



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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**A snowy scene captured
by Barbara Collier. See
her article on page 2.**

Photo by Barbara Collier

About the Program for our February Meeting.... An Art of Refinement

There are 3 Japanese arts of refinement, as they are known: flower arranging, incense appreciation, and tea ceremony. These arts were first practiced by the aristocracy who had time on their hands to engage in such pursuits. Ikebana or flower arranging came to embody air, earth and humans thru the manner in which the various branches, leaves, and flowers are arranged. The modern practice of Ikebana is thought to have derived from a combination of belief systems including Buddhism and Shintoism. Many schools of Ikebana came into existence at the end of the 15th century. (Thank you Wikipedia!)

Our February speaker and fellow club member, Iryna Korol Latorre, has a Ph.D in Naval Architecture, which she taught before settling in New Orleans in 2000. She started her journey in Ikebana in that city, and in 2007 she moved to Maryland. Here she studied Ikebana with Valerie Eccleston and went on to earn her Instructor Certificate from the 3rd Headmaster of the Ichiyo School of Ikebana, founded in 1937. She has continued her pursuit of artistic development and exploration of Japanese culture and traditional art, frequently journeying to Japan to study under the 4th headmaster of the Ichiyo School.

Iryna still teaches, demonstrates and exhibits Ikebana. Her arrangements have been displayed in the New Orleans Museum of Art, The House of Culture of Japan in Paris, and the Japan Information & Culture Center in Washington, D.C. Most recently she attended the Ikebana International 13th World Convention in Kyoto where she exhibited her work. Her work has also appeared in books published in Belgium and Australia.

...and an additional word about Wednesday's meeting: please bring a sandwich to share, cut into 4 elegant pieces. No chopsticks required! Please put your sandwich in the kitchen when you get to the meeting. We will also have soup!! And, of course, dessert!

February 25, 10:30AM - monthly meeting at St. Mark Presbyterian Church, 10701 Old Georgetown Road. Since we could not meet in person last month due to weather, I am sending a reminder of our request for any Christmas "doo-dads" you may have collected to donate for our next Holiday Greens Workshop. Any excess decorative items you did not use last year, or wish to recycle, will be much appreciated by the Holiday Greens Committee. If you have any questions, please contact Carole Gelfeld: cgelfeld@comcast.net

Plant Sale News

Please mark your calendar for our annual Plant Sale

When: Thursday, May 14, 2026 from 9 to noon.

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

Our Plant Sale is our club's largest annual event and draws gardeners from throughout the area. Please help us make it a success this year. Plant Sale Day is a wonderful time of community, fun & a bit of hard work.

Kindly watch for upcoming information about the sale and how you might personally help. Participation opportunities will be in upcoming newsletters, at our meetings, and through email blasts. *Your help is vital on the sale day and in the week before the sale.*

As perennials pop up again in your garden this spring, keep a look out for those that could be divided, potted and donated for the sale. Your plant donations are essential. The best time to dig and pot plants for the sale is usually early April.

If you would like help digging or choosing plants for donation or have any other questions, please ask any Plant Sale 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

Environmental Concerns

Snowmelt

Barbara Collier

February continues the window-gazing theme of January. But this month I was far from alone in being confined to sitting inside looking out. The snow and ice, along with the uncharacteristically long and deep cold, kept a lot of us off the streets. In my neighborhood, we are lucky that the town is good at plowing the streets, but still, it was a long time before walking outside was inviting or even possible. Staying in and watching the slow changes in the snowscape seemed the wisest course.

The ice was so thick on top of the snow and the weather so cold that I was deprived of the usual amusement of observing the proliferation of footprints left by our animal neighbors. The snow stayed untouched for days. It turned out it was even capable of holding my weight—but it was tricky to test as the ice on top was so slick and smooth.

On the other hand, the view from our back windows was remarkably reminiscent of a Breughel painting. All those shades of brown show up nicely in the snow!

When we did finally get out, we experienced the famous "snowcrete"—the slabs of ice that had to be broken up to get to the fluffy soft snow underneath. This became a real issue because on the coldest Saturday of the subzero stretch, our old furnace gave up the ghost. We had to hack a path through the snow to provide access for the new one (we spent only two days bundled up next to space heaters, fortunately).

A propos, I heard about a new (to me) concept: the subnivean or subniveal zone. That's the area under the snow and above the ground that forms when there is a persistent snowpack. I had been aware that snow is an insulator, so I was reassured to think of all the plants being insulated from some of the extreme low temperatures we experienced. However, I hadn't thought much about all the other life happening under the snow. Apparently a snowpack of 15 cm (about

**Breughel?***Photo by Barbara Collier*

6 in.) keeps the ground just above freezing, where all sorts of things can carry on with their lives. Besides plants, there are bacteria and fungi busy decomposing leaf litter, as well as insects and small mammals foraging. (I gather that northern gardeners especially can be plagued with voles wreaking havoc from their tunnels under the snow.)

Our snowpack probably didn't last long enough for an extensive subnivean ecosystem to form (I read that "deeper snowpacks lead to larger, more diverse and more active populations"), and even if it did, I couldn't tell. However, the microbes might have got busy, and perhaps the chipmunks and mice had a chance to poke about?

As the snow melts, it is interesting to observe the patterns of exposure versus cover, and get some insight into the associated microclimates. When the snow was deep, I could imagine that tiny things were using the shelter provided by clumps of grass and perennial stalks, as well as by stick

piles and our dead hedges. As the snow retreats, ground is uncovered first not just around the woody trunks of trees and shrubs, but also around metal posts (presumably the sun warms them up). The snow persists in open areas and retreats in the wooded areas, maybe because the depth of snow was different to begin with, but maybe also because the shelter of the living cover is just warmer. Where stones are heaped above ground level, they are uncovered before the surrounding ground, but the flat flagstones at ground level are still snow covered; watching these changes highlights some of the ways that stones affect microclimate.

Now if only I can take advantage of these observations. Well, even if I don't, the plants probably will.