



# Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

[www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org](http://www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org)

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You can create a beautiful arrangement like this one crafted by Dee Lertora at last year's Greens Workshop. Come on December 10 and let your creativity spread holiday cheer.

*Photo by Dawn Landsman*

## LAST CALL FOR HELPING HANDS HOLIDAY GREENS WORKSHOP

DECEMBER 10, 2025

Plan to join us on December 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am as we gather for one of our favorite and most impactful 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. To be honest, it brightens the lives of our members as we work collaboratively to make these gift arrangements. This year we plan to make approximately 150 arrangements.

Here is how the workshop will operate:

- Plan to come by **9:30am** to start promptly at 10:00am. (Volunteers for set-up and oasis prep are asked to come at 8:30am.)
- Be sure to bring your own tools including clippers (labeled) and perhaps gloves, an apron and a trash bag to help with clean up.
- Most important, please bring "conditioned" greens 6-12 inches long or longer. Cut the greens from your shrubbery (or from a yard of a friend) on Sunday or Monday before the workshop. Place the greens in a laundry tub or bathtub in a mild solution of detergent (e.g. 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 workshop on Wednesday morning in bags.
- Examples of greens to be used are: spruce, pine, boxwood, juniper, cedar, holly, yew, nandina, dusty miller, cryptomeria, osmanthus, goshiki and *virburnum chindo*. You may bring acuba and Southern magnolia only if the leaves are small. 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 to use in small arrangements.
- There will be "roving advisors" to coach anyone with problems or questions regarding the mechanics of an arrangement. No one needs to be an experienced "floral arranger." We are all beginners.
- There will be a lot of cute "doo-dads" and bows to add a spark to your greenery thanks to Diane Beverly, Joyce Mucahy, and Lizzie Glidden Boyle.

We can always use more volunteers. Please contact Karen Eppinger (302-587-6635; cell: 24393-2656) if you can help.

Our greens arrangement will be delivered to many local charities. A complete list of those charities and their mission statements will be placed at each worktable.

If you know of a garden club member who might benefit from an arrangement due to illness or other circumstances, please notify one of the committee members before December 10. (Committee members are Dawn Landsman, Karen Eppinger, Joyce Mucahy, Diane Beverly, Lizzie Glidden-Boyle and Carole Gelfeld). Finally, consider asking a friend/neighbor to join us at the workshop. For many members, their first experience with the garden club was attending the Holiday Greens Workshop. The sense of community at this event is infectious.

SEE YOU ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10<sup>th</sup>!



**Members of the Connie Morella Planning Committee meet regularly in downtown Bethesda. We are looking for new volunteers to join our group. Please contact Elizabeth Bonardi, (chair) Gwen Stewart, Jeanne Weiss, Candy Kessel, Betsy James or Blanca Luisi for more more information.**

## Winter Weed Watch Returns!

When I think about what to write for a given month for Environmental Concerns, I try to check back and see what I have written in previous years. My clever idea for this month was inspired by the *Arum italicum* that I see popping up in the neighborhood—and my back yard. “I know!” thinks I to myself, “I’ll write about weeding out undesirable plants in the mild intervals of winter.”

Well, well. It turns out I’ve already done that, back in December 2020. So I decided to revise that article, with some commentary.

The first sentence was: “Now that we are well and truly in meteorological winter, it’s a good time to seek out and destroy nonnative invasive plants.” This is still true enough, but I’ve been thinking about following the lead of celebrated gardener Rebecca McMackin and adjusting my terminology. As she and others have pointed out, in this era of rampant and sometimes violent xenophobia, words like “alien,” “native,” and “invasive” have taken on dark connotations (not to mention “seek out and destroy”!). McMackin is trying out terms like “disruptive” and “introduced species” to describe the plants that we find problematic, and “plants from this land” to describe the ones that have the best ecological function where we happen to be.

Is this just a lot of fussing over words and political correctness? Maybe, but it can also make us pause and think. As we know, “U.S. native” can describe an awful lot of plants that are ill-suited to our particular neck of the woods, and both food crops and many inoffensive ornamentals come from all over the world. So taking care with general terms can’t hurt.

Continuing from 2020, with some changes in terms: A characteristic of many of our more challenging disruptive weeds is the way they persist through winter or come up very early in spring—characteristics that help them crowd out desirable local species.

All that time you saved not clearing up your fallen leaves and your spent perennials, so that the

birds could eat the seeds and the insects could winter over? Now you can apply some of that saved time to those patches of English ivy, honeysuckle, creeping euonymus, vinca minor, and other vines that may be occupying areas of your garden or growing up trees. These incursions can be hidden when shrubs and trees are in leaf, but in winter they are clearly exposed. The milder wintry days, while most things are dormant, are an excellent time to get the bad stuff under control.

A man I met at a Maryland Native Plant Society meeting once assured me that the very best time to attack vining honeysuckle was in January, because it comes up most easily then. I can believe it, because while clearing the above mentioned vines in certain neglected areas of my own yard, it was satisfying to find how fast the work went along. Also satisfying? Observing our deer visitors munching on the enormous pile of pulled vines I had created.

Back in 2020, I observed the early emergence (late October!) of the dreaded lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*). I have not seen it yet this year, but when everything else is dormant, it is easier to see it coming up. Look out for its fresh green leaves, which help to distinguish it from, say, old violet leaves (see picture).

This brings us to my original idea: the need to get after *Arum italicum*, a handsome garden plant that is unfortunately ubiquitous around here. Easily seen at this time of year, it requires serious digging to get at the deep bulbous roots, and persistence to get at the small bulbs that are inevitably missed the first time. And just like ivy and porcelain berry, if it's gone to seed in your neighborhood, you will keep having to remove bird-planted seedlings.

So if you go out scuffle hoeing paths and other places where the winter annual weeds are springing up (hairy bittercress, chickweed, ground ivy, false strawberries, etc., etc.), take some time to look under shrubs and other hidden places for the lesser celandine, rosettes of garlic mustard, *Arum italicum*, and others, and check the bare tree

trunks for ivy. Getting them out now frees up space where you might prefer ferns, spring ephemerals, or other native ground covers, whether robust (like *Packera aurea*, golden ragwort) or more sedate (like *Antennaria plantaginifolia* or other pussytoes). It's a great time for setting the stage for spring planting.

Barbara Collier



**Bright green lesser celandine sprouts (top) with battered violet leaves nearby. Lesser celandine leaves are more rounded, hairless, and glossy than violet leaves and have wavy edges; violet leaves are more scalloped or sawtoothed.**

*Photo by Barbara Collier*