

TAKOMA HORTICULTURAL CLUB (THC) Newsletter for April 2009
www.takomahort.org

WELCOME to the Takoma Horticultural Club (THC) monthly newsletter, which we hope is a useful resource for you about Club news, events and garden-related items of interest.

Upcoming THC Events

Our April Meeting
Wednesday, April 15 at 7:30pm
Takoma Park Community Center, Azalea Room
7500 Philadelphia Avenue,
(Park behind the building off of East-West Highway.)

On Wednesday, April 15, THC presents Bob McDowell who will speak to us on " Rejuvenating and Established Garden." Bob, a Master Gardener for 10 years, started a Victory Garden with his dad in the early 1940s. His love of gardening has continued his entire life. You can often find Bob in the Master Gardener's Demonstration Garden at the Farm Park in Derwood. The focus of Bob's talk will be improving soil, choosing appropriate plants and respecting the environment. There will be handouts and time for questions. Come early to join THC, renew your membership and/or just talk gardening. Please bring snacks to share. Beverages will be provided by THC and rumor has it there may be door prizes too! For more information, check our website at www.takomahort.org or call Carole at (301) 588-2743.

Report on Past THC Events

The THC March meeting featured Joe Seamone, aka "Boca Joe", whose talk title said it all, "It's a Jungle Out There--Creating and Growing Your Own Tropical Paradise in a Non-Tropical Climate." We were inspired by photos of lush, beautiful plants--some gigantic! -- all grown in a single season in backyards throughout the DC area, even up further north! We learned which tropicals do best here, how to plant them, how to combine tropicals with the more familiar impatiens, begonias, and cannas. Tropicals like elephant ears and bananas are becoming fashionable and easy to find in nurseries and home/hardware stores. The biggest surprise, they can also take a lot of shade!

Dues and Membership Buzzzzzz

Thanks to all who have paid their dues in the last few weeks. Please check our website to learn how to renew and join anew. Contact Carole Galati if you have membership questions at cagalati@rcn.com. We also want to welcome the following new members who joined in February and March: Susan Nelson, Ed Zielinski, Emily Townsend, Linda Davidson, Brooke Randolph, Lynn Neagley, Bernice McIntyre, Cynthia Johnston, and Wendy Oliver. A special welcome to Laura Arnston, who joined as a new Lifetime Member. For information about our meetings, information about gardening excellent

gardening resource, past newsletters and membership information, please go to www.takomahort.org.

IN THE GARDEN: "Getting Your Garden Ready for Spring Planting: Easy As 1-2-3!"
by Madeline Caliendo

As temperatures warm many gardeners are bursting at the seams to get out to start planting for Spring. STOP! While temperatures may occasionally soar into the 60's or higher in April, it is still generally too cold for tender garden plantings. For the DC area, the last average frost date is April 15th (tax day). That is an average, though, and many killing frosts have come to our area well past that date in years past. In fact, many seasoned locals use Mother's Day as the first safe planting day for tender plants. This year, Mother's Day is Sunday, May 10th.

So what is a gardener to do in April? Plenty! Here is my top 3 list of things to help get your garden ready for Spring:

1. Clean Up Your Garden: Think of it--literally--as spring cleaning. We do (or should do) spring cleaning indoors so why not spring clean outdoors as well?

- +Remove any remaining leaf and other debris from garden beds and hardscaped areas.
- +Remove dead tender plants and prune dead wood from trees and shrubs. A good article on pruning is at: <http://www.sustainable-gardening.com/PruningReich.php>
- +Clean hardscaped areas, furniture, planters, etc. for re-use.
- +Weed ASAP before weeds go to seed become more difficult to eradicate. A good article on weedless gardening is at <http://www.sustainable-gardening.com/ReichWeedless.php>

2. Plan your 2009 Spring Plantings and More: If you haven't done so already, plan what your Spring garden plantings and other garden additions will be. Consider your five senses in doing so.

+What do you want your garden to look like? Will you be experimenting with a new color scheme in a new planting or two? What about foliage? Foliage can be as-- or even more--beautiful than flowers. Consider experimenting with new-to-you foliage plants this season. Will you grow vertically as well as horizontally? Do you need to make or buy arbors and growing posts?

+What will your garden feel like? Are you going for the informality of a cottage garden or will you tighten things with more traditional lines and shapes? Are you planning to create a certified wildlife habitat in your garden so as to invite birds and other beneficial wildlife? If so, information about how to do so is at: <http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife/create.cfm?CFID=10177698&CFTOKEN=a615d1ca9bedb1db-3A6E755C-5056-A868-A032C020FCD8933C>

+What will your garden sound like? Will you add a water feature like a fountain or pond

this Spring? What about wind chimes to help create a sense of peace? Do you like listening to music or radio talk shows while in the garden? If so, how about installing outdoor speakers? Do you have noisy neighbors or live on a loud thoroughfare? How about installing a living sound barrier? Thinking of inviting the sounds of wildlife--like buzzing bees, fluttering butterflies and/or whirring hummingbirds? You may need to add special plants and feeders to help with that.

+What will your garden smell like? Will you plant scented flowers to evoke memories from old-fashioned gardens of your past or might you add a fragrant herb or two to experiment with while cooking or making homemade botanical potions? The below site can help with ideas for homemade botanical projects

<http://www.mothenature.com/Library/Bookshelf/Books/15/10.cfm>

+What will your garden taste like? Will you grow edibles? Which ones and where? Will your edibles be interspersed amongst the ornamentals or will they be grown in separate beds and containers? Will there be a succession of plantings or will you plant a one shot deal? A good resource for local edible planting times is at. Go to <http://the7thstreetgarden.squarespace.com/> and in the left column click on the "Resource" page to access a database with planting times.

Having a good garden plan is invaluable. I didn't do one as a newbie gardener and regret it now. A good resource on Garden Design is at <http://www.sustainable-gardening.com/Design/DesignIndex.php>

3. Work to Improve your Soil: Good soil is essential for a vibrant, healthy garden and April is a good time to fortify soil. How? Just add compost, leaf mulch or other organic matter to help improve soil structure. You can work it into the soil or just scratch the surface and lay organic matter on top. With the latter method nature will work the organic matter into the soil over time.

If you don't do so already, compost. It's the easiest and cheapest way to add organic matter to your soil, and it is also good for the environment as it keeps unnecessary waste out of the landfill. Compost is gold for your garden. Here is a primer on compost to help get you started. <http://www.sustainable-gardening.com/Compost2.php>

Do you have leaves left in your yard from the Autumn? If so, you can grind them up to use as a top dressing for your beds. A good technique for grinding is to put the leaves in a large metal trash can and chop them with your weed whacker. For the cooks among us, think of your weed whacker as an immersion blender for the garden!

If you don't have left over leaves, no worries. The City of Takoma Park can help. Pick up leaf compost for free or have it delivered for a fee. Information is at <http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/publicworks/mulch.html>

You can also buy screened compost from the City of College Park. Their compost beautiful black gold. I love it, but it's costly. Information about it is at

<http://www.collegeparkmd.gov/smartleaf.htm>

Getting your garden ready for Spring planting is as easy as 1-2-3! Don't rush to plant early. Rather, lay the foundation--the "ground" work-- for a productive growing season. All it takes is 3 easy steps.

Any budding garden writers among us? Would you like to do a little research or share your expertise/experience by writing a short article (500 words or so) for the newsletter? Is there a particular plant or flower you love? Want to tell us about it so that we might want to grow and enjoy it too? If so, send Madeline Caliendo, the Newsletter Editor, an email at vivaitaliana@gmail.com

Selected Community Garden Events of Interest

April 4 10am to Noon

"Planting and Caring for Large Shade Trees"

Columbia Heights Recreation Center 1480 Girard Street, NW, WDC

Free workshop sponsored by the DC Department of the Environment. It will cover all aspects shade tree purchase, planting and care from a sustainable, environmentally friendly perspective. To RSVP or for questions, (202) 671-0350 or email kelly.melsted@dc.gov.

April 4, 5, 11 and 12 at 1:00PM

"Ikebana Demonstration" at the US Arboretum

Flower arrangements representing a variety of Ikebana schools and styles created by the DC Chapter of Ikebana International. The installation will change on April 8th. Master teachers will give free Ikebana demonstrations in the Lecture/Demonstration Center in the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, 3501 New York Avenue, NE, WDC 20002 www.usna.usda.gov

April 5, 2 to 4 pm

"Spring Wildflowers of the Potomac Valley Collection" at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens regional Park, 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna, VA

See some of the regions most beautiful spring wild flowers in this internationally recognized conservation collection. Fee: \$5 adults and \$2.50 for children 17 and younger. Preregistration is required. Info: (703) 255-3631 or visit www.nvrpa.org.

April 5. 3 to 4:40 pm

"Discovering the Diversity of Flowering Cherries" at USNA

Research geneticist Dr. Margaret Pooler shares a behind-the-scenes look at how arboretum scientists create new varieties of flowering cherries with improved qualities. A brief walking tour of some of the trees follows the talk. FREE but registration required. Call (202) 245-4521 to register. US National Arboretum, 3501 New York Avenue, NE, WDC 20002 www.usna.usda.gov

April 7 thru June 13th

"Docent led Spring Garden Tours at Hillwood Museum and Gardens."

Docent led tours are offered on a first-come first-served basis Tuesday thru Saturday at 10:30am, 12:30pm and on "Serene Sundays" at 2:30pm. Tours are FREE with \$12 Museum entrance (\$10 for seniors, \$7 for college students and \$5 for children) and tix are distributed at the Visitor's Center everyday upon opening. Complimentary audio and printed garden tours are offered throughout the year. Info: (202) 686-5807. 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW Washington, DC 200008, www.HillwoodMuseum.org.

April 7, 8 and 9 from 8 to 10 PM

"Full Moon Garden Hikes" at the US Arboretum

Five mile long mildly strenuous hikes through moonlit gardens, meadows and woods. Guides show points of special interest and seasonal highlights. The 2-hour walk over hilly and uneven Flower arrangements representing a terrain is more of a brisk hike than a tour so wear good walking shoes and dress for the weather. Not recommended for children. Fee \$19 (\$15 FONAs), 3501 New York Avenue, NE, WDC 20002
www.usna.usda.gov

April 10, Noon to 1PM

"Moving Toward Native" at the US Botanic Garden Conservatory, 100 Maryland Avenue, SW,

How do we integrate native plants into the designed landscape? A new age of planting design is upon us with a need to reduce negative human impact on the environment. By using more native plants we will decrease the need for watering, maintenance, and increase the diversity of plants, animal, habitat, and the return of bees, birds, and butterflies. Sandra Clinton, President of Clinton & Associates will discuss integrating native plants into the designed landscape and will share information about her favorite native plants for our region. Fee: \$10 (\$5 for SONG members). Info: (202) 225-8333 or www.usbg.gov.

April 18 from 11AM – 1PM "Container Gardening" at Common Good City Farm, 2025 3rd Street, NW (3rd and V Streets) in Washington, DC. If you've always wanted to grow vegetables in that empty spot in your backyard or on your porch, this workshop is for you. We'll show you how to fit plants in your space using pots, raised beds or even that old bathtub or tire that's been laying around the backyard. Suggested Donation: \$1-\$15. For more information and to register email info@CommonGoodCityFarm.org

April 18, 1 to 2:30pm "The Best Vegetables to Grow in DC" with Cindy Brown of Green Spring Gardens Presented by the Historical Society of Washington (HSW), DC Urban Gardeners, and Washington Gardener Magazine. The talk will take place at the Historic Carnegie Library's auditorium which is home to the Historical Society of Washington, 801 K Street NW, Washington, DC. FREE and open to the general public.

April 21, 10:00am to 12:30pm

"Basic Floral Design Workshop" at Hillwood Museum and Gardens.

Examine floral arrangements in the mansion with floral designer Adrienne Summer AIFD. Then learn basic floral design techniques and make a beautiful arrangement of your own to take home! This workshop is appropriate for those with no floral design experience. All supplies provided. Limited to 20 people. \$45 Public, \$40 Members. Info: (202) 686-5807. 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW Washington, DC 200008, www.HillwoodMuseum.org.

April 24th, 10AM to 12 Noon and April 27th 5 to "Azalea Collection Walk and Talk" at the US Arboretum Knowledgeable and long-time curator of the Azalea Collections, Barbara Bullock, guides you through thousands of blooming azaleas. Learn about all aspects of azaleas, pick up expert growing tips, and find out how the arboretum has developed new varieties for gardeners world-wide. Fee \$15 (FONA \$12) 3501 New York Avenue, NE, WDC 20002 www.usna.usda.gov

April 25TH, 10AM TO 11:30AM

"Prepping & Planting with the Lasagne Method with City Blossoms' Girard Garden Workshop Series"

Use free to inexpensive materials to create a healthy garden bed, just in time for Spring planting. Instructor: Rebecca Lemos. FREE. Workshop held in the Girard Children's Community Garden in the Girard Playground at 1480 Girard Street, NW in Washington, DC. Info: (202) 443-854-1669.

April 25TH, 9AM TO 4PM

"Garden Fair & Plant Sale" at the US Arboretum

The 18th annual Garden Fair offers unusual plants, garden supplies, expert advice, family fun, and food vendors. National Arboretum staff will answer gardening questions. FREE. 3501 New York Avenue, NE, WDC 20002 www.usna.usda.gov

April 30, 10:00am to 12:30pm

"Advanced Floral Design Workshop" at Hillwood Museum and Gardens.

Examine floral arrangements in the mansion with floral designer Adrienne Summer AIFD. Then build upon your floral knowledge and make a beautiful arrangement of your own to take home! This workshop is recommended for those with prior floral design education/ experience. All supplies provided. \$45 Public, \$40 Members. Info: (202) 686-5807. 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW Washington, DC 200008, www.HillwoodMuseum.org.

Looking Ahead...

May 2 thru September 12 Join the Neighborhood Farm Initiative (NFI) , a non-profit project of the America the Beautiful Fund NFI's Gardening Education Program is an all-inclusive, hands-on training course in all aspects of organic vegetable gardening! The course includes your own 12'x12' garden plot for the 2009 growing season, all plants & transplants, compost & soil amendments, drip irrigation system, trellises, tomato cages/stakes, your own trowel & gloves, seasonal use of NFI's communal tools, and bi-monthly instruction in all aspects of starting and maintaining the garden, plus one-on-one

assistance in applying class lessons to your garden! The class topics will take you from testing and preparing the soil to planting, maintenance, to organic pest and disease management! When: Alternate Saturdays, May 2 –September 12, 10am-noon. Where: Mamie D. Lee Garden (Ft Totten Metro Station—Red, Yellow, & Green Lines) Cost: \$600/season (payment plans available) Info: send email to neighborhoodfarm@gmail.com for more info.

Check out Washington Gardener Magazine for information on a freegarden talk series Washington Gardener is co-sponsoring throughout 2009 at the Washington Historical Society in downtown Washington, DC. For more info:http://www.washingtongardener.com/index_files/Events.htm

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