



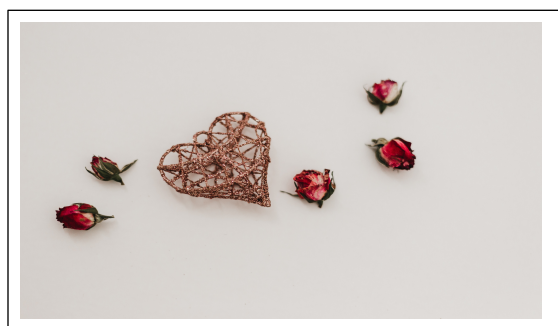
## ***The Perennial***

***February 2021***

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

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



**February Program – Wed., February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 10:30 am**  
*via Zoom (Zoom link will be sent a few days before the program.)*

### **“Hot Topics in Waste Diversion”**

**Arlington’s Recycling Coordinator Charlotte Milan** has early memories of making crafts out of ordinary household objects. As a natural maker, she sees value in stuff that's lying around that others might consider trash. Charlotte values collaborating with colleagues and volunteers to find all kinds of creative ways to promote waste diversion.

**Arlington's School Sustainability Coordinator Rachel Oliveri** grew up in a family of educators and reuse/repair enthusiasts. She loves supporting students who work as a team to advocate for the environment at their schools and in their community. She feels lucky to work with Charlotte and connect Arlington youth and their families to local waste diversion projects.

## Recapping January's Program

### "Garden Tips, Tools & Tidbits"

*Presenters: Members of the Board*

Lolly Bennett recommends the book: *Wildflowers of New England*, Ted Elliman

Karen MacKinnon: [Spearhead spade](#)

Carmen Torres: **Vertex Garden Rocker Comfort Seat**

... features an ergonomically-designed seat that subtly rocks with you as you bend and stretch. This movement reduces pressure on your knees and lessens strain on your lower back."

"I bought the rocker from [Gardeners Edge](#) for \$41.24.

Also sold at Home Depot and elsewhere online for a higher price. It's also available with a cushion and rocker wheels."

*Editorial note:* **A. M. Leonard** is also the name of this excellent garden tools seller

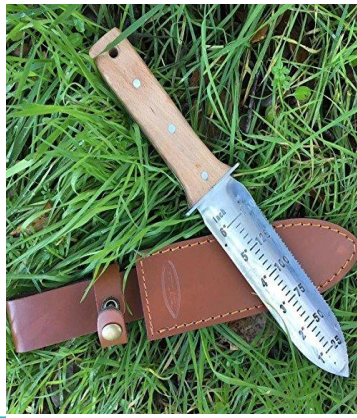
"Last Fall I attended the [MMGA Home Gardening Webinar Series](#) which was offered by the **Massachusetts Master Gardener Association**. I learned about the rocker seat in the ergonomic gardening session and found all the lectures to be really interesting and informative. I recommend checking out their future webinars: < <http://massmastergardeners.org/home-gardening-webinar-series/> >

Patsy Kraemer: **Edging shovel    Garden tool bag with pockets**  
**Bird bath warmer**

Emily Snyder: 2 **Pruning saws**

- Pruning saw - 3-sided razor teeth for efficient cutting and 14 in. blade is ideal for cutting large branches
- Bonsai saw – Small saw with serrated teeth and folding blade

Both are from [Corona Tools](#)



Janet Ford: [HoriHori garden knife](#)

Stephan Miller demonstrated **tool sharpening techniques** using these devices: 10" mill bastard cut file, a 6" pointed file, *Multi-Sharp* scissors sharpener, 3" sharpening stone.

[Multi-Sharp 4-in-1 Sharpener](#) – (also available at Bed, Bath & Beyond)



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### **BUTTON CELL BATTERIES CAN NOW GO INTO THE TRASH!**

The battery manufacturers have figured out how to make these batteries without mercury. Thank you to the Garden Club for being great partners with this program over the years!

*Charlotte Milan, Recycling Coordinator  
Arlington Department of Public Works*



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## ***For the Birds***

***Stephan Miller, Environment Chair***

For this month's article, I thought I would tell you what I have learned in 25 years of feeding the birds in my backyard.

It all started when I decided to purchase an expensive, large plexiglass bird feeder. In order to hang it, I installed a 10' tall wooden structure that my neighbors called the gallows. I hung the feeder from the gallows and stood back with great pride and invited my neighborhood birds to a feast. About 2 hours later, we were eating dinner when we heard a loud crashing noise. When I went out to investigate, I found that a squirrel had gnawed through the heavy nylon rope I used to hang the feeder which crashed to the ground where an entire squirrel family was stuffing seeds into their cheeks as rapidly as they could. My beautiful feeder was in no less than 58 jagged pieces of useless plastic.

So I did some research. My next purchase was a heavy steel feeder and a squirrel baffle that I hung with a braided steel cable. The perches on the feeder are spring-loaded so if anything heavier than a cardinal stands

on them they close off the seed reservoir (*Woodlink Absolute Squirrel Resistant Bird Feeder*). I've now had this feeder for more than 20 years.

But all was not perfect in Birdland. A few days after I installed the new feeder, I came out to find a squirrel hanging upside down, under the baffle, with one rear paw gripping the cable, scooping seeds with one of its front paws. We obviously have better educated squirrels in these parts than wherever the *Woodlink* was designed.

I soon found that there was a second problem, maybe more difficult to solve than the first—sparrows. The feeder holds more than 3 lbs. of seeds, and a flock of sparrows can empty it in a matter of hours. In addition, the flocks of sparrows intimidated and discouraged other species of bird from feeding. I did more research and came upon two additional improvements which not only reduced the sparrow problem but totally solved the squirrel problem.

Improvement #1 was to abandon the bird seed mix which contains all those

yummy sunflower seeds and substitute safflower seeds. Sparrows do not have powerful enough beaks to break the seed coat of a safflower seeds but cardinals, titmouses, chickadees, finches and nuthatches manage just fine. Safflower seeds are more expensive than the usual seed mix, but a batch in the feeder lasts much longer. A few sparrows were still frequenting the feeder, I think to eat the seeds with broken shells.

This brings us to Improvement #2, halos and dangly gizmos. I found in the sparrow-discouragement literature, two physical methods for sparrow management, both of which I use. I made a silver halo, from a coat hanger, which I suspended over the feeder. This deterrent discouraged all but a few of the bravest sparrows. Why? Who knows. The second deterrent I use are weighted strings dangling in or two.

front of the perch (see photo). The halo and the dangly gizmos together pretty much eliminated sparrow predation of the seed in the feeder.



I've been using this setup for about 5 years. The squirrels completely ignore it. Sparrows will fly up to it but almost never land. I figure the occasional sparrow brave enough to broach my defenses deserves a seed

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## **FEBRUARY GARDENING TIP**

Valentine's Day is coming. Instead of a bouquet of flowers or a box of chocolates, consider giving your favorite gardener a gift certificate to a nursery or a longed-for garden tool. You'll reap thanks again when the gardener puts it to use in the spring. Plus it's a great way to support local businesses during these tough times.

P.S. If budget doesn't permit gifting a debit card right now, you can always promise to lend a hand with spring garden cleanup.

## **“WINTER IS THE BEST TIME”**

(By David Budbill - Vermont Poet)

Winter is the best time  
to find out who you are.

Quiet, contemplation time  
away from the rushing world.

cold time, dark time holed-up  
pulled-in time and space

to see that inner landscape,  
that place hidden and within.



Vermont Winter, Joan Robbio, photographer

**A TASTY WINTER PROJECT?**  
**Very Red Velvet Cake with**  
**Cream Cheese Icing & Pecans**  
**(Serves 12-16)**



Cake:

- 2½ C cake flour
- ½ T baking soda
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1½ C sugar
- 1½ C vegetable oil
- 2 T distilled white vinegar
- 1 C buttermilk
- 1 t pure vanilla extract
- 3 T red food coloring (2 1-oz. bottles)

**Icing:**

- 1 (1-lb.) box confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 (8-oz.) pkg cream cheese, softened
- 1 stick (8 T) butter, softened
- 1 C chopped pecans

**Preparation**

1. Set the oven to 350°F & adjust the rack positions to the middle & top third. Spray three 8-inch round cake pans well with baking spray.
2. Sift the flour with the baking soda.
3. In a large bowl, with an electric mixer on medium speed, beat eggs well, then beat in the sugar, oil, & vinegar. On low speed, slowly add flour & beat in well. Add the buttermilk slowly, then the vanilla, & then the food coloring.
4. Pour the batter evenly into the pans & rap them on the countertop several times to eliminate any air bubbles. Bake for 12 min. then rotate the pans from shelf to shelf so they bake evenly & bake until the tops spring back when lightly touched, about 25 min. altogether. Let the cakes cool in the pans on racks for 15 min..
5. Run a knife around the sides of the pans & invert the cakes onto the racks to cool completely. Once they're cool, refrigerate the cakes for 20-30 min. to make icing them easier.
6. To make the icing: Combine everything in a medium bowl & mix well until very smooth. It's best to use the icing right away, when it's soft & spreadable.
7. Put one cake layer upside down on a cake plate or cake stand and cover the top evenly with frosting. Add a second layer, right side up, and spread with more frosting. Top with the third layer, right side up, and spread the frosting evenly around the sides of the cake and on top; check for any places where you can see through to the cake. Finally, sprinkle the pecans evenly all over the top of the cake.
8. Once the frosting sets, cut into slices to serve. This cake keeps for up to 2 weeks in a cake keeper, but once it's ready, people want to dive right in.

**2 Tips**

I sometimes like to mix the pecan bits right into the frosting. Don't worry, they'll stay crisp. You can make 18

cupcakes from this recipe. They'll take about 25 min. to bake.

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## **Date for March Program**

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

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

**The Mystic River Watershed Association**

MyRWA is an environmental organization based in Arlington, which works for a vibrant, healthy and resilient Mystic River watershed for the benefit of all community members. Learn about some of its initiatives that impact Arlington, including, park, plant and garden-based strategies to reduce flooding and stormwater pollution which you might have seen around town.

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***Members' Corner*** - Welcoming new member:

Brucie Moulton

Brucie is interested in Environmental Programs, native plants and native pollinators (pollination systems). Robert Gegear, UMass Dartmouth; The Beecology Project, Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

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