



Takoma Horticultural Club

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October 2011



Hops growing on a telephone pole

Bugs are Busy on Your Behalf

(. . . and they're not all stinkers!)

-by Dodie Butler

Who'd expect that a lecture on "How Bugs Make the World Go Round" could be interesting, entertaining, and thought-provoking? Mike Raupp, University of Maryland Professor of Entomology and Extension Specialist was quite the showman at the club's meeting on September 21, using media and the internet to convince us that bugs are interesting, important and vital to life on earth. The Takoma Horticultural Club and the City of Takoma Park co-sponsored his talk at the Community Center.

Compared to *homo sapiens*, insects are a champion form of life in several ways. The first insects appeared on earth about 320 million years ago. If insects' time on earth were measured as one year, humans would have only joined them during the last 2.4 hours. In number of species, it's BUGS, four to six million, HUMANS, one. And as he showed with many charts, illustrations, photographs, and mini-videos, insects provide "critical ecosystem services" to planet Earth.

Bugs play a vital role in the food chain by eating and being eaten... feeding on plants and *(See "Bugs" page 3)*

Club Event

Reminder to Club Members: THC's Fall Plant Exchange!

*Sunday, October 16th, 1:30pm-3:30pm
Heffner Park, 31 Oswego Ave, TP, MD*

-by Carole Galati

With all this rain, it might be a good time to think about potting some of those treasures you can part with for the Plant Exchange on Sunday, October 16 at Heffner Park from 1:30 to 3:30pm. Dividing and thinning might be part of your Fall cleanup. Perhaps you might want to start some cuttings. Preparing early will give you time to label your plants.

If you don't have plants, gardening books or magazines, tools, garden art, or any gardening-related item you've got squirreled away but find you don't need any more are welcome. Refreshments are also appreciated. If you have any questions, please drop me a note (cagalati@rcn.com). If you need to renew or join, instructions are at our website www.takomahort.org. You can also do this at the Exchange. (Checks only, please; \$12 made out to THC.)

Membership Counts!

We have 4 great reasons to belong to the Takoma Horticultural Club and here they are:

#1 THC is selling bulbs at the Takoma Park Street Festival this Sunday October 2, 10am to 5pm

Members get a discount on their purchases! We'll be on Carroll Ave. near Tulip. You can join or renew at the sale.

What are the other 3? See page 5!

You've Got Kale!

You may remember reading an article in the March 2011 Newsletter in which I extolled the virtues of CSAs. I don't know if it convinced anyone else to join one, but it did convince me that I should give it a whirl. And so I did. What follows are my brief observations on my endeavor.

Most CSAs suggest a full portion for a household with four persons—however, we only have a three-person household, and since one is a teen (who are documented to be veg-adverse), it probably brought the number down to two, or two-and-a-half at best. Which meant, it probably wasn't our imagination that we didn't get through things before the next week's delivery rolled in.

In the beginning, there was a LOT of lettuce; as in, sometimes up to four heads of red and/or green leaf lettuce, with the odd Boston lettuce and/or bag of spring greens thrown in for good measure. Now, while we like salads, we can (1) only eat so much and (2) get tired of salads! Which meant one head of lettuce often went to my mom or a friend. This can be seen as a minus (not eating food you paid for) or a plus (both will no doubt remember me in their Last Will and Testament).

Another observation was that...we got kale...**lots** of kale. Did I mention I don't like kale? Or collard greens or mustard greens or any of those other, bitter-tasting greens? Well, not to be stymied, I read up on these little understood (to me) greens and found out that boiling them in heavily-salted water for a few minutes can do wonders toward removing this taste. You can then add them to any number of dishes (stews, dals, or use it in lieu of spinach in other

dishes). You can also make them star on their own (sauté some mushrooms, ginger, and shallots in butter and toss with the drained kale—yum!) In the end, I not only converted myself, but got a teen to like it too 😊.

Christmas in May. And June. And July, August, and September. I know, I know, it's **only** vegetables for Pete's sake! But I have to admit, going each week to retrieve our items felt a little like Christmas every week. I definitely looked forward to Wednesdays with a vengeance!

Discards are delicious. After a few weeks, a box appeared on the porch of our pickup spot. Its purpose? For people to "donate" things they don't want from their deliveries, and take things they do. This was a terrific side show to our regular weekly pickup. It also amazed me what people didn't want. Basil? Score! More peppers? Pile it on! And yes, I even rescued several clumps of discarded...kale!

Time for vacation? We were only away for one week during the summer, but given the delivery schedule (Wednesday evenings) and our travel plans (leaving Thursday, back on a Saturday 10 days later) it effectively meant we were unable to consume two week's worth of food. The first delivery we were home for, and able to distribute to friends and neighbors, but the second we would need someone to retrieve. It was of course not too difficult to find someone willing to make a short detour to pick up a load of free veggies, so I won't count this as a problem (and surely this got me a brief mention in yet another Last Will & Testament?)

(See Kale, next page)

(BUGS continued from first page)

in turn being eaten by birds and mammals. If bugs vanished, Mike said, the food chain would collapse. In addition they pollinate our food plants and serve as biological controls, keeping various forms of life in balance. Bugs also clean up the planet, helping decompose dead plants and animals and cleaning up waste.

Bugs need carbohydrates and protein, which flowering plants provide via nectar and pollen. In return, insects move among your favorite flowers, making it possible for plants to produce seeds. Raupp shared photos and mini-videos of some of his favorite examples of plants and insects that have 'co-evolved' to better serve each other's needs, some so specialized that they cannot survive without each other. Examples of matched pollinators and plants include Monarchs and milkweeds; the Zebra Swallowtail and the pawpaw tree; and Red-Spotted Purples and cherry trees.

Insects also serve as biological controls and can even multi-task, providing different services at different times of their lives. For example, the soldier beetle is a pollinator as an adult and its larvae kill cutworms. The lacewing adult is a pollinator and its larvae dine on aphids and spider mites.

You should celebrate when you find a praying mantis in your garden, for it's a sign of a healthy ecosystem. While discussing the praying mantis, a predator powerful enough to catch and eat a hummingbird, Raupp mentioned a [New Yorker cartoon](#) based on the interesting fact that the female mantis sometimes beholds her male partner. Raupp reported that studies show that Takoma Park is a very healthy environment for insects, having significant diversity in overstory and understory trees and flowering shrubs and plants.

The third important service insects provide is environmental cleanup. They are busy little composters, ingesting dead and rotting animals and plants and returning the nutrients for use in the ecosystem. Burying beetles measure, skin, and bury small vertebrates such as mice and birds, then lay their eggs on the carcasses so that hatching larvae will have *(next column)*

You've Got Kale! *continued*

To sum it up, there were some definite pluses and minuses to the whole affair. It sold me on some things I didn't like (kale), and it made me recognize how much better just-picked food could be over store-bought. However, it was also sometimes too repetitious (corn for four weeks?), or sometimes too stingy (what can you do with two Indian eggplants, each not much bigger than a golf ball?). Hence, I've decided that next year I'll shift to a CSA focusing on fruits rather than veggies. For I don't believe I shall ever tire of apple pie.

(Bugs, continued from column 1)

food. Dung beetles similarly take care of manure. Raupp's website, www.bugoftheweek.com, was devoted in September to the brown marmorated stink bug, which he calls the worst pest ever introduced to this country. Only a couple of predators in the U.S. will eat them, whereas they feed on more than 500 kinds of plants, including fruits and vegetables, and will cause billions of dollars in crop damage as they spread around the country. They can complete two full reproduction cycles in Maryland, he said, and when they spread to the Deep South, they'll be reproducing in four cycles.

Dr. Raupp counseled us to get to work on the home-winterizing tasks that block cold air and also prevent stink bugs from coming in to spend a cozy winter with us. (Don't worry, they don't eat household items.) You can learn more at the ["Grow It, Eat It" website](#) of the University's Extension Service, where you'll find his video on stink bug control.

The City of Takoma Park broadcast Dr. Raupp's presentation live on its cable Channel 13, and around mid-October you should find the presentation ready for viewing online as well. Select the link for Cable TV in the left side of Takoma Park's homepage at www.takomaparkmd.gov.

How About This for a Garden Tour?

by Diane Svenonius

The City of Tromsø, Norway, 217 miles inside the Arctic Circle, has the world's most northerly university, brewery, and... botanic garden! The Arctic-Alpine Botanic Garden is run by the museum of the University of Tromsø, located at 69 degrees of latitude and two hours north of Oslo by air. While the sun doesn't rise between November 21 and January 17, on the other hand, it doesn't set from May 18 to July 26, and the area is warmed by the Gulf Stream, allowing many flowers to bloom.



Arctic-Alpine Botanic Garden, from Univ. of Tromsø

The garden specializes in “cold-loving” plants from around the world, many from rocky mountainous environments such as Svalbard, the Norwegian archipelago; the American Rockies, Himalayas, Alaska and Siberia. The Arctic garden is a rocky landscape devoted to plants that grow above the polar tree line.

When it opened, the Tromsø garden took the ‘northernmost’ title away from the former champ, the Polar-Alpine Botanic Garden on the Kola Peninsula of Russia. The Russians graciously endowed the new garden with several plants: the Siberian Fawn Lily *Erithronium sibiricum*, with large droopy flowers, the blue squill *Scilla Rosenii* with large cyclamen-like



Meconopsis Linholm (blue poppy), Univ. of Tromsø

flowers, and a chocolate-colored lily, *Fritillaria camtchatcensis*.

The pride of the collection is a large ‘blue Tibetan poppy’, *Meconopsis Lingholm*, (lower left) which stands one meter high in the Himalayan garden and blooms in July. Although in the papaver family, Lingholm is not a true poppy; but it is blue, and it is gorgeous.



Scilla rosenii (blue) and Siberian Fawn Lily in the Friendship Garden, D. Svenonius.

Other specialty groupings are rhododendrons, including a local *R. lapponicum* that grows in northern Norway; plants from the Rockies, the southern tip of South America, and the Alps; a large primrose collection, and an area displaying plants that were once grown in traditional gardens in northern Norway. In the herb garden, a heart-shaped bed holds aphrodisiacal plants.



Primula viallii, orchid primrose, D. Svenonius

For further information visit
<http://www.nordnorge.com/en/tromso-arcticalpine-botanical-garden.html>

3 More Reasons...

for being a Takoma Horticultural Club member!

Upcoming Members-only events:

- #2 **THC Plant Exchange** on Sunday, October 16 (1:30 to 3:30pm) at Heffner Park
- #3 **Anne Brooks** presentation of **Holiday Design** on November 16
- #4 **Winter Pot Luck**, January 12, 2012

To keep your membership, please remember dues are due in January for 2012.

Please welcome our newest members: James Heelan, George Greer, and Elizabeth Joyce.

Community Forklift Special Sale Landscaping Materials Sale

Arriving Oct. 5th

As the Solar Decathlon collegiate teams break down their exhibits, many have contacted us about donating truckloads of leftover landscaping items. We're still not sure exactly what we'll get, but starting this Wednesday, Oct. 5th, it will all be here waiting for you!

We don't have much room for this stuff, and we're not set up to water hundreds of plants - so we will be pricing them to move! For example, we expect that most shrubs, grasses, and trees will be priced at \$1 - \$10 each... more at www.communityforklift.com

National Arboretum

64th Annual Orchid Show and Sale

Vendor Tent & Exhibits: October 8 & 9, 10am-5 pm; October 10, 10am-3pm National Bonsai & Penjing Museum Special Events Wing and Lecture/Demonstration Center. Collectors, hobbyists, and observers will all find something to love at this three-day show and sale. Thousands of orchid plants in bloom, striking displays, expert advice, informative presentations, walk-through tours, and a sales tent full of quality plants and supplies make this annual event a favorite. See [Orchid Show Educational Programs Schedule](#) for a complete list of free drop-in lectures about orchid growing. Presented by the National Capital Orchid Society. Free admission.

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 dsvenonius@msn.com

Getting Your Garden Ready For Winter

Kathy Jentz, Editor of *Washington Gardener Magazine*

Thursday November 10th at 7pm

Takoma DC Public Library at 5th and Cedar Streets, NW. Open to all.

Grow a beautiful garden filled with flowers and foliage and still honor the Earth by using sustainable gardening practices. Learn how to prepare your yard for the next growing season in an eco-friendly way. Presented by Kathy Jentz, Editor of *Washington Gardener Magazine* to celebrate the donation of 18 garden books to the Takoma DC Public library by the Takoma Horticultural Club. Make sure to peruse the books on display while at the library!

For more information, please call the library at (202) 576-7252 FREE to Attend!

Fenton Street Community Garden Harvest Party

Columbus Day, Monday, October 10 from 4-7pm

King Street Community Gardeners, Fenton-area neighbors, families, and friends are all welcome to join us. We'll have a grill and cook hot dogs and hamburgers. The rest of the meal will be potluck and we'd love for you all to share some of the bounty from your gardens.

Please bring your own chair! Games, prizes, and crafts for all ages. To cover the grilling and other costs, we're asking all attendees for a \$1 per person donation.

Please RSVP and sign up for a potluck dish at: <http://bit.ly/qUKiHD>

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