's return!" so we will.

Please cross your fingers that the weather is as fine as it was for last year's picnic. We will have the opportunity to visit several different gardens in this picturesque little town and then gather to have another tasty picnic lunch (same caterer) at the Garrett Park town hall.

We'll start accepting reservations in May. It's members only for this annual get together.

Environmental Concerns

Pushing back on weed pressure

Barbara Collier

As we delight in the advance of spring, we can't help noticing that winter annual weeds, among others, are enthusiastically joining in the fun. As usual, we face weed pressure: the propensity of weeds, if given the slightest opportunity, to explode dramatically—or worse, stealthily in corners and under other plants. Around here, the weed pressure is exacerbated by our heat and humidity (think of those unlucky people who have it worse than we do!). And everywhere, it seems, invasive species are a problem that is only increasing.



Spring beauties after persistent removal of unwanted grass

Nonetheless, this spring I've been cheered by the little successes I observe in my war on weeds. I can't be as persistent as they are, but I notice that I have made a difference over time: by using plants as ground cover, heavy mulching, and of course weed removal by cutting, pulling, or digging. (No big surprises there.)

To outcompete unwelcome nonnatives, I prefer using green mulch; that is, allowing various prolific native plants to spread freely. On paths and edges, I encourage steppable plants like violets,



A violet-studded path

common fleabane (*Erigeron philadelphicus*), and Carolina cranesbill (*Geranium carolinianum*); all these are volunteers. In shade, I have planted useful spreaders like white wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*) and golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*); scattered seeds of roadside jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*); and welcomed volunteer white avens (*Geum canadensis*) and woodland sedge (*Carex blanda*), to name a few. Most of these are fairly easy to keep in check, depending on where they're growing.

Other aggressive natives can present more of a control challenge, like some of the goldenrods, sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), and Virginia jumpseed (*Persicaria virginiana*), which have tough and aggressive roots, or Canada anemone (*Anemone canadensis*), whose rhizomatous roots look delicate, but can spread vigorously, especially in sunnier areas. So if you use these as weapons, watch out for backfire! (At least letting an aggressive native get out of hand has a bright side for the wildlife.)

A more traditional way to avoid weeds is the use of heavy mulch, especially if you don't yet have enough competition in a given area. I find winter annuals like henbit and deadnettle much easier to remove when they are growing in a heavy wood chip mulch: you can slide your fingers under them and get the whole plant. I have more trouble with ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*); the mulch helps, but this, like mock strawberry (*Potentilla*

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indica), requires Eternal! Vigilance! if you want to prevent it from taking hold in a big way.

Of course, unwanted plants infiltrate even aggressive spreaders and thick mulch, and here the question of whether to cut, pull, or dig becomes an issue. In theory, removing all the aboveground parts slows things down without disturbing the soil, and lets the competition crowd out the offending plant. So the aggressive spreaders may finish the job for you. In practice, I find that the decision often depends on convenience (am I holding a tool, and which one?) rather than science. So when I pull, for instance, some of the hundreds of tree seedlings that pop up everywhere, I take a Panglossian attitude: if I get the root, excellent; but if it breaks off, also excellent, because the seedling is weakened without soil disturbance. (I do make an exception for lesser celandine and certain other horrors, which get dug up as soon as detected.)

For later in the year, I've started practicing with a weed whacker to discourage taller weeds by strimming them to the ground, and also to counter the exuberance of aggressive natives—either by cutting back edges, shortening the tall ones, or whacking off blooms before they go to seed.

Looking on the bright side, we can recall that the weedy pioneer or ruderal species, native or not—those first responders that move in after natural or human disturbance—are vital to heal the soil and allow other plants to succeed them. Even under weed pressure, we can be glad that Life Will Find a Way.



Jewelweed seedlings covering ground

Photos by Barbara Collier



Bethesda Community Garden Club

PLANT SALE

Thursday, May 15 9 AM – NOON

Montgomery Farm Women's Market

7155 Wisconsin Ave, Bethesda MD 20814

Plants that thrive in the metro area

CASH – CHECK – CREDIT CARD



Plants from gardens of members and friends.
Sales support our work in the gardens at
Davis and Connie Morella public libraries,
and local horticultural and conservation
organizations.

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