



# Takoma Horticultural Club

A Hardy Perennial Since 1916

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

April 2012



*Cephalotus follicularis* Licking its lips

## *Dates to Savor*

Sunday, May 20 1:30-3:30 pm  
Members' Annual Spring Plant Exchange,  
at Heffner Park.

Sunday, May 6, 1-5 pm  
City of Takoma Park  
Annual House and Garden Tour  
[www.historictakoma.org](http://www.historictakoma.org)

THC's List of Area Plant Sales  
[www.takomahort.org](http://www.takomahort.org),  
has been updated. See the link and some  
examples on page 5 below.

**Carnivorous Plants, with Grower  
And Teacher Michael Szesze**  
*Wednesday, April 18, 2012, at 7:30 pm,  
Takoma Park Community Center, 7500  
Maple Ave. (at Rt. 410); free and open  
to the public. A large selection of plants  
will be available for purchase.*

Michael Szesze has been raising carnivorous plants since childhood, and is currently owner and operator of Carnivorous Plant Nursery in Derwood, Maryland. In addition to being an accomplished photographer, he is an award-winning science teacher of 32 years. His accolades include the Maryland Science Teacher-of-the-Year, the Maryland Alternate to the NASA Teacher-In-Space Project, and the National Science Foundation VIP-Outstanding Physics Teacher. Michael's love and enthusiasm for science have inspired thousands of students and teachers in his classes, workshops, conference presentations and seminars.

Michael's insight into excellence in teaching and learning express themselves in the high quality materials he has developed to help explore the fascinating world of carnivorous plants. He will speak about his lifelong avocation at our April event in the Community Center.

He will also have a selection of plants available for purchase. The program is open to all; snacks to share are most welcome.

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The *Takoma Horticultural Club Newsletter* is published monthly on the listserv and posted at [www.takomahort.org](http://www.takomahort.org). Contributions, comments and suggestions are warmly welcomed. Contact the editor Diane Svenonius at [dbsvenonius@msn.com](mailto:dbsvenonius@msn.com).

## Natives for our Shady Gardens

by Lisa Caprioglio

Gardening beneath our beloved neighborhood trees offers wonderful opportunities to create a peaceful shady garden. Choosing natives will contribute to the ecological health of our watershed.

Start with some understory trees to add a human scale to the magnificent oaks. Eastern redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, adds tracings of vibrant color to the early spring, golden fall color and lovely asymmetrical shape to the winter landscape. The large leaves of paw paws, *Asimina triloba*, look lush and exotic. As a bonus, the paw paws I have planted have not been browsed by deer.

For moist shady places, such as the base of a hill or the narrow side yards between houses, plant serviceberry or sweetbay magnolia.

Serviceberry, *Amelanchier canadensis*, is my favorite small tree, with delicate white blossoms in the early spring, good for gardens that are too shady for a cherry tree. The blueberry-like fruit is delicious, if you can get to it before the birds do. The red fall color and nice winter bone structure makes serviceberry an ideal four-season tree.

Sweetbay magnolia, *Magnolia virginiana*, has fragrant flowers that will entice you to walk in your garden or sit on your porch nearby. In my experience, deer have not eaten either of these trees, though they need protection from antler rubbing in the fall.



Native understory shrubs include viburnums and witch hazel. Blackhaw viburnum, *Viburnum prunifolium*, a large, multistemmed shrub, can give the effect of a small understory tree and the white umbel flowers become summer berries for birds to enjoy. Mapleleaf arrowwood, *Viburnum acerifolium*, a shorter, suckering shrub, makes a good filler plant, with white umbel flowers, summer berries, and red fall color. Witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, blooms in the fall.

Support biodiversity by planting asters and goldenrod, which, according to Doug Tallamy's research, support over 100 species of butterflies and moths. Shade loving white wood asters, *Aster divaricatus*, (pictured) make gentle green leaves in the spring, followed by tiny white flowers in the summer and fall. Bluestem goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*, also creates a soft ground layer with arching stems of yellow flowers in the summer and fall.

Native ferns make a lacy groundcover. Eastern wood fern, *Dryopteris marginalis* tolerates drier conditions than many other ferns. If you absolutely must have low groundcover, creeping phlox, *Phlox stolonifera*, makes a good substitute for the much used, but invasive periwinkle. Wild stonecrop, *Sedum ternatum*, grows in the shade and looks charming draped over a stone wall or tucked between large roots of a mature tree. Its small, fine roots will not require a big planting hole to disturb the  
(see Natives, bottom of page 3)

*Lisa Caprioglio is a Master Gardener and owner and garden designer of the firm Aldertree Garden, specializing in native plant design and installation in the Washington D.C. area.*

## Grow Seedlings for THC

### **Annual Garden Party, June 9, at Behnke's Beltsville Nursery**

—by Nancy Newton and Carole Galati

THC will join some eight other area garden clubs and plant societies at Behnke's Second Annual Garden Party, a benefit for Brookside Gardens. We ask members to start **seedlings** to give away at our table—to draw visitors to learn about the club. Many veggies can be sown outdoors now and throughout April; tomatoes, pepper and annual flowers should be started indoors. (See “what to plant when” on the THC web site).

If you would like more information or can help staff our THC club table for a shift during this day-long event, please contact Nancy Newton (n.newton@verizon.net) or Diane Svenonius (dbsvenonius@msn.com). In addition to local club information tables, the Garden Party will include:

*A raffle to benefit Brookside Gardens (last year we raised over \$1200!)*

*Plant Swap*

*Garden vendors*

*Plant Society information tables*

*Master Gardeners to answer garden questions*

*Behnke Sale*

*Food*

*10 minute garden talks*

*Surprises! – come and see!*

*(Natives, continued from page 2)*

tree's roots.

So choose native plants. They are well adapted to local soil and climate and support the insects and other animals that make up our ecosystem. Then go sit beneath a giant tree and rejoice in your backyard miniforest.

## **Membership & Dues News**

An interesting talk on carnivorous plants is coming up on April 18, free and open to the public. But the following three club events are for Members Only: On Sunday, May 20 we have our Plant Exchange – a great opportunity to clean up, divide and share your garden successes, while adding to your growing garden. There is a garden tour in the planning stage for June, and then a tour of Adkins Arboretum on July 15. For these events your 2012 dues must be current. Check [www.takomahort.org](http://www.takomahort.org), for instructions on how to pay your 2012 dues or join the club.

Meanwhile, please welcome new member Susan Davis and renewing member Wendy Oliver. We are a “growing” club, with over 110 members, who have paid their 2012 dues. Perhaps some “2011” members might like to renew and enjoy the rest of our 2012 events, activities and meetings. Please remember that being a Takoma Horticultural Club member and being on the Yahoo Listserv are two different things. Although the Yahoo List is free, you have to join on your own. Instructions are on our website. And if you are not sure if you paid your 2012 dues, please ask. Thanks, Carole Galati, [cagalati@rcn.com](mailto:cagalati@rcn.com))

### Officers

**President:** *Sherrell Goggin*

**Vice President:** *Carole Galati*

**Secretary:** *Becky Lavash*

**Treasurer:** *Taffy Turner*

### Committee Chairs and Contacts

**Membership:** *Carole Galati*

**Listserv:** *Anne Hardman*

**Newsletter:** *Diane Svenonius*

**Public Relations:** *Kathy Jentz*

**Webmaster:** *Sherrell Goggin*

## THC March Meeting

### Wigglers at Work

—by Diane Svenonius



The star of Mark Richardson's talk to the Takoma Horticultural Club on March 20 was *Eisenia fetida*, a red worm who, with a passel of its brethren can eat up to half their weight in kitchen scraps each day and turn it into nitrogen-rich compost.

Since plants, with few exceptions, can't procure the nitrogen they need for healthy growth, they rely on largely invisible soil organisms such as bacteria, protozoans, nematodes and mycorrhizal fungi that slowly decompose organic matter. Red wigglers, which are rarely found in garden soil, have a special talent for speedily breaking down organic waste into a substance that's great for plants.

Vermicompost, the product of well-reared worms, is not voluminous but is "very intense", said Mark, and extraordinarily rich in nutrients. A study found that it contained more than five times the amount of nitrogen contained in typical garden compost. Mark recommended that it be added to potting soil for house plants, and to your back-yard compost pile to speed its decay.

Worms need an environment that is moist, dark, aerated, and kept between 55° and 70° F. A homemade worm bin can be made from a wooden box or trunk, or a 15-gallon Rubbermaid bin in which you have drilled ¼ to ½ inch aeration holes on the bottom and sides. The container sits on bricks or other supports

over a tray which catches the "leachate" or urine, which can be used as liquid fertilizer on house plants. A cover keeps the worms happily in the dark. Fill the bin with about 7 inches of bedding --shredded non-glossy paper, leaves, straw, sawdust or compost. Cornmeal or soil are useful to keep the gizzard functioning. Then bury food in the bedding—vegetables, eggshells, pasta, bread. After some weeks you will notice that the bedding has disappeared, and you harvest the compost and start again.

Commercial systems usually consist of a stack of trays. As they finish off the material in one tray, the worms climb up through holes into the tray above, where you have placed fresh bedding, leaving vermicompost and worm cocoons (offspring) below for you to harvest.

Mark noted that there are no "native" worms, and some earthworms are invasive and damaging to forests. Our native trees evolved to take in nitrogen slowly, and forests suffer when worms such as night crawlers rapidly decompose the "duff" layer, producing overly rich soil. However, *Eisenia fetida* does not persist in ordinary soil and become a threat to forest trees.



To learn more about soil, Mark recommends the website [www.soilfoodweb.com](http://www.soilfoodweb.com). For information on vermicompost, see [www.redwormcomposting.com](http://www.redwormcomposting.com) and [www.naturesfootprint.com](http://www.naturesfootprint.com) (Worm Factory).

**OUR THANKS TO ALL WHO BROUGHT THOSE DELICIOUS REFRESHMENTS TO THE MEETING!!**

Photo credits: p. 1,, attrib. Alexander Fisch; p. 2, *Aster divaricatus*, attrib. Teun Spaan; p. 4 left, by Carole Galati, right by Toby Hudson; p. 5, *Greenhouse*, *Smithsonian Gardens*; *Amelanchier grandiflora*, by Kurt Stueber,

## Gardening Events in the Area



### Plant Shows and Sales

**Note: Many plant sales occur in April.**

To see more visit our online list:

[http://www.takomahort.org/2012\\_THC\\_plant\\_sale\\_listing.pdf](http://www.takomahort.org/2012_THC_plant_sale_listing.pdf)

Now and continuing through April 29 –

**US Botanic Garden/Smithsonian Institution** - "Orchid Mystique: Nature's Triumph" at the USBG Conservatory, 100 Maryland Ave SW, Washington DC - FREE!

Saturday, and Sunday, April 14 and 15, 10 a.m.– 4 p.m. **Adkins Arboretum Public Sale Days** The region's largest selection of ornamental native plants will be for sale, including a broad selection of flowering trees and shrubs, perennials, ferns, and grasses for spring planting. Master Gardeners will be available to answer questions. [www.adkinsarboretum.org](http://www.adkinsarboretum.org).

Friday and Saturday, April 27 and 28

**U.S. National Arboretum Annual Garden Fair and Plant Sale** Public sale April 27, 1:00 – 4:00 pm and April 28, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, New York Avenue parking lot The 22nd annual Garden Fair and Plant Sale features new, rare, and hard-to-find plants, garden supplies, used books, children's activities, refreshments, entertainment, and expert advice from arboretum staff. Sponsored by the Friends of the National Arboretum. Free admission.

Friday and Saturday, April 13 and 14.

### **American Horticultural Society's Spring Garden Market at River Farm**

Vendors from throughout the mid-Atlantic region will be selling a wide variety of plants - including natives, annuals, perennials, shrubs, herbs, and vegetables - as well as garden supplies and unique garden art. There also will be a raffle and other special promotions.

The event is open to the public on Friday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday, April 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. [www.ahs.org/river\\_farm](http://www.ahs.org/river_farm)

### Other Events

Saturday, April 21, 10 am to 2 pm

### **Takoma Park Arbor Day Celebration**

The City of Takoma Park will celebrate Arbor Day on April 21 with educational opportunities and the distribution of free tree seedlings at the Takoma Park City Library from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The City Arborist, Friends of Sligo Creek, the Maryland Department of Forestry and others will be on hand to answer questions,



Amelanchier grandiflora