

The Perennial



2015-2016
Issue 6: February

Website:
ArlingtonGarden.org

What a month! From record-breaking, below zero cold to spring-like temperatures, our plants are clearly confused. Tulips are pushing up, snow-drops are flowering and trees are budding. The snow pack is gone and we're still below average rainfall. It will be important to watch for plants being heaved up during freezing temperatures.

Upcoming Programs:

Joint Day and Evening Program – March 31- 7:00pm
Senior Center, Main Room, 2nd Floor

Design Tips for Knockout, Easy-care Gardens presented by Kerry Ann Mendez. Kerry has been featured on HGTV and in numerous horticulture magazines and is the recipient of the 2014 Gold Medal from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

Gorgeous, low-maintenance gardens are no accident. Learn proven design tricks for sensational gardens. Topics include selecting great plants, incorporating focal points, vertical interest, sustainable practices, natural repellents, the how's and when's of using fertilizer and more.



Please note: there will be no daytime meeting in March

Garden Therapy – Ginger Tower

The Garden Therapy Committee met for the first time this year for a Valentine's Day themed gathering on February 1st. Donna McGowan provided a delightful project consisting of miniature mason jars, tied with pretty red ribbon with white sparkly hearts around the opening, and filled with fresh baby's breath. They looked so pretty and cheerful. All of our 24 residents, including the men, enjoyed them. Irene MacKinnon supplied a delicious snack, and Carol Nahigian led the song fest accompanied by Lily Heckard on the piano.

It Was All About the Sharing at the February Meeting – Nancy Pike

Valerie Maxwell braved the elements and walked to the meeting with this, her favorite garden tool. It is a rotary tiller pushed by person power. Valerie showed everyone how easily each of the three heads is removable by loosening the white knobs. The heads can be used together to manufacture rows and to vary spacing for flowers, aerating, weeding or tilling.



Stephan Miller bicycled to the meeting with a full rucksack and a tool called a Colinear Hoe that he found at johnnyseeds.com. In addition, he brought the following books and catalogues, which he recommended to his fellow members: Growing and Propagating Wildflowers, by William Cullina; Weeds of the Northeast, Richard H. Uva, Joseph C. Neal and Joseph M. DiTomaso; Prairie Moon Nursery, www.prairiemoon.com; Wild Seed Farms, www.wildseedfarms.com; and K. Van Bourgohdien and Sons Dutch Bulbs (wholesale), www.dutchbulbs.com.

Along this line, Carol Nahigian brought, among other books, her very own garden journal. For anyone who wants to start one, a “fancy book” may be purchased or one can use a plain notebook to organize sections. “As the seasons evolve”, she said, “I make notes all along, about the weather, my thoughts at that time and my plans for future planting. I also remind myself not to repeat certain things that just didn't work. One note says ‘No iris, Carol’. Through the months, I add photos of plants in bloom, grandchildren, changes, and also some articles and pamphlets that I particularly like or that apply. I list new plants with dates, when certain plants or trees bloom (even street maples!), compare years and changes. I list plantings to note celebrations and to mark times of births and deaths, when plants are transplanted or brought from family gardens in different states, plants given by friends and family as gifts.” Carol's presentations had many of her fellow gardeners thinking of starting their own journal.

Emily Forshay-Crowley presented what she described as an invaluable garden aid – a “Tubtrug”. “I use my Tubtrug to collect weeds and prunings,” she enthused. “I love this rubbery/plastic tub because it is light weight, flexible and easy to carry with you as you go around the garden weeding and pruning. I find it much easier than pushing a wheel barrow or large basket that you might have to keep emptying. They can be found at Shattuck’s hardware and many other stores or go to Tubtrugs.com”. In addition to this, she brought a beautiful book titled O Garden of Fresh Possibilities, written and illustrated by Kim Smith. She introduced the book by talking about the author:



“Kim Smith is a horticulturist, photographer, writer and artist. I became a big fan of hers when I discovered her website: www.kimsmithdesigns.com. I receive automatic posts of hers that are filled with gorgeous photography and videos. [This] book is far more than a reference book – it is filled with interesting writings of her Gloucester garden, her

grandmother’s Cape Cod garden, her painted illustrations, and poetry. It’s the kind of book you can take to bed with you. Kim Smith is also an avid writer and video producer on the Monarch butterfly and designed and maintains the butterfly garden at Willowdale in Topsfield. I cannot say enough about her.”

Donna McGowan demonstrated a sturdy, metal folding gardening kneeler/chair. She explained that these are very helpful for any gardeners who may have knee or back problems, arthritis, or difficulty bending. It is wonderful for sitting while potting up planters. The sturdy one she shared with us can be folded and hung up for storage! Several members tried out the chair and found it as Donna represented. The chair is available through several garden magazines and hardware stores with good gardening departments.



Emily Snyder told us about some good sources for garden tools: A.M. Leonard’s *Horticultural Tool and Supply Co.* www.amleo.com; Grow-Tech, Inc. www.growtech.com; Gardener’s Supply Co., a cooperatively owned company based in (green!) Vermont www.gardeners.com. Emily also supplied us with some sources for native plants and information about native plants: The New England Wildflower Society, aka “Garden in the Woods”: www.newfs.org; Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Univ. of Texas - a valuable national website for native plant information www.wildflower.org; and also Grow Native Massachusetts holds free “Evenings with Experts” in neighboring Cambridge gownativemass.org. Last but not least, she brought her favorite pruning tools and recommended the following: Felco - #5 is the standard one; not cheap but have changeable parts & truly last a lifetime www.felcostore.com/pruners and Fiskars www2.fiskars.com/Products/Gardening-and-Yard-Care/Pruning-Shears. She reminded us that many of our local hardware stores carry these items.

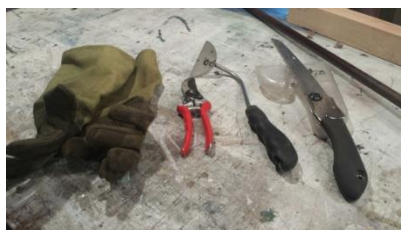
Sally Naish of www.lightandshadegardens.com brought some of her favorite gardening books, including *Continuous Color* and *Continuous Bloom* by Pam Duthie, *Residential Landscape Architecture*, by Norman K Booth & James E Hiss, and *Bringing Nature Home* by Douglas Tallamy. She also invites anyone who wants to contact her at the above web address.

Nancy Pike brought two related books. The first is *The New Victory Garden*, by Bob Thompson, and its companion book, *The Victory Garden Cookbook*, by Marian Morash. She gave a very brief history of America's victory gardens during WWII. If you are interested in learning more about these gardens, which many of us remember, you can go to www.nationalww2museum.org. The cookbook, published by Knopf, has recipes that are gathered alphabetically according to the vegetables featured in the Victory Gardens.



Janet Pagliuca brought her dandelion digger and told us how much she likes using it. "It looks like a screwdriver but the end is shaped like a fish tail. It provides a lot of satisfaction to see the root come out of the ground and know that no pesticides were used." The version she brought to the meeting requires getting down on her knees (Janet might want to get one of Donna's kneeler chairs), but she said that there's a similar tool that can be used while standing up. Janet says that when (she is) using this tool it is a sure sign of spring!

Patsy Kramer brought a number of enviable items, including a gardening tool bag with storage pockets that is obviously well used, a rake that changes sizes and numerous tools. In addition, she brought some special garden gloves that cover not just one's hands, but also forearms. This is a great addition for any gardener who works around thorns or who has allergic reactions to weeds or other growth.



[Pennies for Pines](#)

Keep those pennies coming! We've already raised \$29.97 toward our goal of \$68.00 and the planting of an acre of trees by the US Forest Service.

Environmental Corner – Mary Stack

Plants are not the only invasive species to worry about. In New England we have winter moths (*Operophtera brumata*). A native of Europe, it was first found in Nova Scotia in the 1930's. They have since spread south and now infest most of the New England states. Its hosts include oak, maple, crabapple and fruit trees. They are also partial to blueberry bushes and will feed on some garden perennials and roses. But being opportunistic feeders, they will eat almost plant.

Both the females and males emerge from the ground on warm days usually between Thanksgiving and Christmas. You probably noticed small grayish-brown moths fluttering around your windows or outdoor lights last December. These were male moths looking for the flightless females. The females are oriented to vertical surfaces. As they climb up trees, they leave a trail of pheromones which attracts the males. After mating the females lay their eggs on the bark or in crevices of trees. Then both male and female die. In early April, the caterpillars hatch, just as tree buds begin to unfold. These tiny pests produce silk threads, and carried on the wind they balloon up to the tree tops. They work their way into the buds and begin eating. As they mature and the tree buds open, the caterpillars start to feed on the new leaves. A heavy infestation can completely defoliate a tree. Sometimes trees are able to produce new leaves, but this can be very stressful especially if it is a dry spring.

In an effort to control the spread of winter moths, UMass Amherst has been experimenting with the release of a parasitic fly *Czyenis albicans*. These flies only prey on winter moths so they pose no danger to beneficial insects. Initial results are promising; however, it will be a while before the flies are widespread. In the mean time there are some things gardeners can do to mitigate tree damage. Which control method to use depends on the stage of development.

Tree banding with special sticky tape in the fall can stop females from climbing trees to lay eggs. In early spring, you can hire someone to spray trees with horticultural oil to destroy eggs.

When the caterpillars start to feed you can have your trees sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (kurstaki). For small infestations Spinosad products such as Bull's Eye Bioinsecticide can be used to kill caterpillars. Also be sure your trees are getting enough water. Both *Bacillus thuringiensis* (kurstaki) and Spinosad can be harmful to bees during application.

Because the timing of these methods is tricky, you may want to have your trees assessed and treated by a licensed arborist or other professional. For more details about management go to <https://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/winter-moth-identification-management>



Winter Moth Caterpillar and Adult

Button Battery Collection

Button Batteries will continue to be collected at the meetings.

Eco-Fest – Saturday March 19 10:00-2:00

This year's theme is "Ready for Climate Change?" EcoFest is co-sponsored by the Club with Sustainable Arlington and the Town. There will be speakers, family musical programs, workshops and vendors to educate and inform attendees on "thinking green."

If you can help, please contact Patsy Kraemer or Emily Snyder.

Plant Sale – Saturday, May 21

It's that time of year when we need to start thinking about this major fundraiser for the garden club. This year we need new co-chairs. Gerry Ricci kept great notes and has great reference records to help make the job a breeze. If you are considering this position, please contact Nancie Richardson. And don't forget to start saving quality items for the flea market.

Learning Opportunities:

-Evening with Experts

As a follow-up to our sharing day presentations by Emily Snyder and Sally Naish, Grow Native is presenting a program this coming Wednesday, March 2 at 7:00 at the Cambridge Public Library. The speaker will be Doug Tallamy, author of Bringing Nature Home and co-author of The Living Landscape. His topic is "Restoring Nature's Relationship at Home."

-Development Workshop sponsored by GCFM:

"Lessons from New England's Public Gardens," lecture and workshop, will be held at the Espousal Center in Waltham on March 24 from 10:30-2:00. Cost is \$15.00 and includes a light lunch. The speaker will be Suzanne Mahler who has addressed us at two of our Day Group Meetings. Discussion will follow the

presentation on what we can learn from our best public spaces, how we can apply those lessons in our own communities and how we can work with our community leaders and where to get funding.

Several AGC members have attended previous civic workshops and found them well worth it.

Advance registration is required. Send your name, address, phone, email address and your \$15.00 check made out to GCFM to Louise Sironi, PO Box 2123, Hanover, MA 02339. You must note that you are a member of the Arlington Garden Club and that this is for the Civic Development Workshop. Any questions, please contact Louise at sironied@verizon.net or call Nancie Richardson at 781 646-5952.

Gardener's Corner:

Please send questions or concerns that can be answered in this column as well as your favorite gardening tips.



Last winter we worried that spring might never come and this year we worry that it may be coming over and over again!