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From Our Gardens to Yours

Whether they are our own gardens or the community gardens that we establish and care for, our objectives are to sustain, conserve and beautify.

We garden for wildlife, for the preservation and restoration of habitat and for the sheer joy and beauty of it all. Those of us who design take the chaos of our buckets of beautiful things and bring forth works of art.

As the daffodils bend and fade, here come the golden alexanders, blue stars, peonies, caterpillars, and the butterflies. There is always beauty. All of this is for the public good and private delight.

Our objective this year is **to grow**. Yes, we are growing livelier, and healthier gardens but we also want and need more of us.

We have a lot to offer. We bring not only our experience and enthusiasm to the community; but we also share plants from our own gardens. Natives can be hard to find and sometimes expensive. Several times a year we will offer small plant sales. These are natives, many of which have been lovingly nurtured by our members from seed.

Throughout the year, we offer programs, workshops, field trips and hands-on community service to inspire and encourage aspiring gardeners or 'seasoned' horticulturists to come grow with us.

Bring a friend. Invite a newcomer. Learn to design. Take home some plants. Have a ball.



Golden Alexander

OGC's Newest Members

Michelle Mactavish.



Michelle being presented her new member apron by Membership co-chairs Gail Jackman (L) and Trish Reynolds (R)

I can't think of a better time to join Oxford Garden Club than in the Spring on the Eastern Shore! With the magnolias, forsythia, and daffodils in full bloom, no one can deny the natural beauty that surrounds us here. Surely, like many of the members at OGC, I feel like I've been digging in the dirt most of my life. Preparing soil and sowing seeds alongside my grandmothers, parents, neighbors, friends, husband and children, I have found that my happiest place, physically and spiritually, is in the garden. I now look forward to working and learning in unison, with all of the club's talented members, to bring creativity and joy to our precious town of Oxford and beyond.



Earl Segal



Approximately 20 years ago and after raising their family outside of Washington, D.C., Earl and Suze Segal moved to Oxford, where like many others, Earl battled the deer, rabbits, and squirrels for even a small portion of the harvest from his vegetable garden. Finally upon realizing that he did not stand much of a chance against the four legged residents, Earl surrendered, and for the past several years has focused his gardening efforts on bearded irises and plants that support our local pollinators.



March 2024

FGCMD Annual Meeting

Our FGCMD Annual Meeting Adventure

The Annual FGCMD, Inc. meeting is held on the 4th Tuesday of March each year at Turf Valley Convention Center in Ellicott City, MD. This meeting starts at 9:45am and ends at around 2:30pm.

The best laid plans often call for a change in strategy. Being flexible is very important for Garden Clubbing! It was an adventurous day for members of Oxford Garden Club. Terry was designated driver with Melinda, Pat J, Jane, Sandy, and Trish R. We planned to carpool for all six of us. Unfortunately, Trish Reynolds was ill and had to beg off the day before. And then there were 5. The Frances Scott Key Bridge Collapsed earlier that morning suggesting the possibility of traffic issues. We did our best to depart on time from an Easton store parking lot at 8am after struggling to figure out how to work the middle seatbelt in Terry's car for Jane. Thankfully, we arrived at venue giving us a full 2 minutes to run to deliver our District I Silent Auction Basket of items and for Terry to rush to dais for the 9:45am Meeting to give her District Report and to deliver Trish Reynold's motion for President Susie Middleton.

The morning meeting room was filled with garden club officers and members from across the fine state of Maryland. The State officers gave their reports, and the District Officers gave theirs. A memorial service was held to create a special floral design of yellow roses to honor our garden club members who passed during the year. Then Awards were announced. It was exciting! Of great note were all the fabulous projects and activities of the FGCMD's 88 garden clubs which offered some novel and great ideas.

At the conclusion of this meeting, we were able to grab some coffee and had a fun time visiting vendors for hats, fascinators, garden pots and tools, jewelry, fashion clothing and accessories, specialty soaps and more! The vendors were numerous. Melinda made it a point to buy a special ergonomic shovel from the tool guy. Jane bought some pots. We had the option to view the Silent Auction items offered from each district and all the councils of FGCMD. These were plentiful and bidding ensued. Pat Jessup volunteered for the registration table.

As we gathered to sit down for the luncheon with tables of ten with each table featuring a unique floral centerpiece that was available for purchase. At least one of these centerpieces was purchased by the group for Trish. Many of us purchased raffle tickets for the special designs that famous floral designer, Jane Godshalk, would create. The room was filled with people. 216 had registered for this event. It should be noted that before Covid, these meetings typically would have over four hundred in attendance.

The lunch was nice. We started with a pretty salad filled with colorful vegetables with a nice vinaigrette, beverages of lemonade, iced tea, water and a cash bar for wine or a bloody mary purchases. The meal was a nice piece of chicken with pasta and mixed roasted vegetables. The dessert was a decadent carrot cake with coffee option.



The meeting restarted and many top awards were announced by the FGCMMD Awards Chairs. After these winners were announced, the program began. Jane Godshalk, AIFD, was the featured program. She is an exciting and internationally recognized floral designer with her own noted American style. She proceeded to create six designs, most of them HUGE, trying to incorporate sustainability in her creations. For the design viewed on left, she used a large decorative shallow clay pot filled with sand as the medium. She filled the container with tall pussy willow, purple allium into damp sand, which cut flowers love, as they last longer! ~ She added “dancing poppies” and placed in purple muscari and narcissus flowering bulbs by using stakes placed into the bulb and staked into the sand. She finished the design using some bark and decorative fake easter eggs, staked into the sand. It was breathtaking!

Another of her other designs was an interesting white/off-white piece which was the smallest of her creations. She glued/wired in large test tubes on top of a wood plank. Then she used bleached dried mitsumata branches placed horizontally between the test tubes. Cut white roses were placed in the test tubes and she used a tube filler to neatly fill the



test tubes with water. The design was created to give great visibility from both sides. Working with a lazy susan made this easy. She added some white tulips, green and white flowering hellebores, and draped clematis in and around the mitsumata branches and tubes. Then, she turned on battery powered lights and the design popped. The crowd became very excited. This was my favorite of Jane’s designs as it was about two feet long and eight inches wide. I should share that mitsumata is Japanese for “groups of three.” It is a branch that is medium brown naturally or turns white after being bleached. As branches grow, they grow in groups of three branches from each stem. This type of branch can be reshaped by soaking it overnight in water in the tub and then easily bent into a shape that can be wired to hold it into the new shape. Once dried, the mitsumata holds this shape until the next soak. I have had my branches for 20 years and they have been reshaped many times.

Another design was a traditional one where she used a large green traditional vase but inserted a shallow container full of water at the lip of the vase to lighten the amount of water needed and to allow for shorter plant material. Her method avoided floral foam and allowed for the top of the creation to be separated for transport. When using a simple container of water, Jane shared that it was necessary to place the floral material in a radial pattern which helps the plant material to lock in place. She added white flowering spirea around the base with sago palm fronds, green viburnum, Italian ruscus and Fasia (which can be grown on the eastern shore) and folded variegated aspidistra. To the greens she added a dozen white roses and white daylilies. She added some pretty light yellowed narcissus using some interesting techniques.



Narcissus stems contain oxalic acid which, when added to a floral design with other flowers, can quickly kill the other flowers. While there are techniques to eliminate oxalic acid, Jane simply created a new mechanic using

a plastic 8oz cup to which she used green floral tape to adhere three stakes which included a cross hatch at the top to help keep the daffys in place. This brilliant idea allows you to add shorter height flowers to a tall arrangement. In this case, it also kept the other flowers alive. Fatsia and aspidistra leaves hid the mechanics. She used green tape and green stakes to minimize the mechanic when mixed with greenery. When sitting on a thirty' high table, this design was over six' tall!



Then something funny happened. Melinda Hudson won the clay container with sand medium. A few raffle pulls later, I won the green vase container described above. I also won another design but gifted the others another chance. Was I generous or thinking of how all this stuff would fit into the car for the ride home? No one knows...

The meeting ended and we all gathered to stuff our purchases and winning designs into the back of Terry's car. With the help of Sandy Wrightson, it all fit and arrived safely, even Melinda's new shovel! We carpooled home without too much traffic and discussed the events of the day, which was a great deal of fun. Next year, let's try to get more members to attend as it was a blast! Our motto of the day: "Go BIG or stay home."

Jane Godshalk, is an internationally acclaimed floral designer and teacher, Artistic Judge for the Garden Club of America, and a Certified Evaluator for the American Institute of Floral Design, "Developing diverse interactive floral programs for museums, garden clubs and organizations as well as teaching at Longwood Gardens has allowed me to pursue my life's passions. It has created a fulfilling and exciting life I can share with friends around the world who also have a love and fascination for flowers "



Carpenter Gratitude

Easter is the season for carpenters. Jesus was one, so was his father, Joseph. We have reason to be grateful for carpenters!

There's more carpenter excellence than found in the Bible though. Much carpenter excellence can be found in your own yard. We're talking about Carpenter Bees of course; and - if you're not grateful for them - read on. Perhaps you'll come around to loving them!

Many folks focus on getting rid of these marvelous miracles of nature. Yes, they do burrow into wooden objects we wish they wouldn't: decks, furniture, siding. They're efficient and hard to get rid of. If you learned an easy way to keep these bees from going after your favorite wood products, would you be willing to leave them alone, especially if you knew they wouldn't hurt you or your kids? What if you knew they don't make hives and you're only dealing with a mated pair?

If you do find a way to keep them away from your favorite woody things, you'll find your garden is much improved by their presence, particularly if you love tomatoes and eggplants, as well as other veggies and flowers. It's worth the small effort to keep these bees happy - and at the same time, keep them away from your favorite outdoor wood!

All that's necessary to make many a delighted Eastern Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa virginica*) happy is to give them a woodpile that's all their own. Stack up dead branches, cut up fallen trees and leave them in a nice, neat pile somewhere close by. You'll have happy bees (worth it). Once there's a spot for them, you won't, unless they've already burrowed into your favorites, need to paint everything or stick steel wool or wine corks in the holes or try to bury them in wood putty. They'll try to protect their homes, but if they're ousted and can find a better one in the wood pile, they'll go away. Give them what they want - dead wood - and they'll leave your other stuff alone (to a Carpenter Bee, your siding is a very poor second choice).

Carpenter Bees are, along with Bumblebees, are the only bees who can successfully pollinate your tomatoes. Eggplants, too. Only these very large bees can perform "buzz pollination," which is beating their wings so fast the flower is forced open and pollen literally is sucked out of the flower on to them. For reasons unknown to us, tomatoes, etc., just seem to want this.

Once the giant bees have "opened" the flower other bees and pollinators can get inside the designed-for-giant-bees flowers, too.

The giant Carpenter male bees may try to protect their bride's special spot. Easily recognized by a white spot on their heads, these poor bees truly can't sting you. The females can, but it's very unlikely. They're busy. They have homes to make and children to feed and only so much time to do it in, why would they waste it stinging you? Even if you fill in their precious burrow, they'll be philosophical and fly off to find another spot. Hopefully, to the wood pile you've so kindly made for them. Put simply, they have no interest at all in stinging you. You can relax and watch them at work, and laugh at the poor male who uselessly slams his head into the plugged hole. Poor guy, he's all buzz. No sting. (Females have a black head, period. And yes, they can sting. It's rare. Very rare. And they won't slam you.)

Carpenter bees are wonderful creatures, like the Bumble bees they resemble. Bumble bees don't nest in wood, and similarly are unlikely to hurt you, and are also fabulous in your garden. How to tell the difference? Easy.

Shiny heinie? It's a Carpenter bee.



Fuzzy butt? It's a Bumble bee.



For more about Carpenter bees, go to [Everything You Need To Know About The Carpenter Bee \(bestbees.com\)](http://bestbees.com)



Two bee or not to bee?

Holy Trinity Lunch Bunch: Easter

This year's arrangements were made by Dodi Sutton and her two granddaughters along with Meryl Nolan, Luann Madary, Alice Collins and Dorothy Williams.

The Parish hall was all set up for Easter so the Lunch Bunch crew were working in the kitchen. We worked well together but it was a tight fit!

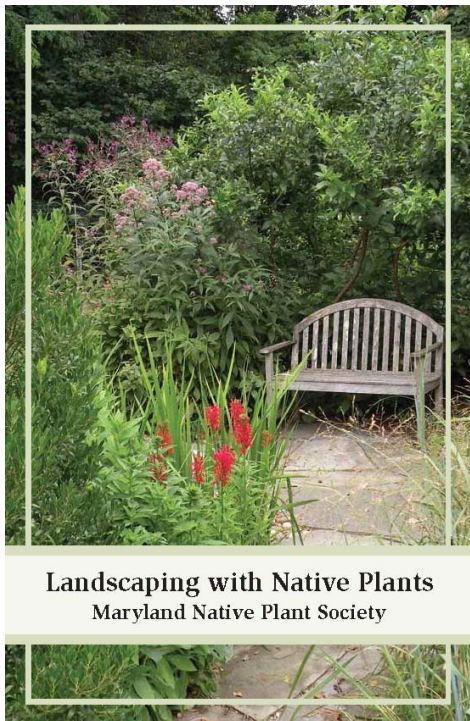


April is Native Plant Month

The U.S. Senate first declared National Native Plant month in April 2021. This year they were joined in this Resolution by the U.S. House of Representatives.

Maryland's Governor, Wes Moore also issued proclamation in 2023 designating April as native plant month.

One of the challenges most all gardeners face is what to plant in shade, whether dappled or deep . If you are starting a new landscape, depending on how much space you have, you'll want information on shade loving trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials as well as ground covers. For one stop shopping check out The Maryland Native Plant Society publication, "**Landscaping with Native Plants**". Its not available in print right now, but you can easily download it to your computer. Just google Maryland Native Plant Society and the download reference will pop up. This publication lists natives by type (tree, shrub, grass, etc.) and provides, in chart form: Name, Bloom Time, Flower Color (for herbaceous plants), Height, Sun/Shade Requirements, and needed Soil Type for each plant listed. Since most of us live in urban environments with small gardens, below are a few native herbaceous plants and ground covers to consider. Local sources: Adkins Arboreum, Environmental Concern, & on the western shore, Chesapeake Natives. More sources can be found on the Maryland Native Plant Society website.



Sampling of Herbaceous Plants

- Heucheras (coral bells)
- Tiarella cordifolia (foamflower)
- Mertenisa virginica (Virginia Bluebells)
- Aruncus dioicus (Wild goats beard)
- Aquilegia canadensis (Wild columbine)
- Iris cristata (dwarf crested iris)
- Packera aurea (Golden ragwort)
- Coreopsis verticillate (Threadleaf coreopsis)
- Antennia dioica (Pussy toes) →



Some Ground Covers

- Asarum Canadense (Wild ginger)
- Sedum Ternatum (Wild stonecrop)
- Chrysogalum virginiaium (Green and gold)

ASK A MASTER GARDENER

Q. How does the change in our planting zone (from 7b to 8a) affect planting dates for seeds?

Everyone agrees that the trend in temperatures is upward. From 2014 through 2023, the world experienced the 10 hottest summers ever recorded in 174 years of climate data. Just a few months of excessive heat can significantly affect plant health, especially cool-season garden crops like broccoli, carrots, radishes and kale. The USDA defines plant hardiness zones based on the coldest average annual temperature in winter at a given location. Each zone represents a 10-degree F range, with zones numbered from 1 (coldest) to 13 (warmest). Zones are divided into 5-degree F half zones, which are lettered “a” (northern) or “b” (southern). We used to be 7b. Now we are 8a, so going from 7 to 8 represents a 10 degree change.

What does this have to do with planting dates for seeds? Hardiness zones matter far less for annual plants, which germinate, flower and die in a single growing season, than for perennial plants that last for several years. Annuals typically avoid the lethal winter temperatures that define plant hardiness zones.

In fact, most annual seed packs don’t even list the plants’ hardiness zones. Instead, they provide sowing date guidelines by geographic region. It’s still important to follow those dates, which help ensure that frost-tender crops are not planted too early and that cool-season crops are not harvested too late in the year.

But for annuals, you might want to try planting your seeds a little earlier than you usually would. As the average temperatures mean it gets warmer earlier than before, the soil will also get warmer sooner, so you might want to experiment by planting earlier, both seeding indoors and planting out or planting out directly. On a recent visit to Robins Nest (hoping they would have a new dwarf fig tree (Figalicious)), Ken Morgan stated that they don’t even buy plants hardy to 7b because, in his opinion, the warming temperatures are averages and don’t mean it can’t dip below the stated low range for the zone, thus an opportunity for the plant to freeze. So, to be “safe”, he only orders perennials that can consistently thrive in lower zones like 6a or b.

It’s also important to remember that just as milder temps mean we can plant earlier, it also means southern insect pests and plant pathogens are expanding their range. Keep an eye out for new pests. For those who remember Gilda Radner as Rosanne Rosannadanna on Saturday Night Live, “**Its always something!**”



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