

TAKOMA HORTICULTURAL CLUB (THC) Newsletter for JULY 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-- by Carole Galati

Trip to Anne Brooks' Hollywalk Nursery in Brookeville, Maryland

Saturday, July 11; 11:00 to 1:00 pm

For Takoma Horticultural (2009 Dues - Paying) Members

Please join us for a local trip to Anne Brooks' delightful Brookeville, Maryland garden, also known as Hollywalk Nursery. We are invited to bring a brown bag lunch and arrive about 11:00 am. for our garden tour. Anne has a mature, woodland garden with lovely specimen trees and shrubs. She will provide beverages, a lovely setting and maybe some plants for sale. Anne's address is 211 Brinkwood Rd. in Brookeville, MD 20833. It takes about 20 minutes from the New Hampshire Exit of the Beltway. Carpooling is recommended, as parking is limited. Please RSVP (cagalati@rcn.com) , so we can tell Anne how many to expect. Not yet a 2009 THC dues paying member? No problem. There is still time to join. See membership information below for more details.

Report on Past Events--by Melanie Isis

2009 THC Open Garden Tour

The 2009 Tour included a dozen gardens in East Silver Spring in the neighborhood running outside of Fenton Street, a couple of blocks from downtown Silver Spring. There was an amazing diversity of garden types on the tour, ranging from the extensive vegetable garden of octogenarian Charles Koiner, at Easley and Grove Streets, who sells produce from home and at the Silver Spring Farmer's Market, to the edible garden of Simone Fary at 716 Chesapeake Ave, to the traffic circle garden of Melanie Isis at Woodbury Drive and Gist Avenue, to the urban garden of Kathy Jentz, publisher of Washington Gardener, wrapping the corner of Philadelphia Ave and Fenton Street.

Many of the gardens were small and well designed, occupying 4000 sf lots that included houses and garages. Tour attendees, both THC members and residents of East Silver Spring who noticed red balloons waving at tour locations, walked the entire route and visited the gardens, chatting with hosts and examining plantings. Mental notes were made about types of plants suited to shade or sun, and combinations of plants that catch the eye. Hosts explained their garden challenges, and listed plant types for those who wanted to know. Cookies and cold beverages were offered at several stops to provide the tour goers with needed refreshment.

The imagination of gardeners was evident in the innovative designs found in their yards. Sarah Wagner's small and sunny front garden was a contrast to her sunken, shady back yard filled with hostas and ferns. Rachel Kaplan's cottage garden was overflowing with blooms gracing her bungalow.

Gardening is a passion for many, and many more gardeners wanted to participate in the 2009 tour than space permitted. THC hopes to organize the 2010 tour in North Takoma in order to showcase some of the outstanding gardens in the area between Takoma Avenue and Piney Branch Road. We hope that many of you will join us for that tour!

THC Membership News by Carole Galati:

Welcome To Our Newest Members

Is it July already?? Then I guess it's time to welcome our new members who joined the club in June. Please welcome: Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, Sarah Wagner, Sara Long, Danielle Meitiv. Lynn Koiner and her dad, Farmer Charlie Koiner. Since we have members-only events for July, August and October, some of you won't be able to participate because you have not paid your 2009 dues. Check our website for program details: www.takomahort.org Also, check with Carole Galati (cagalati@rnc.com) if you are not sure whether you paid your 2009 dues.

In the Garden... "*Crape-Myrtle: A DC Area Institution*" By Madeline Caliendo

We'll soon be entering the dog days of the Washington summer. Sweltering, heat can be tough on gardens and gardeners alike. Other than annuals, little else blooms in the average Washington garden at the height of this oppressive heat and humidity. That is, little else other than one of my favorite trees-- the Crape-Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*). The Crape-Myrtle is a genus of around 50 or so species that includes both deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs that are not native to our area but rather the Indian subcontinent, southeast Asia, northern Australia and parts of Oceania. I just learned it is part of the Lythraceae family--also know as the Loosestrife family.

The various species and cultivars of the Crape-Myrtle family can fill a wide range of landscaping needs, but I think its two most distinctive features are its elegant, stunning bark and its bold and showy long-lasting flowers. First the bark. It is very distinctive. It's smooth to the touch and easy on the eyes with its mottled reddish brown and gray coloration. The bark exfoliates in a way that is not quite like, but is distantly reminiscent of (at least to my untrained eyes), a river birch (without all the texture of a river birch tree). The tree has a very elegant branching form that is simply lovely. The flowers are showy large panicles of crepe- like crinkly flowers that range in color from a creamy white to a deep purple. Incredibly, the flowers stay on the tree for anywhere from 60-120 days, even with our severe summer storms with their occasional pelting rain, high winds, and periodic golf-ball sized hail. My favorite is the showy hot pink one that dares you to look at it and never fails to bring a smile to my face.

Other nice features of the Crape-Myrtle are its beautiful leaves, which are a glossy medium green color that leaf out in Spring. The leaves turn a vibrant yellow/red/orange in the Fall. The tree also develops dark berries after it blooms the size of peas that eventually turn brown.

One of the nicest qualities about the Crape-Myrtle, though, is its versatility. It will happily grow in urban, suburban and country-like settings, in good soil and not so good soil, as a specimen tree or as a stunning stand of trees planted in an attention-grabbing row. The Crape-Myrtle needs sun--the more the better --and if it doesn't get it the tree will likely be spindly, not particularly showy, and/or suffer from a case of powdery mildew--so site it wisely.

I am originally from NYC and we didn't have many Crape-Myrtles there. I think it is more of a warm climate tree. When I first saw it in DC 20+ years ago, it simply took my breath away. Interested in seeing some images of Crape-Myrtles so it can take your breath away too? If so, click here: <http://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/showimage/3/>.

Want to learn more about Crape-Myrtles? Hillwood Museum & Gardens is partnering with Homestead Gardens to offer a FREE talk about Crape-Myrtles on Sunday, July 19th, at 11:00am at Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville, MD. For more information about the event, see the listing below in the Community Garden events section.

Whatever you do, please take time this hot, sweltering Washington summer to get outside and admire a Crape-Myrtle tree or two. You won't regret the sticky inconvenience!

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? It can be about a particular flower or plants you love (or hate!), virtually any gardening topic of interest, or just your musings about the garden. Just send Madeline Caliendo, the Newsletter Editor, an email at vivaitaliana@gmail.com to coordinate. Writing an article is a great way to come up to speed (if you are not already) on a topic of interest. Look forward to hearing from you!

Selected Community Garden Events of Interest

Now thru July 24th, FREE

Brookside Gardens: 40th Anniversary Exhibition and through September 11 "*Botanica 2009: The Art & Science of Plants.*" Brookside Gardens at 1800 Glenallen Avenue, Wheaton, MD. Info: (301) 962-1400; or www.brooksidegardens.org.

Friday July 3 from 1:45pm to 5:00pm and Saturday July 4 from 9:00am to 3:00pm
Houseplant Sale at the American Gesneriad Convention Plant Sale in Silver Spring, MD
Purchase high quality Gesneriad family houseplants (think African violets, streptocarpus, gloxinias, chiritas and much more) from multiple vendors in the Hilton Silver Spring, 8727 Colesville Rd, Silver Spring, MD (4 blocks to Silver Spring metro). FREE. For more information go to www.nationalcapitalgesneriads.org or <http://gesneriadsociety.org/con2009/index.htm>

Fridays, July 5, 12, 19 and 26 at Noon

"Healthy Garden Workshop Series at the US Smithsonian" FREE

Learn how to improve your own garden at home. Workshops will be held every Friday through September 25th at "The People's Garden" at 12th Street and Jefferson Drive at the USDA Building.

Saturday July 11 from 10:00am to Noon FREE

"Bayscaping & RainGardens " Part of the DC Government's Riversmart Homes Program

Learn about the benefits of using natives on your property by Bayscaping and building Rain Gardens. You will learn how using plants native to the Chesapeake Bay Area can reduce storm water runoff while at the same time creating an aesthetically pleasing landscape." At the Chevy Chase Community Center, 5601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, WDC 20015).

Saturday July 11 from 1pm to 3:00pm FREE

"Open Gardens: From the DC Government's Riversmart Demonstration Project" (Part of the DC Government's Riversmart Homes Program) Each demo site garden had a rain barrel, shade tree, rain garden and pervious pavers installed. Come see the possibilities for your own garden when you garden in a Chesapeake Bay friendly way! For a list of addresses and a google map call Jenny Guillaume at (202) 535-2252 or email her at jennifer.guillaume@dc.gov.

Saturday July 11 from 1:00pm to 2:30pm FREE

"Rainbarrels and Water Management " by Barry Chankin of Aquabarrels" at the DC Historical Society

The Washington Historical Society and Washington Gardener Magazine present a talk about water harvesting via rain barrels. Washington Historical Society at 801 K Street, NW WDC.

Saturday, July 18 8am to 2pm, FREE

Community Yard Sale at Benkhe's Nursery in Beltsville, MD.

Local citizens will sell and barter their wares amidst the greenery at Behnke's in Beltsville on July 18th from 8 am to 2pm. Treat yourself and stroll through the urban market. You may just find your treasure! All rental proceeds will go to benefit the Beltsville Lion's Club. Food will be provided by the Beltsville Lion's Club. Want to rent sales space? It's only \$10. For more information email sfleming@behnkes.net or calling 301-937-1100 ext. 6709.

Saturday, July 18 10am to 3pm, FREE

Kenilworth Gardens Lotus and Water Lily Festival

Enjoy a full day of workshops, tours and special programs. For more information call (202) 426-6905 or go to www.nps.gov/keaq.

Sunday, July 19 at 11 am, FREE

"Choosing Carefree Crapemyrtles" Brighten the garden during the hot summer months when few other shrubs are in bloom. Jody Fetzer, garden supervisor at Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, will discuss the selection and care of these beauties at Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville, MD. From Washington DC, take Rte 50 toward Annapolis to 424, turn right and follow the signs to Homestead Gardens.

Thursday, July 16 from 5 to 7 pm, FREE

"Trees of the Regional Garden" Join Melanie Choukas-Bradley, Author of *City of Trees* will lead a talk identifying trees of the Mid-Atlantic Piedmont and Coastal Plain as you tour the Regional Garden. Melanie will teach you how to identify tupelo, hop-hornbeam, red buckeye, pawpaw, oaks, pines, and many other native trees as you spend a pleasant evening strolling the grounds of the National Garden. She will also share some of the arboreal history of Washington, DC, which has long been known as the "City of Trees," and offer ideas for self-guided tree tours in and around the nation's capital. Registration required. Info (202) 225-1116 or www.usbg.gov

Saturday July 25 *"Bugs: Friends or Foes?"* 10am to 11am at Girard Street Garden in DC, FREE

How do you know whether an insect in your garden is good or bad? The family friendly program will help you know just that and will provide time for a hands-on project for kids. Instructor is Lola Bloom. Meet in the Girard Children's Community Garden in the Girard Playground at 1480 Girard Street, NW in WDC. Info: (443) 854-1669 or rebecca@cityblossoms.org. See also, www.cityblossoms.org.

Saturday July 25 and Sunday July 26 *"Parade of Ponds"* --\$15 all to charity (kids free) Premiere Ponds hosts this self-guided tour of ponds in Montgomery and Howard counties to benefit Shepard's Table, a worthwhile charity that helps feed the hungry and much more. For more information: http://premierpond.com/Parade_2008.html

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