



Takoma Horticultural Club

A Hardy Perennial Since 1916

The President's Plot

—by Sherrell Goggin

Launching the Member Profile

Spring Greetings! This month, the Takoma Horticultural Club inaugurates a new web site feature, the Member Profile Page, at www.takomahort.org. Each quarter we'd like to highlight a club member's garden project, which we hope you'll find useful when thinking about your own garden plans.

This month we look at a circular brick patio that Patricia Peter essentially single-handedly installed over the course of two months last Fall. She faced a few problems, and a lot of hard work, but she stuck with it, and as the pictures will show, did so admirably. You can check out her story of her handsome patio, follow the project in photos, and find out how your project can be our June debutante by visiting our website and clicking on the sidebar entitled "Member Profile".

As I embark on my own hell-strip makeover, I have a feeling I will be thinking of Patricia and her perseverance many times in the coming weeks!

Save The Date!!

**THC ANNUAL PLANT EXCHANGE
SATURDAY, MAY 15TH**

Heffner Park
1:30 to 3:30 pm
Members Only

Check for details as they blossom
www.takomahort.org



Glenn Dale azaleas at the National Arboretum.

April Meeting Trellis Workshop

— by Cindy Walczak

Tired of paying high prices for a trellis you know you could whip up on your own? At our April 20 meeting at Heffner Park, we will be making a trellis from locally-grown bamboo. Bamboo is a versatile, strong, and lightweight renewable material. We will construct a trellis approximately 5 tall by 2.5 feet wide, so be sure you have a way to transport your trellis home. Due to space restrictions, this is a members-only event limited to 20 people. Sign up is on a first come-first served basis, and must be made with Cindy at cwalczak@helix.nih.gov. At press time only a few spaces were left, so don't delay to secure your spot! Heffner Park is at Oswego Street, off Ritchie Avenue.

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

Photo credits: Glenn Dale Azaleas, p. 1 and Azalea Collection, p.6, usna.usda.gov; Hosta Frosted Mouse Ears, <http://mws.beaulog.com>, Hosta Blue Mouse Ears, www.hostagardener.com. John Gamradt, Apple Valley, Minnesota; Membership photo, Karen Helfert.

Mini Hostas - Tiny Gems of the Hosta World

— by Taffy Turner

I love my garden and every plant in it. But my true obsession is with the genus *Hosta*. Many years ago, I joined the Potomac Hosta Club (PHC) and started going to their Open Garden Tours every spring. Pad and pencil in hand, I noted all the wonderful hostas I saw in these people's gardens with the firm intent to acquire every one of them for my own. I currently have about 165 different hostas – a small number compared with a lot of those folks.



Frosted Mouse Ears

Trends in hosta collecting come and go. A few years ago, hostas with red petioles were the hot item on my hosta list. The latest craze in the hosta world is miniatures. According to the American Hosta Society (AHS), to be considered mini, these sweet little guys must have leaves smaller than 6 square inches, with no restrictions on clump size. So cute! And, so easy to find these days. I found one on-line nursery that sells over 90 varieties of minis – yikes!

In March 2010, the AHS formed an ad hoc committee to clarify the size of mini hostas in order to create uniformity in size specification for AHS Hosta Show classification and other AHS activities. The terms 'dwarf' and 'tiny' were discontinued



Blue Mouse Ears

in favor of 'mini'. A Mini Hosta Forum was set up to assist in determining which hostas meet the AHS criteria for a 'Mini Hosta', maintain a listing of AHS Mini Hostas to be used for the annual AHS Mini Hosta Popularity Poll, and provide a forum for exchange of information on growing these hostas. If you go to the AHS website, you can actually join this group. If only I had the time!

Bob Solberg, who runs Green Hill Nursery in North Carolina, is one of the current hosta experts who not only grows and sells hostas, but hybridizes them as well. In the March 2011 issue of "The Green Hill Gossip" (subscribe at <http://www.hostahosta.com>), there is a great article on how to be successful in growing minis. It points out that minis have a smaller root system than larger hostas. This means they don't grow down far into the soil and need to be watered more frequently, and therefore need really good drainage. Solberg recommends adding very small gravel or turkey grit to the soil when planting minis. Using the gravel as mulch will also help the problem of the plants heaving out of the ground in winter. I don't normally fertilize my hostas, but because of the tiny roots and required frequent watering, minis benefit from a bit of liquid fertilizer every few weeks. Solberg also recommends a little more light than you would give larger hostas to help (see *Tiny Gems*, page 3)

(Tiny Gems, continued)

them grow better. Do remember, though, that more light will dry them out faster, so watering is a must. He recommends growing minis in containers to protect their delicate roots and tiny leaves from voles and slugs which could demolish a mini in no time.

I like the way mini hostas look in hypertufa troughs with other mini plants. Some nice plants to combine with mini hostas are mini ivy, mini sedge, mini *acorus*, and even mini conifers and hollies. Minis give a whole new dimension to one's hosta obsession.

Spring is here – let the hosta acquisition begin!



THC Dues and Membership News

Here is a bouquet of reasons to pay your Takoma Horticultural Club dues: you can attend members-only workshops, two annual Plant Exchanges, our club garden tour in June, and our potluck dinners in August and January. But maybe the most important reason is, I will stop bugging you!!

There are about 80 people who are on the 2010 membership list who have not paid their 2011 dues. The good news is: about 100 others are paid up and in good standing. Please check with me only if you're not sure if you paid your 2011 dues. To join the club or pay your dues, check our website for instructions: www.takomahort.org

Please welcome our newest members: Laura Andes, Jennifer Betts, Lorna Brodie, Virginia Lamprecht, and Sarah Wagner. I encourage you all to get involved. Ask me how. We are always looking for fresh, new energy in the club!

___ *Carole Galati*: cagalati@rcn.com



Plant Sales in April

As a service to members, a list of regional native and other plant sales now appears at www.takomahort.org. There you can find locations, hours and contact information for the April sales listed below, as well as events later in the spring and fall.

April 2-3 Camellia Society Show & Sale.

Brookside Gardens' Visitor Center, Wheaton, MD.

April 2&9 Green Spring Garden Markets,
Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA.

April 9 Beltsville Garden Club's member plant sale, High Point High School, Beltsville, MD.

April 9 Rust Nature Sanctuary Native Plant Sale Audubon Naturalist Society, Leesburg, VA.

April 14-16 Annual Spring Garden Market American Horticultural Society, River Farm, Alexandria, VA.

April 15-17 Native Plant Nursery Opening & Sale, Adkins Arboretum, Ridgely, Maryland.

April 16 Chesapeake Natives plant sale. Mike Tidwell's house (private residence) Takoma Park, MD.

April 29-30 Garden Fair and Plant Sale, U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C.

April 30 Dahlia Tuber Sale, Brookside Gardens' Visitor Center, Wheaton, MD.

April 30-May 1 Azalea Show & Sale, Brookside Gardens' Visitor Center.

April 30 Parkfairfax Native Plant Sale, Saturday, 9 am to 2 pm 3601 Valley Drive, Alexandria

Become a THC Member at the Plant Exchange!



Another “Save the Date” Announcement!

BEHNKE’S GARDEN DAY

Saturday, June 4th, 10 to 4

* Raffle for Friends of Brookside * Garden Clubs * Plant Societies * Garden Venders * * Master Gardeners * Grow It Eat It Salad Table * Plant Swap * Speaker: David Culp *
* Special Behnke’s Sale * Food for Sale *

See you in June!

If you, your garden club/organization/business would like to reserve a table/space, please get in touch: cagalati@rcn.com

THC March Meeting

Community Gardening Takes Off in the Neighborhood

Lettuce-eaters took over the Lilac Room at the TP Community Center for David Vismara’s talk on the County’s Community Garden effort, which in just two years and on a shoestring budget, has 12 gardens in operation to meet the ravenous craving for home-grown veggies. David gave much credit for this progress to Ursula Sabia Sukinik who (as the 600 enrolled gardeners know from her frequent e-mails) works closely with the gardens, solves problems creatively and runs a tight ship.

As David and Ursula gained experience, their initial approach changed fairly quickly to a standard set of practices for each garden (1500 gallon cisterns, with water purchased from the fire department, TALL deer fences, tilling to four or five inches to preserve soil structure, 200 and 400 square foot plots assigned by lottery) and a standard set of rules for gardeners, which can be adjusted. Organic practices are required, gardens must be planted by a certain date and cleared in the fall, no invasives allowed, and an initial restriction on perennials like asparagus has been lifted.

To give a sense of how the gardens are established, Vismara contrasted Sligo Mill Overlook and Briggs Cheney. Sligo Mill was underused park land but problems emerged: two buried houses, deer, expensive water from WSSC. The City of Takoma

Officers, Committee Chairs and Contacts

President: *Sherrell Goggin*

Vice President: *Carole Galati*

Listserv: *Anne Hardman*

Membership & Program Coordinator:
Carole Galati

Newsletter: *Diane Svenonius*

Public Relations: *Kathy Jentz*

Secretary: *Becky Lavash*

Treasurer: *Taffy Turner*

Webmasters: *Karen Helfert
& Sherrell Goggin*

Park came to the rescue with \$10,000 for a fence, and a fire hydrant solved the water problem. David credited park, community and political support (from Valerie Ervin), a volunteer coordinator (who gets a free plot), flexible guidelines and the use of a garden listserv. The thirty Sligo gardeners hold meetings, have a very active listserv and sometimes have dinner parties on site. Briggs Cheney was a huge established garden from an earlier era of Victory Gardenitis, run by volunteers. Various structures had been built, and since there was no water source, jugs were everywhere. When the county took over, it removed 3.5 tons of debris and installed four cisterns, fed by a hydrant. With 120 25’x25’ plots, and a huge area, a “sense of community”
(continued on page 6)

Gardening Events in the Community

U.S. Botanic Garden

National Garden Tour

National Garden Lawn Terrace- Saturdays,
April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Stroll through the National Garden with a USBG
volunteer to see trees and shrubs of the Mid-
Atlantic region, and learn which would grow
well locally in your lawn and/or garden. Free, no
registration required.

Book Talk: Andrea Wulf, Author

Conservatory Classroom,
Tuesday, April 19, 3:00 – 4:00 pm
George Washington, John Adams, Thomas
Jefferson and James Madison regarded
themselves foremost as farmers and plantsmen
and for them gardening, agriculture and botany
were elemental passions. In an illustrated talk,
historian Andrea Wulf will show how plants,
politics and personalities intertwined as never
before. Code: LM041911 Free, pre-registration
required. Visit www.nfusb.org

National Arboretum

Flowering Tree Walk

Saturday, April 23, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Meet at Visitor Information Trailer
The Washington area supports a wide range of
beautiful flowering trees other than our famous
cherries. Tour several arboretum collections with
Casey Trees Urban Forester Shawn Walker and
learn how to identify and use flowering trees in
the home landscape. This walk covers hilly and
uneven terrain. Free, registration required at
www.usna.usda/Education.



Curator-led Tour of the Azalea Collection

Wednesday April 27, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Friday April 29, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Visitor Information Trailer

Amid a brilliant spring display, learn about the
origins and culture of azaleas from Barbara
Bullock, the knowledgeable, long-time curator of
the Azalea Collection. Get expert advice on
growing these spring beauties and discover how
arboretum scientists have developed new
varieties for gardeners. Fee: \$12 (\$10 FONA)
Register: www.usna.usda/Education
Repeated in May

21st Annual Garden Fair and Plant Sale

New York Avenue Parking Lot
April 29, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm; Friends of the
National Arboretum members only. April 29,
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm and April 30, 9:00 am – 4:00
pm, open to the general public. An extensive
selection of unusual plants, garden supplies,
books, art, children's activities, refreshments,
entertainment, and more. Bring your garden
questions to National Arboretum staff members
who will be on hand to share their garden
expertise. Free admission.

Brookside Gardens

A Special Evening with Rosalind Creasy to

benefit Community Gardens and Brookside.
Thursday, April 28, 6:30-9:00pm, Visitors
Center Auditorium
Rosalind Creasy is an internationally recognized
garden and food writer, photographer and
landscape designer with a passion for beautiful
vegetables and ecologically sensitive gardening.
She will cover an A to Z list of her
recommended beautiful edible plants for home
gardens and present principles of landscape
design particular to edibles. The recently-
published revised edition of Rosalind's book,
*Edible Landscaping: Now You Can Have Your
Gorgeous Garden and Eat It Too!* will be for
sale in the gift shop. Join Rosalind after her
lecture for a book signing and a reception
featuring locally produced refreshments.
Fee: \$35/FOBG: \$30, Event number 132906
(registration required), Register at ParkPASS.org

Make & Take Rain Barrels

County Dept of Environmental Protection
Gather water from your rooftops, help control
storm water impacts from your yard and store
water to use in your landscape. Limited to one
rain barrel per household. Course number 130099
Friday, April 15, 10:00am-1:00pm (*see next
page*)

(Rain Barrels, continued)

Course number 130100 Saturday, April 16,
10:00am-1:00pm

Fee: \$10; registration required

Visitors Center Adult Classroom



Coinciding with the National Museum of Natural History's annual orchid show which continues through April 24, the Sackler Museum will present twenty works related to orchids in Chinese painting, ranging in date from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. The cymbidium orchid (Chinese: lan) has been cultivated in China for hundreds of years. Since the time of the philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE), the cymbidium has been associated with principled, moral gentlemen whose talent and integrity go unrecognized by the powers that be. Over the centuries, various literary and philosophical works attributed other virtues to the orchid, such as friendship, loyalty, and patriotism.

Hyattsville/ ECO City Farms Workshop on Composting

Tuesday, April 26, 7:30 pm
Hyattsville Municipal Building, 4310 Gallatin
The Hyattsville Environment Committee (HEC)
and the Hyatt Park Community Garden Group
will be holding a workshop on composting. No
charge to attend. The speaker is Christian

Melendez of ECO City Farms (located on
Crittenden St. in Edmonston)
<http://www.ecoffshoots.org/>, who will talk about
compost: why you need it, how to compost the
right way, how NOT to compost, compost bins,
worms and everything else you can think of
regarding composting!

**Whole Foods Market Documentary Film
Festival including *Vanishing of the Bees,*
Urban Roots, etc. April 16 – 20 AFI Silver
Theater, Colesville at Georgia, Silver Spring.
The Whole Foods "Do Something Reel" film
festival is about how choices we make can have
a huge impact on our bodies, our economy and
our environment. "Vanishing of the Bees",
about colony collapse disorder, will be shown on
April 16 at 5:30 pm and April 20 at 6:20 pm All
tickets are \$8! To see the full lineup go to
[http://www.afi.com/silver/new/nowplaying/2011/
v8i1/dsr11.aspx](http://www.afi.com/silver/new/nowplaying/2011/v8i1/dsr11.aspx)**

(Community Gardens, continued from p.3)

has not emerged, and the new rules were not
immediately welcomed.

However, veteran gardeners are giving input to
the county and helping newcomers. The success
of perennial asparagus at Briggs Cheney led to a
change in the prohibition on perennials in the
other gardens.

Many lush and unusual edibles are grown in the
county's gardens, for example hard-to-get Asian
staples for gardeners' favorite recipes. The parks
operation provides wood chips as mulch, a water
source, and compost areas.

An audience member questioned the lottery
structure which gives 70% of plots to those
within just a half-mile of the garden, while the
remaining plots can go to any county resident.
She pointed out that the City of Takoma Park
donated money for the local gardens. David said
the point was valid; the apportionment was
chosen because most gardens are on public land
and must by law be accessible to all residents.

At this point, the lottery has been completed for
the King Street garden, and Fenton Park
gardeners are waiting for the site to be dry
enough for tilling and plot-marking.
After the talk, *Corner Plot* was shown. It is a
ten-minute film about Charlie Koiner, who farms
at the corner of Grove and Easley Streets in
Silver Spring, and sells his produce at the Silver
Spring Farmers' Market. *Diane Svenonius*