

Takoma Horticultural Club

A hardy perennial since 1916



February 2017



*A happy garden Valentine.
Photo: Carole Galati.*

Edible Landscaping in Small Spaces

Meredith Sheperd of Love and Carrots

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Historic Takoma, Inc., 7328 Carroll Avenue, Takoma Park

Looking ahead to summer bounty? Dreaming of juicy tomatoes and tasty greens? At our February meeting, Meredith Sheperd will speak on *Edible Landscaping in Small Spaces*. Meredith has been working in organic agriculture and environmental sustainability for 15 years. Before founding the DC Urban Gardening company Love & Carrots in 2011, she was the manager of Chailey Farm in Virginia, producing organic herbs and vegetables for high-end DC restaurants, City Zen and The Sou'wester.

Meredith received the 2013 DC Mayor's Sustainability Award, the 2014 Green America Award, and Business Insider's Top 50 New Businesses in America.

This talk is free and open to the public. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the talk begins at 7:30. Bring a snack to share and a nametag!

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Orchids: A MOMENT

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden

7th and Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC

From now until May 14, Smithsonian Gardens and the U.S. Botanic Garden will showcase over 100 orchids in a limited-time display amidst the Hirshhorn's unique architecture. Selected from the collections of both Smithsonian Gardens and the U.S. Botanic Garden, these stunning blooms are presented as colorful time-based installations, constantly changing throughout the exhibition's four-month run. Visitors are encouraged to enjoy the exotic assemblage as a whole as well as each orchid as it stands in that moment, and to return again and again as it evolves. (From *gardens.si.edu*)



Growing a vegetable garden favorite

To many home gardeners, a summer is not a summer without feasting on plump, juicy, delicious home-grown tomatoes. Tomato plants are easy to grow. If you take good care of them, there is a good chance you will get a bumper crop in return!

A strong tomato plant starts from a strong seedling. Many gardeners prefer heirloom varieties for their excellent taste. However, they often do not share the same disease resistance as hybrid tomatoes. Nowadays there are many new disease-resistant hybrid varieties that preserve the great tastes of their heirloom parents well. You may be surprised at what they can offer. Practice crop rotation to avoid perpetuating soil-borne diseases. If you must plant your tomatoes at the same spot, try planting a different variety resistant to diseases your tomatoes had in the previous years.

Tomatoes grow best in a temperature range of 70F to 80F. Planting seedlings too early in the garden does not help give them a head start. Instead, cold snaps and frigid soil can cause irreparable damage to these delicate baby plants. Many local gardeners use Mother's Day as a benchmark—at least 2 weeks after the area's average last spring frost date. If you start your own seeds, do make sure you harden off your seedlings sufficiently before planting them outside. To help them get established, apply a starter fertilizer (2-4-2) in the planting hole. Adding ¼ cup lime per plant may prevent blossom end rot further down the road. Setting your tomatoes deeply at an angle helps them develop a more extensive root system. After the first fruits appear, apply a side dress of ¼ lb 10-10-10 fertilizer per 10' row to keep up with the plants' needs.

Most tomato diseases are soil-borne. Among them, the most common ones are fungal diseases. Although these diseases may happen at different times of the year depending on the weather, the symptoms tend to share a similar pattern—yellowing leaves with circular dark spots or lesions. When you notice yellowing leaves, remove them gently on a dry day with dry hands and tools so that you do not spread the fungus to other plants or other parts of the same plant. Throw these leaves in the trash, and do not compost them.

As always, good cultivation practice is the best prevention measure. Proper spacing of plants (a minimum of 2.5' to 3') promotes good air circulation and thus good health. The best watering practice is regular, deep watering at least once a week early in the day. Frequent but shallow watering promotes a shallow root system which hurts the plants during hot summer days. Overhead watering is not only ineffective and inefficient, but can also promote fungal problems. Splashes of water from the soil can spread soil-borne diseases to your plants. The moisture trapped in the foliage becomes a medium for fungal spores. Mulching around the base with straw and newspaper helps conserve water, moderate soil temperature and prevent the propagation of diseases. Removing the lower leaves growing from within a foot above soil level is also an easy but effective disease prevention technique.

While there are no guarantees, if you adopt these practices when growing your tomatoes, chances are you may have your best harvest ever this summer!

Do you know that...

Determinate tomatoes have a certain mature size while indeterminate tomatoes do not? If conditions allow, an indeterminate tomato plant may keep growing larger and larger indefinitely!

You can pinch your tomatoes plants to grow larger fruit? By removing "suckers" to limit the number of main stems to 2 or 3, you are telling your plant to grow less plant but more fruit. In addition, you can root the suckers to make more tomato plants for your garden!

You can pinch the growing tips of your indeterminate tomatoes in early summer for earlier fruiting? Using the same technique, you can also encourage fruit ripening in late summer!

Tomatoes do not need sunlight to ripen? As soon as the fruit start to change color, you may pick them and ripen them indoors at room temperature. They taste just as great, but without the risk of catching anthracnose or becoming squirrel breakfast. Do not refrigerate because the process damages the flavor and texture of your prized tomatoes.

—Meipo Martin



Nice, with No Ice

Always a cheerful winter event with good company, good conversation and wonderful food, the 2017 January Potluck took a big step toward elegance this year. Coordinated by Taffy Turner, a team of early arrivals turned the institutionally bland Heffner space into a shadowy candlelit dining room with votives and candlesticks shimmering everywhere. Two dozen or so club members attended; food was plentiful and delicious as always. (And last year's icy streets were but a memory...). —Diane Svenonius (text and photos)

Monthly Potlucks?

Since 8 club members renewed their 2017 dues at the January Potluck, I have decided that the Winter Potluck is our best dues stimulator. Therefore, I have decided that we need to have a monthly Potluck built into our Calendar of Events for 2017!! All in favor, say "Yay!"

Alas, I do not have the energy or the time to organize a Potluck each month. Not to mention the overabundance of caloric intake that would result! So instead, just check your membership status with me, and I will let you know if you owe the club \$12 for 2017. We really do need our members to pay dues. This money keeps the club going. It pays the speakers. It pays for our lovely Historic Takoma venue, our Centennial Garden upkeep and our valuable donations to Brookside Gardens and Takoma Park.

So, potlucks help keep the club going and are wonderful fun, but active members paying dues are really the essence of the club. Let me know if you have questions about your membership status.

—Thanks! Carole, Membership Director (cagalati@rcn.com)