



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
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BEE INFORMED

The speaker for our March meeting.... Sam Droege, a wildlife biologist, grew up in Hyattsville, Maryland, went to the University of Maryland for a B.S., got an M.S. at SUNY-Syracuse, and worked at the US Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center starting in 1978. He now works at the Eastern Ecological Science Center in Laurel to support research, among other studies, on native bees and "stem some of the losses to wild things that come with population growth, wealth, and disconnection from Nature." Sam has also found time to write a book with co-author Laurence Packer called "Bees: an Up-Close look at Pollinators Around the World."

We've all been made aware of the plight of the bee population and its decrease. There are 450 bee species in Maryland and many can occur in our own gardens. Whether they do appear in our gardens, Sam says, depends on whether we've sprayed for pests such as mosquitoes and what plants we choose. Sam no doubt has many tips and suggestions for how we can do our part to attract those busy little creatures to our yards. Don't miss this opportunity to hear a widely and deeply informed speaker on a subject of importance to gardeners everywhere.

And FYI, lunch at the Wednesday, March 26 meeting is sandwiches, so bring a sandwich to share, carefully cut into 4 irresistible pieces that the Lunch Committee will artfully arrange on platters. See you on the 26th.

Environmental Concerns

Spring Cleaning

Barbara Collier

Here we are at last, in both meteorological and astronomical spring! Our native spring ephemerals are finally poking their leaves out (welcome, Virginia bluebells!) among the snowdrops, winter aconite, crocuses, and other spring bulbs. (Besides cheering us up while we wait, these nonnatives also provide pollinators with nectar and pollen resources that are scarce at this time of year.)

If you have been encouraging birds and insect allies (like pollinators) by leaving the leaves and letting the perennials stand all winter, you may be getting itchy to start actually garden-



Bluebells beginning



The Plant Sale is coming in May. Learn how you can contribute on page 3.

Photo by Dawn Landsman

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ing. There are lots of rules of thumb regarding when it's "safe" to start cleaning up while still protecting insects, but these are mostly vague and not well supported by research. My conclusion after much reading is, basically, leave everything alone as long as you can, and then clean up thoughtfully.

The main reason we humans do garden cleanup is aesthetic. However, once we realize that welcoming beneficial insects helps control pests, that leaf litter promotes beneficial insects and soil health, and that letting stalks and leaves of perennials stay up all winter protects plant crowns, we can see that a lot of tasks gardeners used to do routinely (like spraying and fertilizing) are poor imitations of what nature would do for us if we let it.

After all, as far as nature is concerned, you don't need to do any garden cleanup. If you want a healthy natural habitat, just remove invasive species as best you can, and add as much biodiversity as possible. But since some kind of intervention is always necessary—to be able to get in and out to observe, if nothing else—it is perfectly fine to try for an aesthetically pleasing result.

This is the case especially for parts of the garden on public display, such as the front yard. I am blessed with easy-going neighbors who are fine with my copious leaf litter and lack of lawn (as far as I know!), so I have many things I can leave alone. But I do have a lot of amsonia that's getting bedraggled, so I have started cutting the branching tops and leaving a sort of pincushion of 8 to 25 inch stalks, which will disappear as the new growth comes in over the next month or so. The cut stalks will, I hope, provide homes for stem-nesting bees. Joe Pye weed or any other pithy or hollow stemmed perennials are also candidates for this treatment.



An amsonia pincushion

In my yard, a few other clumps of stalks, like my *Astilbe biternata* (North America's only native astilbe!) still have some winter interest left, so they can stay. Elsewhere, I may break off isolated standing stalks, but collections of them don't bother me so much, so they just stay there until they do.

The things I cut down or break off I generally crumple up and let fall nearby. This year I applied this approach to a patch of epimedium; this nonnative is a useful plant for dry shade, and trimming the foliage is the traditional treatment to let the spring flowers reveal themselves. I usually don't bother, but this year I trimmed off and scattered the leaves in and around the patch; in theory, they can still provide a little protection there, if necessary. Similarly, I have some non-native *Clematis heracleifolia*, a shrubby nonvining species that gets very large if not pruned. When I did so this spring, I broke up the clippings and left them around the plants.

But won't all those leaves and trimmings lying around get in the way and inhibit your plants' growth? I suppose that could happen, but the beauty of letting the leaves fall where they want is that they don't all fall in one place. I find that if I need to move piled up leaves off some emerging plant, it's usually because I or another human put the leaves there in the first place (sorry, *Puschkinia*).

Photos by Barbara Collier



Puschkinia freed from leaves

So as you chop, try to drop so as to spread the organic wealth around. You can also stash excess under shrubs and out of the way places, add it to compost piles, and generally save it for later. It's always good to have organic matter gently rotting away in odd corners. Waste not, want not.

Mark Your Calendars for the BCGC Plant Sale: New Date

When: Thursday, May 15 (note new date)

Time: 9 a.m. to Noon.

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

The Plant Sale is our club's biggest event of the year, a chance to share our love of gardening with the public. We depend on your help to make it a success.

What is the Plant Sale?

Every May, the garden club holds a unique public plant sale that features an eclectic mix of beautiful and reliable plants. We know they thrive in the metro area, 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 donate thousands of dollars to support local public gardens, horticultural and conservation organizations, our Holiday Greens Workshop, and our gardening projects at the Connie Morella and Davis Libraries in Bethesda.

How can you help with the plant sale?

Donate your plants. What plants can you share from your garden? What plants can be divided or have spread more than you would like? April is the time to dig, divide and pot up these extra plants for donation to the plant sale.

Volunteer. We have varied opportunities for all members to help make the sale a success, both in preparation for the sale and on the sale day. Watch for more information and SignUp Genius links coming up soon..

Advertise. Share information about the sale with your neighborhood listserv, book club and other community groups. We will provide flyers and signs to distribute and short share-able blurbs on our listserv.

Would you like more help?

Many of our members have beautiful gardens and would like to donate plants to the sale, but find digging and potting physically challenging. We may be able to help. Contact Elaine Hope *as soon as possible* to discuss assistance.

Questions?

Contact Elaine Hope or Mary Horan

How to dig and pot 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 when you do regular spring maintenance. We will sell plants in pots with diameters of 6" or larger. 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.)

- 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 or soil knife to divide the plant into pieces.
- Place some leaves in the bottom of each pot.

Then cover the leaves with a little soil. Transplant each plant into a pot. Surround the plant 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 photos below. If you know the plant is native, add that to the label.

Which plants to donate?

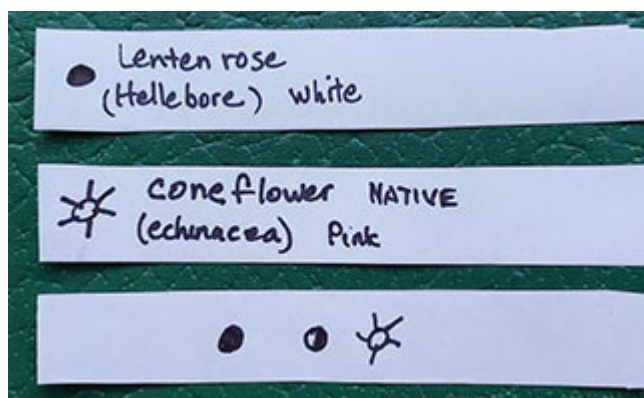
We aim to offer interesting plants that fill a variety of garden niches.

We *cannot* accept:

- Nonnative invasive plants like English ivy, common orange day lily, Asian pachysandra, purple loostripe, houttuynia 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

We cannot accept more than 5 each of green hostas, day lilies and liriope 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!

Bottom: use these symbols for light requirements: (left to right) shade, part sun/shade and sun.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW—

Payment Due Date April 1, 2025

It's time to send in your Garden Club membership dues (\$45) for the upcoming 2025-26 year. Your dues includes membership to the NCAGC (National Capital Area Garden Clubs, Inc.). We are required to submit our updated member list and dues to the NCAGC by May 1st.

Thank you to the 50 members that have already paid dues. We have 100 members who remain unpaid. Please note that according to our Bylaws, Section 5, "*A Member who has not paid dues by May 1 of each year shall be dropped from the roster, after due notification by the Treasurer.*"

To pay online

Visit our website

www.BethesdaCommunityGardenClub.org

Select the tab JOIN

Go to the bottom for CURRENT MEMBERS

Click on SQUARE SITE

Click on SHOP NOW

Click on JOIN RENEW

CONTINUE TO CART

CONTINUE TO PAYMENT –

Complete credit card info at check out

Click on SUBMIT

To pay by check

Payable to:

BCGC or

Bethesda Community Garden Club

Amount: \$45.

Mail to: Margy Tritschler, Treasurer
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