

# TAKOMA HORTICULTURAL CLUB NEWS

September, 2010 Edition

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



Photo by Eileen Schramm. Story, page 2

**COMING IN OCTOBER**  
**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3**  
***THC Bulb Sale***  
**at the Takoma Park Street Fair**  
**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17**  
***Fall Plant Exchange***  
**at Heffner Park**  
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## September Club Event **TREES!**

### **A Talk with Todd Bolton**

*Takoma Park's Arborist will speak at the Community Center on September 15 at 7:30 pm Open to the public.*

More than just pretty plants! On September 15th at 7:30 pm, the Takoma Horticultural Club will hear from Todd Bolton, Takoma Park's arborist, about the environmental benefits of trees.

We will hear about the importance of maintaining a healthy urban tree cover, how to take care of your trees, and the reasons for having a city tree ordinance. Todd will also talk about his project to evaluate the existing tree cover in Takoma Park. There will be lots of time for questions. You can find out more about Takoma Park's tree ordinance or get suggestions about trees to plant in your yard. Join us at the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue at the corner of Philadelphia Avenue.



*Quercus-alba (White Oak) leaves in spring*

## Figgin' Out

by Eileen Schramm

Five years I've waited. There have been teasers along the way: a handful or two. But this summer it finally happened: the fig tree went berserk. I was in heaven as I started picking, a quart, another...more. I've been hanging out my bathroom window picking figs.

What do you do with fresh figs? I asked a foodie friend. I just keep stuffing them in my mouth, which is certainly not bad, but there are only so many fresh figs you can eat in a day. Turns out she doesn't really care for fresh figs. The neighbors' response: love 'em! ...wrapped in bacon and broiled. I hit the shelves. All those cookbooks I own must have something. Quite a few recipes—for dried figs. Of course!

Last year I had an overabundance of cherry tomatoes. I thought about buying a dehydrator, but wasn't impressed with what was available. I did some research (thanks, internet) and discovered all kinds of ideas for build-your-own solar dehydrators (just what I needed, another project)...and then I found it. The mobile dehydrator almost all of us own: the car! I tried it with the cherry tomatoes and it worked. Why not try it with the figs?

My car is a hatchback, which provides a perfect flat area. The original idea came from someone who used the dashboard. I lay plastic on the hatch cover to protect against possible drips, and put down two pieces of wood. The drying rack is an expandable window screen you can get at the hardware store. They come in different heights—you can pick what fits best in your car's space. Place this on the wood so air can circulate underneath. Cut the figs in half and flatten them slightly so they are more uniform in thickness. Lay them out on the screen (*see page 4*) and then cover with a layer of cheesecloth—just a bit of protection in case any bugs get in the car. Leave the car in a sunny spot.

My figs are fairly small. They take about a day and a half to two days to dry since the weather hasn't been completely sunny. They

## Annual THC Bulb Sale!!

### Takoma Park Street Festival

Sunday, October 3, 10 am - 5 pm

Get ready to light up your spring garden at THC's annual bulb sale, rain or shine. Deer- and other critter-proof daffodils, North America's only native bulb *camassia*, and of course tulips, crocus, hyacinth, and more. Shop early for the best selection.

### Volunteers Needed

This is the club's one and only fundraiser. We will need a total of 14 volunteers to run the bulb sale,

Shift #1 - 9am to 11am - 4 people to set up

Shift #2 - 11am to 1pm - 3 people

Shift #3 - 1pm - 3pm - 3 people

Shift #4 - 3pm to 5pm - 3 people, with one more at 5 pm to help pack up the several tables and any leftover bulbs.

Please let Nancy Newton know if you are willing to help with this very important club activity. As those of you who have done it in the past know, it's a lot of fun. The street fair is a blast and it's a great experience being a part of this community event. Reach Nancy at [n.newton@verizon.net](mailto:n.newton@verizon.net)

## Save Sunday, October 17, for the THC Members-Only Semi-Annual Plant Exchange

By Carole Galati

We are planning another great Fall Plant Exchange for Sunday, October 17, at 2 p.m. at Heffner Park on Oswego Ave. If you start planning to pot your plants early 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, books, tools, seeds, etc. This event draws a great crowd and is lots of fun! Remember, you must be a club member to participate in this exchange. You can join or renew at the exchange if you bring a check- we won't have cash that day. Check the membership article on page 4 of this issue and visit [www.takomahort.org](http://www.takomahort.org) for more information.

### **Figgin Out (continued from page 2)**

should be sort of leathery and slightly sticky in the middle, but not juicy or wet anymore. You also don't want them completely dry and crispy! Or maybe fig chips are the next snack food fad?

I bring the rack inside overnight since it can get damp in the car and I also don't want to encourage any critters. When they're done, I put the dried figs in a bag in the freezer for about four days. This is supposed to kill anything that might be bad. You can keep them in the freezer, the fridge, or let them "defrost" (and any moisture dry off again) and store them in a container in the cupboard. They are not as sweet as commercial dried figs. Apparently figs are not truly ripe until they fall off the tree on their own and should never be "picked." I want to live in the bug- and critter- free utopia that allows that!

In the absence of a large station wagon, other figs have ended up in the fridge in copious amounts of vodka (with sage leaves), and bourbon (with vanilla bean and cinnamon). There will be happy drunken figs to be had this fall—if I can keep out of the jars that long. With all the rain we've been getting now the figs were cracking and getting soft on the tree—not that suitable for drying, so I hunted for a recipe for fresh fig chutney. A recipe that originated with Emeril Lagasse seemed like a good source, so I tried it. I guess no one else had. It did not work out as written, and it was not very good either. I had better luck with fig preserves in heavy syrup with lemon slices. Now I'm making some simple fig jam, as well as more chutney using my recipe: throw in what seems right that tastes good. But in the meantime, quoting Elizabeth David, "An Omelette and a Glass of Wine": "To eat figs off the tree in the very early morning, when they have been barely touched by the sun, is one of the pleasures of the Mediterranean."— and, hanging out the bathroom window, of Maryland. Oh, and one last thing: don't dry and drive.

### **Summer Pot Luck**



*A little rain at the outset, but it soon cleared. Above, gardeners touring Wendy Bell's back garden; Kay Meek presents the chicken-- many salads, casseroles and desserts are just out of view; maidens in the corn--Wendy & Lois check out the cornfield.*

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**The Takoma Horticultural Club News is posted to the club's list serve and on the web site each month. Contributions of articles (flowery prose??) of interest to gardeners and photos are most welcome. Contact the Editor, Diane Svenonius, at [dbsvnonius@msn.com](mailto:dbsvnonius@msn.com) or 301 585-1566. Comments also gratefully received.**

## Thoughts on Community Gardens

by Kathy Jentz

From a guest post at the USDA blog for CG week 2009, <http://blogs.usda.gov>, with permission.

The last week of August was proclaimed Community Gardening Week by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and the People's Garden project outside the USDA headquarters fronting on the National Mall was a perfect place to discuss community garden in the greater DC-area and take a look at its future. At *Washington Gardener Magazine*, we are seeing the requests for community garden plot space double each year. We see this trend generated not so much by economics as by a desire to be able to be in touch with the Earth and living a more simple, sustainable life-style. Going a step beyond buying local or organic, gardeners that grow their own food have complete control of its production and feel a real sense of accomplishment.

Land use issues prohibit many potential gardeners from growing where they live. From Home Owner Associations to small town ordinances, folks are fighting rules that prohibit front yard edible gardens. Many must turn to community garden plots to provide needed growing space. Those in apartments, rental homes, in shady older neighborhoods, etc. are also seeking out community garden plots to grow in.

In a related trend, urban land owners are offering their unused yards to neighbors who want to grow, but may not have the space. Web sites that match landowners with potential gardeners are springing up in cities across the nation. Many ask for a small share of what is grown in exchange for the land use. This is a win-win for everyone. One new trend in community garden is combining plots and working them together to share the harvest. Instead of each gardener having their own small area, they pool the land and decide as a group what will be grown that season. Another new trend is urban farming, in which a group buys up a piece of unused land with the express purpose of growing edibles and



## Almost Fall Membership News

by Carole Galati

Procrastinators beware: if you didn't pay your 2010 dues, they are still \$12, even though it's September. If you would like to join the club for the first time, it will only be \$6. And if you want to also pay for 2011, it will be \$18. In other words, you get no discount for procrastinating!

But then again, if you want to pay \$125 you can become a Life Member and ignore all these nagging dues reminders. Go to our website for details: [www.takomahort.org](http://www.takomahort.org)

Now let's welcome our latest new and returning members: **Connie Bowers** and **Bella Schauman**. We hope to see you at our upcoming Fall events!

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### *Community Garden week, cont'd.*

dividing up the produce among the shareholders. Sometimes they sell the excess produce at local farmer's markets or grow for an express purpose such as a food bank donation.

Schools use gardens for teaching science, math, art, etc. and now they are growing food in them to supplement what children eat in their cafeterias. Colleges are also jumping in by allowing students to set aside a portion of their campuses for community gardens.

All of these community garden trends are converging and the result is that more Americans are gardening, learning about food, and eating what they grow.

## ***Gardening Events of Interest in the Community***

### ***Brookside Gardens***

#### **Friends of Brookside Gardens Plant Sale**

September 11, 10:00am-3:00pm

Don't miss this annual plant sale on the lawn outside the Visitors Center. Members of FOBG only can shop from 8:00-10:00am and receive a 10% discount, as well as and discounts on many Brookside programs.

#### **Dahlia Show/Sale**

September 25, 2:00-5:00pm, September 26, 9:00am-3:00pm, Visitors Center Auditorium.

Sponsored by the [National Capital Dahlia Society](#) Cut blooms will be sold after the close of the show at 3:00pm.

### ***National Arboretum***

#### **Innovations In Container Gardening**

Learn how Bradley Evans, horticulturist in the Arboretum's Introduction Garden, creates and maintains the container gardens and tree boxes for the terrace and Administration Building. Explore uncommon plants in unusual combinations, from different aloes and succulents to angel trumpet and elephant ears, in a presentation and a walk-through tour, learning about design, planting techniques, placement, and care. Fee: \$12,\$10 FONA. Registration required.

#### **Using and Preserving Lemon Herbs**

September 19, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

National Herb Garden

Lemon herbs are some of the most fragrant and useful herbs. Members of the South Jersey Unit of the Herb Society of America will share new ways to use and preserve your lemon-scented herbs. Free.

### ***Washington Historical Society and Washington Gardener Magazine***

#### **Getting the Most Out of Small**

##### **Space Urban Gardens**

September 26, 2:00 – 3:30 pm

Kathy Jentz, Editor and Publisher of *Washington Gardener Magazine* will lead a discussion. Learn which fruit trees grow best in the Washington area. Free and open to all.

### ***Takoma Park Neighborhood Library***

416 Cedar St., NW, (202) 576-7252

#### **Urban Fruit Trees**

September 4, 11 am

Kathy Jentz, Editor/Publisher, *Washington Gardener Magazine*, will lead a discussion on urban fruit trees. Learn which fruit trees grow best in the Washington area, and get tips on how to enjoy your fruit bounty once you grow it! Free and open to the public.

### ***Casey Trees***

<http://www.caseytrees.org/education/programs-classes/index.php>

(See the website for more classes and walks)

#### **Trees 101: An Introduction to Trees**

September 25, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Sue Erhardt, Director of Education, and Lacey Brown, Education Coordinator. Do you want to learn about the benefits of trees? Would you like to be able to identify an oak from a maple tree? Then Trees 101 is the class for you. This class presents an introduction to the Washington DC urban forest. We also discuss strategies for restoring the District's tree canopy. Wear comfortable walking shoes.

### ***Maryland Native Plant Society***

#### **DVD: Bringing Nature Home – The Importance of Conserving and Planting Native for Biodiversity (DVD)**

September 28, 7:30 pm

White Oak Library, Silver Spring

Many of us have heard acclaimed scientist and speaker, Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*, speak in person, and we're delighted to share this professionally produced DVD, provided courtesy of the FL Native Plant Society. With as many as 33,000 species imperiled in the US, we must change our approach to landscaping if we hope to share spaces with other living things. By supporting a diversity of insect herbivores, native plants provide food for a large and healthy community of natural enemies that keep herbivores in balance and our gardens aesthetically pleasing. Following the presentation, attendees will be encouraged to share their thoughts.

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*Photo credits: page 1, Figs in Vodka, Eileen Schramm; white oak leaf, Wikipedia; page 2, pot luck snapshots, editor; p.4, Figs drying on screen, Eileen Schramm.*