



TAKOMA HORTICULTURAL CLUB NEWS

December, 2010 Edition

www.takomahort.org



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

THC LEADERSHIP FOR 2011

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THC'S 2011 PROGRAM

An exciting 2011 program for the Takoma Hort Club is taking shape. In February we'll hear from Bill McLaughlin, Plant Curator at the U.S. Botanic Garden, about the National Garden, its design and plantings, and issues that arose as it took shape. A joint trip with the Beltsville Garden Club to Mt. Cuba is planned, and THC is taking the lead with Behnke's and area garden clubs in planning (see *2011 Program*, p. 3)

November Club Meeting

Bee-friend Those Bees!

by Becky Lavash

At THC's November 17 meeting, Paula Jean Hallberg of the Maryland Master Gardeners program spoke to a nearly full house on how to landscape to attract pollinators into your garden. Paula talked about the importance of native pollinators- insects, birds and even mammals- and the actions that home gardeners could take to help protect them for future years.

Some of the actions for home gardeners were quite simple:

- Don't completely clean up your yard in the fall. Pollinators such as mason and leafcutter bees lay eggs in plant stalks; if you clean them up and dispose of them you are destroying their eggs. Others hide in brush or small piles of litter.
- Don't use pesticides. Instead, practice Integrated Pest Management, and, if you must use insecticides, use the most benign products (e.g. insecticidal soaps) and target the spray at particular types of insects. Don't use broad spectrum insecticides.
- Do get rid of non-native invasives that take away habitat for native plant foods.
- Do provide blooming plants all through the growing season to ensure a constant pollinator food supply. Look for blooms in a variety of shapes – flat or deep trumpets (for hummingbirds)- and colors (bees like blue and yellow). Swathes of one color are easier for insects to see.
- Do convert at least some part of your yard away from lawn and provide pollinator plants – even a little bit helps, like plants in pots – insects are small!

Because of overuse of pesticides and invasive non-natives that choke out native plant species, more than 30 pollinator species and more than 700 plant species are in danger of extinction. Garden pollinators are not just honeybees, or (See *Pollinators*, page 2)
(Pollinators, continued)

even just bees. Caterpillars, butterflies, moths, ants and hummingbirds can also pollinate backyard gardens and it's good to encourage them all. Even slugs—they pollinate wild ginger! Honeybees are the pollinators we most hear about though, especially because of Colony Collapse Disorder, which has seriously reduced their numbers. Jean pointed out that honeybees are non-native, imported to the US from Africa, by way of Europe. They crowded out the US native pollinators when they arrived and now account for the bulk of agricultural crop pollination in the US. In the rest of the world, they account for only 15 % of crop pollination. In China, due to overuse of insecticides, all crop pollination must be performed by humans because they have killed almost all of their pollinators!



There are 400 species of bees native to the mid-Atlantic. The familiar bumblebee is the second most effective pollinator after honeybees.

These bees electrostatically attract pollen to their bodies, which is brushed into pollen bags on their legs, and take it back to the colony to feed their young. The bees eat flower nectar on the spot to maintain energy. They are social, and nest in the ground, as do native digger bees. Jean concluded by asking that we keep pollinators in mind when we garden, ensuring we have all flowers all season long, avoid the use of pesticides, providing native plant materials for nesting and egg laying, and leaving some plant stalks and litter in the garden all winter long so that the eggs have a chance to hatch in the spring. Now we have an excuse to leave some of that cleanup work for later!

Note: Jean provided additional information in a collection of documents, including a list of suitable plants for a pollinator-friendly garden at:

<http://mastergardener.umd.edu/local/Montgomery/Files/2010%20fall%20miniconference/Pollinator%20info.zip>

Photo: Bumblebee emerging from ground nest. Wikimedia public domain.

New Watershed Academy Opening Early Next Year

Coming next March, the Maryland suburbs and the District will host their first local Watershed Stewards Academy (WSA). Patterned roughly on the Master Gardeners' training, and more precisely on the ground-breaking Anne Arundel Watershed Stewards Academy, <http://www.arlingtonecho.org/education/watershed-stewards-academy.html>, this will be a roughly three-month program, meeting weekly and some weekends, intended to teach activists in some detail about the problems of stormwater runoff and how to assess and remediate the problems. The National Capital Region WSA is effort by a coalition of local watershed nonprofits in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties and the District of Columbia. It is funded by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant and by private foundations—including the Campbell Foundation— and other organizations, and has local government support. The WSA is partnering as well with the University of the District of Columbia to host the program.

This academy forms a critical piece of the puzzle of addressing the huge problems of erosion and pollution in our densely populated region, which abounds with impervious surfaces (roads, roofs, parking lots, etc.) With no change of behavior, we face accelerated destruction of creeks and rivers through flooding, drought and erosion, resulting in pollution and dead zones in the Chesapeake Bay and increasing the difficulty of keeping our gardens and yards healthy. The WSA will give us the tools to share with our neighbors both the understanding and the methodologies to modify our drainage, lawn plantings and maintenance practices so as to help hold and use our rainwater. While there are federal, state and local laws, regulations and programs in place to promote and assist these changes, the task is enormous and requires neighbor-by-neighbor change of behavior. Yard by yard, we can address, comprehensively and more cheaply, the problem of too much impervious surface and too little absorption of rainwater.

Past THC presidents (*see Watershed, p.3*)



A New Community Garden?

Try to picture this homely stretch as a field of waving chard, climbing cukes and flourishing vegetables and flowers, in plots tended by twenty gardeners. In November the Montgomery County Department Parks removed an empty building from this site and erected a 7-foot deer-stopper fence around the property at the corner of Fenton Street and Burlington Avenue. David Vismara, who with Ursula Sabia Sukinik manages the county's Community Garden effort, said that following soil testing for possible contaminants, the county hoped to make a decision whether to open a garden there in January. In the past year, the county has opened six new community gardens, and hopes to have six more for the coming growing season. Speaking at a meeting of the East Silver Spring Civic Association, Vismara said that the garden would be a temporary, perhaps multi-year, use for the space, which was purchased by the county for use as a park. "Lots of rules" and regular oversight characterize the county's gardens, he said. The first 70% of the plots would be drawn from applicants living within a ½ mile radius of the garden, the remainder from a waiting list of county residents. Plot-holders are responsible for keeping their plots cared for (and organic); the county will supply a large water cistern and will maintain the common areas. Vismara said that he and Sabia Sukinik visit the gardens regularly, jumping on any problems that arise. He said that though a playground or the hoped-for "Gateway Park" might draw more people to the spot, gardeners are actually an attraction too; people stop to watch them work. For information, see http://www.montgomeryparks.org/permits/find/community_gardens_program.shtm

(2011 Program, continued)

an event there on June 4 to benefit Brookside Gardens, with speakers, a plant sale, plant exchange, raffle and more. A tour of local rain-conservation plantings comes in July. Stay tuned to www.takomahort.org and the listserv to learn more. Next up: the members-only January 19th Pot Luck/Plant Exchange, so get those 2011 dues in.

Season of Renewal

by Carole Galati

It's that time of year again... all is going slightly crazy, and then there are those nagging "Pay Your Dues!" reminders. Here are the membership facts: only 23 have paid their 2011 dues, but we have 38 Life Time members, which means 61 people are paid up for 2011. That leaves 106 current members who have not paid their 2011 dues. These are due January 1, 2011.

If you are (or think you are) one of those 106 people, you can send your \$12 check, made out to THC, to Carole Galati, 106 Melbourne Ave., Silver Spring, MD; 20901. If you are not sure if you paid, send me an email (cagalati@rcn.com) and I will let you know.

Have a wonderful holiday season! There is no meeting this month, but please look forward to our famous Winter Pot Luck & House Plant, etc., Exchange on January 19. Also, be sure to check out our ever-improving (thanks to Sherrell Goggin) website: www.takomahort.org And... welcome to our newest member for 2011: Betsy Slack!

(Watershed, continued)

Wendy Bell and Kit Gage are among the organizers of the WSA and will be part of its staff. You can talk with either of us if you want more information about the program. Friends of Sligo Creek is one of the coalition watershed group members that has founded the WSA. The WSA will take applications beginning in December. Go to <http://www.anacostiaaws.org/watershed-stewards-academy> for more information and for an application which should be available within a week.

Holiday Gifts From The Garden

by Madeline Caliendo

December marks the start of the month of giving—we give gifts to family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, service providers, and others. Of course we can go to our favorite retailers to buy gifts. That's certainly an easy thing to do, right? Wouldn't it be so much nicer, though, to make at least some of the gifts we give? Homemade gifts are much more personal, much more thoughtful, and I think even more greatly appreciated. I think homemade gifts show we cared enough to go to the extra mile.

As gardeners it's only natural that we'd look to our gardens for inspiration and ingredients for our homemade creations.

Here are some thoughts on homemade gifts we can make from elements found in our December gardens.

1. A Handmade-by-You Creation from GREENERY

When I go to holiday open houses, dinner parties, tree trimming parties and the like, I often bring the host a beautiful bouquet of festive greens from the garden arranged in a simple vase. I decorate the bouquet with pinecones, berries, miniature ornaments and the like and add a bow or two for an extra pop of color. The recipients universally love receiving my homemade bouquets and I enjoy making them. It's simple to do and is so much nicer and more personal than a bottle of wine or other store bought gift. The world-wide web and the craft section of bookstores and libraries are full of ideas and easy-to-follow instructions—so explore!

For holiday greens projects, cone-bearing or needle evergreens are what people use most often. If you don't have a variety of greens in your own garden, borrow (with permission) from friends and neighbors or purchase some from your local nursery, home repair store, or the corner Christmas tree lot. Greens you can use include:

Douglas Fir	Scots Pine	Red Cedar	Rhododendrons
Balsam Fir	Red Pine	Boxwood	English Ivy
White Pine	False Cypress	Holly	Juniper
		Barberry	

It is best to avoid hemlock and spruce for indoor gifts (like a bouquet) as they tend to drop their needles quickly. Whatever greens you have available for your bouquet will work. I know it will be beautiful!

Are you feeling more ambitious than that? Try your hand at one of the following projects:

A Victorian Kissing Ball: <http://www.herbcompanion.com/projects/victorian-kissing-ball.aspx>

A Door Swag: <http://www.gertens.com/learn/howtos/makeyourowndoorswag>

A Wreath: <http://www.videojug.com/film/how-to-make-a-christmas-wreath>

2. An Edible Homemade Treat or Two from the Bounty in Your Winter Garden

In my Washington, DC garden this December, rosemary and parsley are still going strong. So too are arugula and broccoli rabe. If you have these—or anything else—be creative in coming up with a delicious gift idea. Here are some thoughts to help get your creative juices flowing:

Parsley Pesto:

http://find.myrecipes.com/recipes/recipefinder.dyn?action=displayRecipe&recipe_id=10000001898568

You can pair the pesto with savory bread, your favorite gourmet pasta, or with one of these:

Savory Rosemary Biscuits: <http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/rosemary-biscuits/Detail.aspx>

Savory Rosemary Bread: <http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/jos-rosemary-bread/Detail.aspx>

You may also want to include a generous portion of the arugula and broccoli rabe greens with some homemade or store bought dressing for an especially nice offering.

3. A Homemade Beauty Product Made From Elements from Your Garden

Natural beauty products are so simple to make, and so wonderfully indulgent. Just remember to include a note about the product and how to store and use it. Based on what I have in my garden, I think these would make nice gifts:

An Oatmeal and Rosemary Facial Scrub

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTRMYfGekXM>

Rosemary and Black Peppercorn Massage Oil

http://www.ehow.com/how_5794072_make-black-peppercorn-massage-oil.html

Rosemary Soap

http://www.ehow.com/how_4898298_make-rosemary-soap.html

I hope these ideas inspire you to experiment with making homemade gifts from elements found in your garden. The possibilities are limited only by our imaginations. Be creative! ENJOY and HAPPY HOLIDAYS to you and yours!

Holiday Garden-related Events in the Community

Montgomery County Agricultural History

Farm Park

Christmas on the Farm

18400 Muncaster Rd., Derwood, MD
December 11 & 12, Noon – 5:00pm
Come get into the holiday spirit at the Agricultural History Farm Park. It's a perfect place to enjoy the peace and quiet beauty of the season on an early 20th century farmstead. Turn-of-the-century holiday decorations, free live Christmas music and caroling, homemade baked goods for sale, free hayrides, weather permitting. Free hot cider and ginger cookies. Admission and Parking: FREE

Hillwood Museum and Gardens

<http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/calendar.html>

A Serene Sunday, Christmas sales

December 27, 1-5 pm
After hustling and bustling this holiday season, take this Sunday to relax with family and friends, stroll through the gardens and enjoy the estate's holiday decorations.

Brookside Gardens

1800 Glenallan Avenue, Wheaton, MD

Garden of Lights and Train Exhibit

Through January 2, 5:30- 9:00 pm
Visualize 940,000 twinkling colorful lights shaped in imaginative displays throughout the gardens...hundreds of wrapped trees and shrubs, beautifully lighted gazebos, cascading fountains, and the individually formed displays in the shapes of blooming flowers and wild animals. Admission \$20/car weekdays, \$25/car weekends. Info 301-962-1453
Inside the Conservatory, a winter display of holiday poinsettias, flowering plants and

evergreens are combined in bright and bold combinations, providing a colorful landscape through which the garden railway trains travel. The Conservatory & Train Exhibit is open at night now, daytime starting Dec. 5 to Jan. 9.

Friends of Brookside Gardens

Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale

December 4, 5, 11 and 12, 4:00-8:30pm
Visitors Center.
18" Boxwood wreaths made exclusively by Friends members; 24" Balsam Fir wreaths shipped in fresh from Maine. Boxwood centerpieces will also be sold. Questions, please call 301-962-1435.

Make a Holiday Centerpiece

Course number 80651
December 15, 9:30-11:30am
Course number 80652
December 16, 9:30-11:30am
Visitors Center Adult Workshop
Joan O'Rourke, FOBG, will help you make a long-lasting, festive centerpiece using fresh greens surrounding a candle and adorned with seasonal decorations
Fee of \$32 includes all materials for two centerpieces. Registration required
www.ParkPASS.org

The **Takoma Horticultural Club News** is issued each month on the listserv. Previous issues can be found at www.takomahort.org
Comments and contributions of articles and photos are most welcome. Contact the editor at dbsvenonius@msn.com