



TAKOMA HORTICULTURAL CLUB NEWS

October 2010 Edition

www.takomahort.org



THC ANNUAL BULB SALE
Sunday, October 3
10 am- 5 pm
Takoma Park Street Festival
on Carroll Avenue
All Kinds of Beautiful Bulbs
Great for Gifts
Members Receive 10% Discount

September Club Event **What's Up with Trees?** **Todd Bolton Tells All**

What good are trees? How much tree cover is good for a city (and where could you possibly tuck in another tree in TP?) When is a tree that you plant not yours but the city's? How can you give your own trees long and happy lives?

Todd Bolton, the Takoma Park City Arborist, discussed these topics and more in a wide-ranging talk on September 15 at the Takoma Park Community Center.

The benefits of trees are well known: curbing pollution and runoff, slowing global warming, reducing home heating and cooling costs, lookin' good and so on. You might not have considered the economic value of trees to homeowners, which has been calculated at \$8000 if you have one and \$3000 if your next-door neighbor has one. Stores with trees in front do better in sales. *(See Trees, page 2)*

October Club Event **Annual "Members Only"** **Fall Plant Exchange**

Another great exchange is planned
Sunday, Oct. 17 at 2 pm, Heffner Park

— by Carole Galati

Share your garden winners and pick up something new and interesting to plant at the Fall Exchange! Please bring your labeled plants by 1:30 pm so we can sort them and be ready to begin the Exchange at 2. Make a list of your plants so you can tell the group what you have brought.

If you pot your plants now and water them they will look good and be recognizable for the exchange. Last minute potting up = pathetic looking plants. No plants to exchange? Bring finger food, beverages, garden-related items, garden or cook books, tools, seeds, etc. Also, bring a folding chair. We always run out of them.

Remember, you must be a club member to participate in this exchange. Check www.takomahort.org for details about how to join and renew. Please bring a check made out to THC for \$12! We will not have cash at the Exchange. More details will be posted soon on the listserv and our website. It's great fun!

Questions? Call Carole Galati @ 301-588-2743.
Heffner Park is at 31 Oswego, Takoma Park

(Trees, continued)

An Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) study using satellite imagery has been completed for the District of Columbia with its 40,000 trees, and the City of Takoma Park has engaged the same surveyor to break out the city's tree cover as well. Due shortly, the city study identifies, lot-by-lot, areas with some percentage of UTC (that is, leafy surface when seen from above); possible areas for



UTC (grass, shrub); and impervious surfaces unsuitable for UTC (buildings, railways and roadways). The city's goal is to have 40% leafy cover, after which the value per dollar spent drops

off. Todd showed a draft version of DC's tree cover map, and pointed out that lot size is a good predictor of tree cover. People with space tend to have trees (some celebrity clear-cutters notwithstanding).

The city's trees, any trees that grow in a public right-of-way no matter who planted them, are the City Arborist's responsibility. Trees and woody plants placed in the strip between sidewalk and street require a permit, and can be removed (without reimbursement) if deemed necessary. A map of Takoma Park street trees done 10 years ago is out-of-date, and is slowly being brought current. Unfortunately, trees must be removed by the city regularly due to disease or damage. For example, perhaps as a result of heavy equipment used in the construction of a playground, the arborist reluctantly removed some oaks that were 20" in diameter from De Forest Park.

How to keep those leafy guys going strong? Trees need an inch of rain every ten days and it takes more than half an inch for rain to get past the canopy and reach the roots. So if it's been two weeks without rain, it's
(See Trees, p. 3)

THC Launches a New Website Feature

The Takoma Horticultural Club will start a new feature on its website beginning January 1st, 2011, and it's all about **you!** Each quarter we'd like to shine the spotlight on a club member and hear about his/her gardening successes and/or challenges. It's up to you what the focus of your story will be—specific plants you've got a passion for, a rainwater garden you've installed, challenges you've faced and overcome, new plantings you've installed, or a new overall landscaping design you've come up with; we would like you to share it with the club and our other website visitors. Who knows, you might be an inspiration to a fellow gardener, or help a fellow gardener solve a problem. Last but not least, we are always curious about each others' gardening experiences!

We ask that all interested club members submit 5-20 electronic photos along with a 300-400 word description about you and your garden by November 15 for selection for the January 1st inaugural presentation. If you are chosen, we will send you a link before its unveiling so you can preview the page and ensure its accuracy. Any submissions not selected for the initial posting will most definitely be considered for subsequent profile postings on April 1, July 1, and October 1. Details can be found on our website <http://www.takomahort.org>. We hope you're as excited as we are about this new feature, and look forward to receiving your submissions by November 15th.

For those who aren't able to participate at this time with a profile, there is another, equally important way in which you can contribute. We are soliciting a TITLE for the feature which conveys the ideas suggested above. We would prefer that the title implied it is restricted to THC members, but this is not mandatory. As a token of our appreciation for the winning entry, we will provide a free THC 2011 membership, and announce your name in the January newsletter (you need not be a THC member to submit). Please see <http://www.takomahort.org> for submission details. —*Sherrell Goggin*

Photo this page: Todd Bolton, editor's photo.

Choosing and Planting Shrubs in Fall

—by Becky Lavash

Becky says “*I am not a Master Gardener nor do I have a degree in horticulture. But I have spent lots of time and money gardening, researching things, and talking with our Master Gardeners.*”

Two years ago, in fall, I went to Behnke’s and purchased two Korean Spice Viburnums. I had been looking at this variety over the summer and had the perfect space for these shrubs. I focused on picking two with the best shape and apparent health. I brought them home, dug the holes, added amendments, and plunked them in. They did well and went dormant for the winter. In spring they both bloomed beautifully. Then, one wilted. Within four days, it was all brown and crunchy. I called Behnke’s and several of our THC Master Gardeners and learned that I had probably not planted the shrub properly. It was likely that its roots never escaped from the root ball that formed while it grew in the pot. Sure enough, when I pulled it up by the central stem, the entire ball came out, looking pretty much the same as when it was planted.

I’d like to tell you that I never made that mistake again, but I can’t. I lost two other shrubs to this problem this past summer. I thought I had been more careful about freeing the roots, but I could see, when the plants starting swooning, that they had not really grown out of the pot shape. I resolved to do better.

Now it’s fall again! Ever hopeful, I’ve already put in one replacement for a summer fatality, a Winterthur

viburnum which was on sale when I got it. I have learned that “on sale” frequently means “pot bound”, so this time, I put more importance on the condition of the roots, pulling plants up out of the pots to see how the root ball looked. Of course I didn’t want something that was unhealthy looking or too oddly shaped, but pruning can address many branching and shape problems.

(See *Shrubs*, page 4)



(Trees, continued)

good to water. The best thing you can do for your tree is foster good soil under the canopy. “Takoma Park does not have much good soil,” he said. The tree gets air and nutrients through its roots and 95% of the tree’s roots are in the top few inches of soil. The fungi called *mycorrhizae* in good soil are symbiotic with the tiny root hairs of trees and improve their uptake of nutrients. They are disturbed by rototilling and digging (which also breaks down the tiny tunnels and pockets of air in the soil), but can be stimulated by adding organic matter. Todd recommends a couple of inches of city mulch, covered by a layer of wood chips to keep the mulch in place. “Worms do the rest.” He advocated running the lawnmower over your fallen leaves and letting them compost.

In the question period, there were queries about vines growing on trees. English ivy, Todd said, can be used under trees but should not be allowed to climb the trunk. It fosters good soil by capturing leaves which decompose. On the other hand, it’s poor at holding soil; plumbago is a better choice for that, and ferns and epimedium are also good for under-tree plantings. When ivy climbs, and particularly when it becomes iced in winter, it can unbalance the tree, which has “self-engineered” to grow branches and roots as needed for balance and strength. Our local woodland vines have generally evolved along with native trees, and tend to grow up the tree but not cover it. This month you will see trees red with Virginia creeper and poison ivy spreading just to where the trunk stops and no further. Destructive vines that grow over the tops of trees include bittersweet, kudzu, and porcelain berry.

There was obviously much more to learn from Mr. Bolton when time ran out. --DS

Photo this page: Winterthur Viburnum, Wikimedia Commons, Ted Bodner, Southern Weed Science Society / James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service.

(Shrubs, continued)

Roots in the Pot When examining plant roots there seem to be two general sorts: larger woody roots and small hairy roots.

The small roots take up water for the plant, so they are very important. And each species is different. Some plants are very sensitive about having their roots disturbed and some may drown if you soak them. You need to do a bit of research before getting started.



You may find that the root ball is made up of a dense pack of small hairy roots that impenetrably fill the entire pot. In other cases you will

see one or more discrete large roots and some small roots coming off them. In my experience, the second type is preferable. If the bottom of the pot is filled with a dense mat of small roots, some experts recommend taking a knife and cutting off the mass. Others say that the small roots may fill the outer two or three inches of the pot leaving the center empty. In this case, soaking the plant for several hours, or a day, can ensure that water gets into the middle of the ball, encouraging roots to grow into that part of the pot.

Planting For my most recent planting, I set the plant in its two-quart pot in a large barrel and filled the barrel with water over the top of the pot, weighting it down to keep it level and prevent floating. I let it soak for several days. My husband wondered if the plant might drown with the wet roots but it really seemed quite happy. I dug a hole in the garden twice the diameter of the pot, amended the soil with manure and things to help stimulate root growth, filled the hole with water and made sure it drained well. Then I removed the plant from the pot.

The recommended process is to gently pull the root ball apart using a garden claw and your hands. This is hard on the back, so I got a gardening bench, my little red wagon and my hose, and some clothes that were going to get dirty. I probably spent an hour, pulling and teasing the roots out. When I took a break, I put the plant back into the bucket of water to get more soil off the roots so I could more easily pull them apart. It was incredibly satisfying to see how thoroughly I was able to free the roots this time. When I put the viburnum in the hole, I could spread the roots so that they fanned out from the central stem, not in a pot-shaped circle. I filled the hole in, stopping half way to add

MEMBERSHIP & DUES NEWS

Membership is only a "Dues" away. Stay in the club by paying your dues. If you are not sure if you paid for 2010, get in touch (cagalati@rcn.com). If you would like to join, please go to our ever-expanding, always improving website, www.takomahort.org for details. It's all there! We love and welcome new members ~ no matter what your gardening experience is (or isn't). We enjoy mentoring because we know we were all beginners at one time and many of us still are!!

Please welcome our newest members: Elizabeth Levien and Susan Farnsworth, and new Life Member Cynthia Mills. Keep in mind that we have several members-only events coming up: THC discount on bulbs purchased at the Street Fair on October 3 and our glorious, makes-you-smile Plant Exchange on Sunday, October 17th!

MOSAIC RAIN GARDEN HELP WANTED!

You may have already noticed the mosaic panels that have gone up on the white wall on Westmoreland near Carroll in Takoma Park. Soon the city will dig up two feet of sidewalk beneath the mural for a rain garden to help address runoff from the parking lot there and add a drain. Art for the People, which designed the project, has some native plants and will buy some grasses. You can see pictures of the project before and after the mosaic decoration, and as envisioned after planting at:

<http://laurie180.wordpress.com> with further information about the project. If you would like to donate plants, advise or help neighbors with the actual planting, that would be welcomed; write to Laurie Stepp, mail@lauriestepp.com

(Shrubs, continued from col. 1)

more water, then filling in and leveling. I always make a "moat" around my plants now, ensuring that water is captured by a ridge of dirt and has a chance to soak into the ground around the plant instead of rolling off.

I hope to be able to report my new Winterthur is doing well next spring and keeps thriving into next year. Meanwhile, I have more plants to shop for and plant!

Gardening Events of Interest in the Community

National Arboretum

Under the Arbor: Chile Peppers

October 9, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

National Herb Garden

Featuring the National Herb Garden's extensive collection of over 60 varieties, including the world's hottest known pepper. Taste-test the peppers, watch cooking demonstrations, and sample chile-based foods including salsa, sorbet, and jellies. Presented by the Mid-Atlantic Units of the Herb Society of America. Free.

Exhibit: Special Orchids

October 12 – 17, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

National Bonsai & Penjing Museum

For more than 2,000 years, Chinese scholars have cultivated penjing and orchids as noble pursuits. Orchids are one of a group of plants said to embody the qualities of virtue and purity, the ideals of a Confucian gentleman. Members of the National Capital Orchid Society share extraordinary specimens for this display in the Special Exhibits Wing of the museum. Free.

“Orchids in the Capital” Show and Sale

Vendor Tent: October 9 - 11, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Exhibits: October 9 & 10, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

October 11, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Come to the 63rd annual Orchid Show and Sale for thousands of blooming orchids on display, expert advice, informative presentations, and a sales tent full of quality plants and orchid-related materials.. This year's theme, Orchids in the Capital, focuses on orchids that are easily grown in the Washington DC area. See [Orchid Show Educational Programs Schedule](#) for a complete list of free drop-in lectures and walk-through tours. Presented by the National Capital Orchid Society. Free admission.

Brookside Gardens

Fall Lecture Series

Reducing, Replacing or Growing a More Natural Great American Lawn

October 1, 10:00-11:30am

Susan Harris, Sustainable Gardening Writer

Healthy Soil=Healthy Food=Happy People

October 8, 10:00-11:30 am

Mark Highland, Founder & President, Organic Mechanics Soil Company

Each in the Visitors Center Auditorium

Free; registration required.

Conservatory Chrysanthemum Display

October 9 through November 21 (South house closes November 15) 10:00am-5:00pm daily; FREE

Chesapeake Chrysanthemum Society Plant Show

Oct 16, 1:00-5:00pm, Oct 17, 9:00am-3:30pm

Visitors Center Auditorium Sponsored by the [Chesapeake Chrysanthemum Society](#)

Casey Trees

www.caseytrees.org

Rock Creek Park Tree Walk

October 9, 9 am – 12 pm

Rock Creek Center and Planetarium,
5200 Glover Road NW

Melanie Choukas Bradley, author of *City of Trees*. Learn to identify magnificent specimens of native oaks, maples, ashes, and hickories that grace the winding paths through the urban woodland park. Hear about conservation issues that were as relevant in 1890 as they are in 2010. Free, register at web site.

US Capitol Tree Walk

October 30, 9 am – 12 pm

US Botanical Garden Entrance

Melanie Choukas Bradley. Join us for a walk on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol where official state trees from around the country will be blazing in full autumn glory. Learn how President Lincoln urged construction of the half-finished Capitol dome to proceed during the uncertain Civil War years. Contemplate the Capitol grounds design, handiwork of Frederick Law Olmsted, renowned 19th century landscape architect. Free, register at web site.

The Takoma Horticultural Club News is posted to the THC list serve and web site each month. Articles and photos are welcome. Contact the Editor, Diane Svenonius, at dbsvnonius@msn.com

Photos: Page 1, [218970-pumpkin-field-pictures-c-c-please.html](#) Photoforum,; p. 4, [Ginny Stibolt, www.Floridata.com](#)

