



Bethesda Community

GARDEN CLUB

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

www.bethesdacommunitygardenclub.org

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Member of
The National Capital Area
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Barbara Collier explains how to create new plants like this *Cornus sericea* in her article on page 4.

Photo by Barbara Collier

About our November 19th meeting....

NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA GARDEN CLUBS

There are 130,000 garden clubs nation-wide that are members of the National Garden Clubs. Our club, in the Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, (which includes New York down to Washington D.C. and also Northern Virginia) is a member of National Garden Clubs by virtue of its inclusion in the National Capital Area Garden Clubs.

The National Capital Area Garden Clubs started out as the National Capital Garden Club *League*, and in 1951 became the National Capital Area Garden Clubs. Because two intrepid gardeners, members of NCAGC, worked hard to establish Fern Valley at the National Arboretum—a garden of essentially native plants—a Maryland senator and the head of the Arboretum allowed the NCAGC to establish its headquarters at the Arboretum (fun fact).

NCAGC is made up of 58 clubs (a total of approximately 2000 members) and is divided into four Districts. Bethesda Community Garden Club is in District IV, which encompasses Montgomery County except for a small eastern area of it which is in District I. District IV includes 18 clubs including BCGC.

Whew.

Today's speaker is Danielle Brabazon, President of NCAGC. She has been active in two NCAGCs and has been president of both. She has also completed all four of the National Garden Club's "Schools," which offer intensive instruction in Gardening, Environment, Landscape Design, and Flower Show. FYI, NGC/NCAGC is offering a course in basic gardening November 17 and 18 this year in Fairfax VA. You can find out details and get an idea of the instruction that will be offered. Go to National Garden Clubs of America and click on "Our Schools." Scroll down to Gardening School, then click on Learn More, then on Find a course. You should see a screen displaying Upcoming Courses. Click on Course 1 and then on the 2nd Course for a syllabus of the instruction. Pretty serious stuff! These folks mean business.

Danielle, though, promises a Skit and a Slide show to help us understand how these gardening organizations work to benefit all us gardeners and clue us into the mystery of what they actually do.

And if that's not incentive enough to attend, there'll be a hot lunch offered at today's meeting so if you signed up to bring a delicious dish, please remember you're on the roster! See you on November 19th!

....About our November lunch!

November is a hot lunch including salads and desserts. Yum! And thank you to all who are donating their cooking talents!

HOLIDAY GREENS WORKSHOP

“HELP SPREAD JOY” • DECEMBER 10, 2025

On December 10th at 9:30am we will 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. And, 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 between 130 to 150 arrangements.

Here is how the workshop will operate:

1. Plan to arrive by 9:30am to start promptly at 10:00am.
2. Be sure to bring your own tools including clippers (labeled) and perhaps gloves, an apron, a broom, and plastic bags to help with clean up.
3. Bring your own sandwich. Drinks and desserts will be provided.
4. Most important, please bring “conditioned” greens 6-12 inches long or longer. Cut/prune them from your shrubbery (or from a friend’s yard) on Sunday or Monday before the meeting. Lay the greens in a laundry tub or bathtub in a mild solution of detergent (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 meeting the next morning in bags.

Examples of greens to be used are: spruce, pine, boxwood, juniper, cedar, holly, yew, nandina, dusty miller, cryptomeria, osmanthus, Goshiki, *Viburnum chindo*, aucuba, and Southern magnolia (only if 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 for use in small arrangements.

5. There will be “roving advisors” at the workshop who can help you with any questions/problems you may have regarding the mechanics of an arrangement and will show you how to cover ALL your oasis. No one needs to be an experienced “floral arranger.”

6. There will be lots of cute “doodads” and bows to add a spark to your greenery. Many thanks to Diane Beverly for her talent and generosity in making and donating 200 bows for the arrangements. Also, huge thanks to Carolyn Randall for printing and laminating “BCGC” labels with care instructions that are attached to each arrangement.

7. We can always use more volunteers to make the workshop go smoothly. Please email Karen Eppinger at kneppinger@msn.com if you can help.

8. Our greens arrangements will be delivered to many local charities including (but not limited to) the following groups: Wider Circle, Interfaith Works, Central Union Mission, Montgomery Coalition for the Homeless, National Center for Children and Families, Shepherd’s Table, and Whitman Walker Health Center. A sheet with the full list of the charities to which arrangements will be delivered along with the charity’s mission statements will be placed at each work table.

9. If you know of a garden club member who might benefit from an arrangement due to illness or other circumstances, please notify one of our committee members before December 10. (Committee members are Lizzie Glidden-Boyle, Dawn Landsman, Karen Eppinger, Joyce Mulcahy, Diane Beverly, and Carole Gelfeld)

10. Finally, consider inviting a friend/neighbor to come to the workshop. For many members, their first experience with the garden club was being asked to help with the greens workshop. The sense of community at this event is infectious!

SEE YOU ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10th!

Staying Sharp!

My English grandfather was a skilled carpenter and gardener. During World War II, he helped build and furnish some of the huts at Bletchley Park — the top-secret code-breaking center — and grew enough produce on his own plot to help feed local families well beyond the end of the war. His hand tools were his pride and joy. I have fond memories of sitting with him on Sundays as he sharpened his saws, planes, blades, and knives in preparation for the week ahead — a ritual he continued well into his nineties.

Every autumn, he gave his gardening tools a thorough cleaning, sharpening, and polishing. The final step was always the same: plunging the blades into a bucket of oil-soaked sand before hanging them up for winter storage.

When the clocks change, I'm reminded to care for my own gardening tools — a small way to honor my grandpa's memory. As a volunteer supervisor with the **Weed Warrior** program in Montgomery County parks, I'm responsible for maintaining a collection of loppers and clippers used by volunteers who help remove non-native invasive vines from our parkland. Each fall, I take all these tools to **Benchmark Sharpening** to get them back in top shape. Thanks to their expert work, our volunteers' clippers will slice through thick porcelain berry vines like butter!

Benchmark Sharpening is owned and operated by **Todd Decato**, a longtime supporter of Weed Warriors. I first met Todd at the Kensington Farmers Market on a chilly Saturday morning a few years ago. Since then, he's expanded from attending biweekly markets to opening a brick-and-mortar store in Kensington. Not only does Todd offer a special discount to Weed Warrior volunteers, but he's also extended that offer to all **BCGC** members!

If you didn't get your coupon for just **\$5 lopper or clipper sharpening (in-store)** at the September meeting, I'll have more available at the sign-in desk at the next two BCGC meetings.

I wish I had the patience and skill to care for all my tools the way my grandfather did — but thankfully, I have Todd at Benchmark Sharpening! www.benchmarksharpening.com

—Katherine Wood

Silent Auction Success

We hadn't had a silent auction for five years, so timing was right. Members brought several hundred unwanted garden-related items to the October meeting. And a goodly number were bid on. So, many of us got rid of stuff we didn't want or could no longer use. Hooray! And enthusiastic bidders got a new item or two for their gardens.

Plus, we added \$525 to the club treasury — always welcome. And the castoffs that were not bid on were donated to several charities including Humane Together (the Montgomery County animal rescue group formerly Wagging Tails), the Opportunity Shop, and the Salvation Army. So ideally, thrift shoppers around the DMV are also benefitting from BCGC's bounty. Hooray! Hooray!



Gwen Stewart and Joyce Casso modeled their creative Halloween costumes at the silent auction.

Photo by Betsy James

Environmental Concerns

Making New Plants

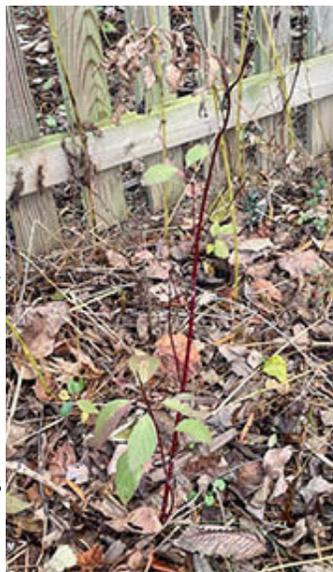
Barbara Collier

In other words: propagation! Whole libraries of books have been written about this topic, but let's just glance here at some of the easier methods that spring to mind at this time of year.

First, there are plants that you can still divide in November. As we know from digs for the plant sale, some perennials are quite happy being divided and replanted or potted up in November. Some can be divided but prefer to be replanted, not doing well over winter in pots. (You can ask the plant sale committee about their experience if you have specific questions.)

Cuttings are an age-old technique for plant propagation. Many of us have started such things as coleus and begonia fairly easily by rooting cuttings in water. If you haven't, the Missouri Botanical Garden website has a guide with helpful pictures. If you have indoor plants or tender perennials, it's not too late to give it a try. For most other things, it may be a bit late to root cuttings.

A possible exception is red-twig dogwood (*Cornus sericea*). I have stuck cuttings from mine into pots of soil for outdoor winter decor, and found that many formed leaves in spring—apparently mostly from stored energy. However, one cutting formed sufficient roots that it is still growing two years later—in a suitable spot protected from deer (picture shows the last leaves clinging on). So it can't hurt to try!



Cornus sericea from cutting

Photo by Barbara Collier

The big opportunity is seed starting by winter sowing. In this technique you sow seeds in little

homemade “greenhouses” and leave them outside to sprout in their own time. The greenhouses are made from recycled plastic containers with clear tops (such as milk jugs or salad boxes), with both tops and bottoms perforated to allow air and water in and out. This allows you to sow seeds needing cold stratification (as many natives do) without having to refrigerate them. All you need to do now is to acquire seeds and start collecting containers; you can wait to start sowing until late December or January.

I reported on my winter sowing experiences back in the November 2017 newsletter and revisited the topic in February 2019 (you can consult these articles on the club website). If you're interested in the technique, those articles provide details. However, the site I recommended visiting (wintersown.org, started by Trudi Greissle Davidoff, who developed and popularized the method) is no longer online; instead, Davidoff and others run a Facebook group (“Winter Sowers - The Original”). Even if you're not a Facebook user, the technique is now sufficiently well known that you can find lots of videos and websites discussing it. Bear in mind that other types of winter seed sowing are possible, so you may find descriptions of other techniques as well. And nowadays, we need to be aware that AI slop (artificially generated websites, both text and video) are proliferating, so a healthy skepticism and careful source-checking are more advisable than ever.

Here's where I encourage you to go ahead and make more plants than you think you'll need. Why? Because we can probably use your excess at the plant sale! If you end up with an excess of successful cuttings, for instance, bear in mind that you can contact the plant sale committee to recruit babysitters to take them off your hands until the plant sale. Are your new plants still rather small at sale time? If they are healthy looking, we may be able to offer them in multiples to fit our standard price.

So go for it! Whether for your own garden, or others' gardens, you can't have too many plants.