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## ***The Perennial***

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***January 2021***

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2020-21: Issue 4

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Website: <[ArlingtonGarden.org](http://ArlingtonGarden.org)>

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Facebook: [m.facebook.com/arlingtongardenclubma](https://m.facebook.com/arlingtongardenclubma)

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### ***GREETINGS, MY FELLOW GARDENERS***

***Lolly Bennett, President***



I think everyone will all agree that putting 2020 behind us is a pretty good thing. We are just beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

I have found a silver lining through this past pandemic. Nature is more than just something to look at (but nothing beats a beautiful sunset) ....

however, being in Nature is a tonic for me. Actually seeing the sunlight sparkle and glisten on new fallen snow, enjoying a Carolina wren at the bird feeder, walking silently through the woods in the snow. These are moments of healing and can be uplifting to us as well.

This New Year - more so than any

others of the past - I am sending my best wishes to all of you for much health and happiness. I look forward to seeing you all out in Nature soon!

Lolly, Your President

**Happy new year to all !**

Stay, healthy, and happy!

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### ***December's non-Holiday Luncheon Winners!***

*~ courtesy of Elf Nancie Richardson ~*



At our holiday luncheon we always have door prizes to hand out. No luncheon this year, but we did still have door prizes which were delivered to the front doors of two members. The two lucky winners were Georgia Contes and Donna McGowan who received Stonewall Kitchen jellies and a basket of various sauces: pesto, bar-b-que, and buffalo.

Extra treat was that Elf Nancie who delivered them, not coming down the chimney, was able to see two homes decorated beautifully for the season.

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### **January Program**

**Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 10:30 am**

*via Zoom*

*(moved to the 4<sup>th</sup> Wed. this month*

*to avoid conflicting with the Presidential Inauguration on Wed. Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>)*

**“Garden Tips, Tools & Tidbits”**

*Presenters: Members of the Board*

Tune in to see and hear Club members rhapsodize about their prized digging, raking, weeding garden tools, and their favorite garden books. As well, Stephan Miller will demonstrate tool sharpening and cleaning.

A Zoom link will be sent to all members with email addresses a few days before the program

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## Save These Dates for Future Programs

*still on Zoom... for the time being*

**Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 10:30 am**

**Speaker:** *Charlotte Milan, Recycling Coordinator*

*Arlington Department of Public Works*

Charlotte has presented to the Club on previous occasions, and she always has interesting new information for us.

**Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 10:30 am**

**Speaker:** *TBA*

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## ***Home Remedies for Keeping Plants Health***

***Stephan Miller, Environment Chair***

When I wrote about the use of herbicides a few months ago, I mentioned that I rarely use synthetic pesticides on my garden and house plants. A little birdie (named ‘Snyder’) asked me if I could write more about the relatively safe methods I use for controlling insects and diseases on my plants indoors and out. So here are some of my home remedies.

**Water (!).** Water is my most used remedy for insect infestations, but it doesn’t work for fungal or bacterial diseases. I find this water treatment to be effective for aphids, spider mites, mealy bugs, scale and most other clingy, sucky insects.

For use **outside**, get an old-fashioned brass adjustable nozzle for your hose and use it to give the plant as stiff a spray as it can stand without damage. This treatment must sometimes be used several times at daily intervals for heavy infestations.

**Indoors**, I do a similar treatment in the kitchen sink or, for larger plants, in the bathtub. I have found that, in order to know your plants well, it is necessary to shower with them once in a while.

**Liquid Lime Sulfur.** For the last few summers, the apple, crabapple and pear trees in my yard have been defoliated by a fungal disease. If I don't spray them, they are bare by mid-July. Early last spring I sprayed them with liquid lime sulfur. This is probably the strongest chemical I use on my garden but it is a very effective dormant spray that kills fungi on contact and at a short distance through the release of a gas, hydrogen sulfide. Its use is generally accepted in organic gardening but it is mildly caustic (pH 11 or so), so you want to keep it off your skin and out of your eyes. A bonus is that it is also toxic to overwintering insects especially mites. Although liquid lime sulfur is mostly used before the plants leaf out, it can be used during the growing season at higher dilutions as long as the air is cool. For use, follow the directions on the bottle of concentrate.

Many companies sell it. I don't think I've used the same brand twice. My current bottle of concentrate says *Hi-Yield*. When I need some, I either pick it up at the local nursery or Google it. I follow the instructions on the label. Of course, you don't want to swallow it or get it in your eyes. I cover up my skin with long sleeves and pants, wear gloves and protective goggles. You could also wear a mask since we all have them around.

**Soap-Shield.** This is the brand of a flowable liquid copper fungicide. Copper is one of the oldest known fungicides. *Soap-Shield* combines copper with soap to make a fungicide that controls a wide range of plant fungal diseases. I use *Soap-Shield* to spray my fruit trees throughout the growing season at about two-week intervals. I also spray my tomatoes early in the season to prevent the fungus that attacks and kills the lower leaves. I don't use *Soap-Shield* on my house plants unless they have a particularly serious case of powdery mildew. I buy *Soap-Shield* from Gardens Alive on the web (<<https://www.gardensalive.com>>) and follow the directions provided.

**Potassium Bicarbonate.** Potassium bicarbonate is widely available because it is used in the food industry and to make wine and beer. This is a chemical compound with very low toxicity similar to sodium bicarbonate. In solution, it provides a mildly basic treatment which controls many fungal diseases. It is very effective against the powdery mildew which attacks my fibrous begonias every winter. I also use it on vegetable leaves that are susceptible to mildew.

For use, I dilute 3 tablespoons of potassium bicarbonate, 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil and half a teaspoon of *Dawn* dishwashing liquid in a gallon of water. Probably any dishwashing liquid would do the job, but tradition says that *Dawn* is the best. If you have a fungal emergency and don't have any potassium bicarbonate on hand, you can use milk. Milk is also mildly basic and works almost as well but I don't use it because it leaves a residue on the leaves.



**Detergent and Alcohol.** Diluted detergent makes an effective insecticide. I dilute 1 ½ teaspoons of *Dawn* into a quart of water and use a quart hand sprayer to spray it on the plant. I use this solution indoors and out to tame mites, white flies, aphids, thrips, and scale. This solution has very low toxicity, so the amount that can be applied is unlimited. I find that some persistence is necessary for heavy infestations, so I might use three or more applications at 2-day intervals. This method can be made more effective by adding isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol (save the Scotch for yourself).

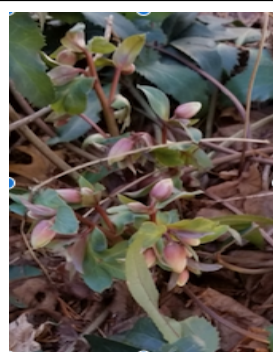
Isopropanol, which is the chemist's way of saying isopropyl alcohol, and it may say either on the label. It is available at your local hardware or drug store and comes in two different concentrations, 70% and 90%. You can use either concentration just add a little more of the 70%.

I mix 1 cup of isopropanol, 1 ½ teaspoons of *Dawn* and 3 cups of water. This is my most used insecticide. The alcohol facilitates the action of the soap by making the insect exoskeletons more permeable to the soap. It is also effective against mealy bugs because it dissolves the gunk they wrap themselves in.

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### Winter Gardening Take 1

*Hellebores peeking  
out in late  
December*



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## ***Members' Corner***

Please update your *Yearbook*

Peggy Gardiner

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**Winter  
Gardening Take  
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