



Greenfield Garden Club Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2015

Vol. 23, No. 1

Trekking for Tea in the New Year

Our monthly meeting this month falls on the Chinese New Year, so what better way to celebrate than with an evening of tea lore and sampling! We have set up this special evening with Tea Trekkers in Northampton for this very purpose.

Our guide will be Mary Lou Heiss, who co-owns the business with her husband, Robert. For 39 years and counting, they have been educating and introducing Americans to the delights of traditional teas from historic tea-producing regions in China, India, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, and Taiwan. Their passion for tea has them traveling to these areas to observe, learn, taste and personally select the teas that they then sell in their small shop in Northampton and through the internet. They import many of their teas directly from tea farmers, village cooperatives, and small village tea factories.

This will be an evening of delights for all of our senses! Come and gain an understanding of the importance of the differences in each class of tea. Mary Lou will also talk about the cultivation, manufacture and methods of preparing tea. You can see why in 2008, the *New York Times* called them the "Professors of Tea!" At the end of the evening, Mary Lou has kindly offered us a small discount on any purchases we make in the store.

Seating at this event is limited! It is very important that members RSVP early by email to greenfieldgardenclub@yahoo.com or call Laura at 413-774-4594 so we'll know if we need to bring extra chairs.

As always, we will carpool from Cherry Rum Plaza in Greenfield, leaving at 6:00 p.m. Tea Trekkers is located at 2 Gleason Plaza in Northampton, MA. Their phone number is 413-584-5116.

Directions: Take I-91 south to Exit 18, which is Route 5 towards Northampton/Easthampton. Turn left onto Route 5/Mt Tom Rd (there will be signs indicating Smith College). Travel 0.7 miles and take a right on Railroad Ave. Gleason Plaza will be immediately on the left.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Garden Club meetings are the third Thursday of each month. All events are open to the public, so feel free to bring along a friend, neighbor, or family member.

February 19, 6:30 p.m.

Celebrate the Chinese New Year at Tea Trekkers, Northampton

March 19, 6:00 p.m. **Wine & Canvas**, Greenfield

April 16, 7:00 p.m. **Magic & Mystery of Crop Circles**, Greenfield

May 21, 6:00 p.m. **Make a Glass Globe Terrarium**, Greenfield

President's Report

Laura Schlaikjer

I cannot start this article without commenting on the Annual Meeting, which has just transpired at the Wagon Wheel in Gill. Everything was perfect, and I think I can say that everyone had a wonderful time. (Even Mother Nature couldn't put a damper on the evening!) We learned a lot about Nepal through slides, artifacts and commentary. Club member Debbie Loomer did a wonderful job capturing our attention and bringing us along for the ride. I can't begin to give enough thanks to Carolann and John Zaccara of the Wagon Wheel for their zeal in capturing the foods of the region. When I saw her suggestion of a momo happy hour, I knew it was going to be a culinary delight. The fried bananas with ginger ice cream was a fitting end to a fine meal, and quenched any fire still remaining from the curries, pickles and chutneys.

Speaking of food, if you need an edible logo on a baked item, head with confidence over to Second Street Baking Co in Turners Falls. They did a fine job putting our revamped logo onto rice paper and applying it to cookies. Half of the assembled group went home with either a cookie or a primrose. Congratulations!

I'd like to draw your attention to our February event, which conspires to continue our travelogue! Our special evening will feature information and tea samplings arranged just for us. It should be fascinating! Since this is so close to Fitzwilly's, members might want to stop there for a light supper and conversation after the demonstration and sampling. Let us know either when you RSVP, or when we gather for the carpool so that we may plan accordingly.

Now, take out your club calendar of events and mark your personal calendars month by month, and take time to join us this year. Don't forget to bring a friend!

February's To-Do List for Gardeners, Zone 5

From combined sources, compiled by
Dolly Gagnon

► GET READY FOR SPRING!

Now is the time of year to relax with a stack of gardening books and other references and plan for the upcoming season. Before you **start ordering seeds**, you may want to consider some basic questions: How many of A, B and C plants can fit into your Y square feet and for what cost in seeds, supplies and labor? Also, how much room, in a sunny spot where the soil drains well, do you really have? Grow what is precious and hard to find elsewhere: things such as organic baby greens or juicy colorful heirloom tomatoes.

When you have a good list of things you want to grow, ask yourself which ones work **best grown directly from seed**? Anything that grows better direct-seeded than started in cells and transplants, and things of which you want to make repeat sowings, such as: beans, peas, squash and pumpkins, spinach and salad greens, cucumbers, root crops like carrots and beets, braising greens, dill, basil, melons and corn.

With **transplants** like tomatoes or peppers, ask yourself, "How many plants of each will I need?" Who needs

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more than one or two cherry tomato plants?

Collaborate with friends — compare orders and swap partial packets or plants.

Hardy **onion seedlings** are one of the earlier crops that can be set out as transplants in the outdoor garden, four weeks before the last spring frost date. Since they need eight to 10 weeks of indoor growth to get to transplant size, it may be onion-seeding time soon. *Note: Onion seeds don't retain their viability well in home storage, so it's best to start with fresh seed each year.*

Potatoes are another crop that goes in the ground early — two weeks before last frost, which in Zone 5 is around April 30.

You can start the **slow-to-germinate plants** such as parsley, thyme, tarragon, geraniums and sage now. Light from your windowsill may not be enough in February so you may need to supplement with a grow light.

► COPE WITH WINTER!

Avoid walking on grass or ground covers while they are frozen. The frozen leaves are brittle and easily damaged.

Check perennials to see if any have been pushed out of the ground by alternate freezing and thawing weather. If so, push them back into the soil; otherwise the exposed roots will dry out and die. Replace mulch if it has

blown away.

Sterilize your tools, pots, and anything you use around your plants. Use one part household bleach to nine parts water. Soak for about 15 minutes, rinse, and let dry.

This is also a good time to **clean salty clay pots**. Soak them in vinegar to help remove salt deposits. Soaking in a dilute solution of bleach (one part bleach to nine parts water) will kill micro-organisms. Never combine any household chemicals for cleaning purposes; complete the cleaning in "two" steps. For heavily crusted pots, scrub with a steel wool pad after soaking for 12 hours.

If you have some time this winter, paint the handles of **garden tools** red or orange. This will preserve the wood and make the tools easier to locate next summer when you lay them down in the garden or on the lawn.

Look at your landscape. Do you need evergreens to protect your privacy, reduce street noise, block the glare of street lights? Order plants in January and February for spring planting.

Try coating your **snow shovel** with a "no-stick" cooking spray. The snow slides right off. Recoat as needed.

Use calcium chloride instead of sodium chloride on your **icy walks**. It does less damage to plants. Or, better yet, use sand, which doesn't hurt your plants a bit.

The Peace of Wild Things – Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the least sound
In fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
Rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
Who do not tax their lives with forethought
Of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
Waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Book alert: The Living Landscape

Susan Farber

Over the last five years I've watched a wetland pocket, home to spring peepers, trilling toads, and a cacophony of birds, become infested with burning bush. Last fall the area was wall-to-wall pink, attesting to the near-complete land-grab of this invasive species, all offspring of one bush planted years ago by a homeowner ignorant of burning bush's dark side.

I'll reveal my own ignorance here. This, I thought, was the complete story of invasive plants: their evil is that they elbow out native plants.

Then I read a book newly arrived at the Greenfield Public Library: *The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden*, by Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy (Timber Press, 2014). This book showed me how invasives disrupt the entire ecosystem – insects, birds, animals, soil, water, air.

The stunning example, for me, is chickadees. Co-author Tallamy, a well-known entomologist, explains that a pair of chickadee parents bring to their nest 390-570 caterpillars each day – that's six to ten thousand caterpillars to raise one clutch. There's no other option on the menu: chickababies eat caterpillars and nothing else.

Many plant-eating insects, Tallamy goes on to explain, have a similarly limited diet. Think of the monarch butterfly whose fabulously striped caterpillar eats only milkweed. Remember, too, that the monarch has evolved to tolerate the milkweed's poisonous sap. (The monarch is flapping towards extinction because Roundup is wiping out milkweed – but that's another story.) If your yard is filled with exotic plants – Kousa dogwood, butterfly bush, hosta, maiden grass – many native insects will not eat them, no matter how hungry they might be. It's not that they're picky eaters. Most plants, like milkweed, contain unique formulas of chemical deterrents – natural insecticides – an evolved defense against being munched. Our native insects die if they ingest the strange chemicals in those exotic leaves.

So if our neighborhoods are planted with exotics, native caterpillars will starve, butterflies will vanish – and, as Tallamy succinctly puts it, "there will be no chickadees where there are no caterpillars." But take heart, chickadees! Count me among the many gardeners intent on including native plants to support a wholesome biodiversity of bees, bugs, birds – the whole ecological shebang.

I've summarized for you here just two pages from *The Living Landscape*. There's lots more in this large-format, nearly 400-page book: abundant information on landscape design and ecology along with glorious photos and an inspiring catalog of native plants. You can find it at the Greenfield Library – as soon as I return it!

Create Golden Birches at March meeting

Save Thursday, March 19, for a fun evening with Wine & Canvas of Western Mass. This event is detailed on the Special Events page of our website along with a color photo of the painting we have chosen, called Golden Birch.

This is a joint venture with St. James' Episcopal Church. The program will be held in St. James' Whiteman Room (Federal & Church Streets, Greenfield) and run from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. All supplies and instructions are included in the \$35 fee. Members are encouraged to bring finger food and beverage to share.

Sign up either on the Wine & Canvas website, or through the club. Space is limited, so sign up early to save your seat.

Please help us spread the word. Posters will be available soon. Contact a steering committee member if you are not hooked up to the internet and want to help!

Find details and registration info here:
www.thegreenfieldgardenclub.org/special-events.html

Treasurer's Report

Jean Wall

Balance as of January 29, 2015..... \$5,714.79

Income (December and January):..... \$1,758.27
Interest, Dues, Donation, Annual Meeting

Expenses (December and January)..... \$1,372.36
Newsletter Printing, Printing, Programs, Annual Meeting

All financial matters and membership dues should be directed to Jean Wall at 773-9069 or write to 40 High Street, Greenfield MA 01301.

The Garden Club's 2015 Grant Program is accepting requests for financial support for projects in Franklin County that link children with gardening, plant science, ecology, or related topics. Grant awards usually range from \$50 to \$200. The deadline to submit proposals is Sunday, March 1. Please share this opportunity with local schools and organizations.

Details on writing and submitting a proposal, along with a list of 2014 winners, are on the Garden Club's website: www.thegreenfieldgardenclub.org/grants.html



Greenfield Garden Club

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MEMBER DISCOUNTS

These vendors have agreed to provide the listed discounts for members who show their membership card when making a purchase. We appreciate their support! Please respect their offers by remembering these generous discounts are for club members only and only when your card is presented.

Backyard Birds – 15 Strong Ave., Northampton

10% off regularly priced items except thistle birdseed

Baystate Perennial Farm

36 State Road (Route 5/10), Whately

10% off regular priced plants

Chapley Gardens

397 Greenfield Road (Route 5/10), Deerfield

10% off regular priced plants and pond supplies

Five Acre Farm – 110 Hinsdale Rd., Northfield

10% off regular priced plants

Glenbrook Gardens

56 Glenbrook Drive, Greenfield

10% off regular priced plants and products

Greenfield Farmers' Cooperative (Agway)

269 High Street, Greenfield

10% anything garden related

LaSalle Florists

23 LaSalle Drive (Route 5/10), Whately

10% off regular priced plants

O'Brien Nurserymen – 40 Wells Road, Granby, CT

10% off plants

Silver Garden Daylilies – 23 Picket Lane, Greenfield

10% off daylilies

Sugarloaf Nursery – 25 Amherst Road, Sunderland

10% off regular priced plants

Warm Colors Apiary

2 South Mill River Road, South Deerfield

10% off

Wilder Hill Gardens

351 South Shirkshire Road, Conway

10% off plants and consultations

Any vendors interested in offering our gardeners a discount, please contact the Steering Committee.