



Greenfield Garden Club Newsletter

MARCH 2015

Vol. 23, No. 2

Create your own birch forest

No art experience is needed to join fellow Garden Club members on Thursday, March 19, for a fun evening of painting and merriment with Wine & Canvas of Western Mass. Each participant will go home with their own painting of a lovely birch forest scene.

If you have participated in a similar Wine & Canvas painting class previously, you know that we will follow clear, relaxed instructions on creating the model painting – our group has chosen “Golden Birch.” You are free to change the colors, add or subtract elements, or paint something completely different on your canvas. Add wildflowers and song birds, change the background: let your imagination run wild!

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.

Find a picture of “Golden Birch” and registration info here: www.thegreenfieldgardenclub.org/special-events.html

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.

March 19, 6:00 p.m. **Wine & Canvas**, St. James’ Episcopal Church, Greenfield. Reservations required. *See article, above.*

March 26, 6:00 p.m. **Garden Club Steering Committee** meeting and potluck dinner. All members welcome. Contact Jean Wall to RSVP and for directions.

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

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

Also of interest to Garden Club members:

Friday, March 20 – **Vernal Equinox**: Welcome, Spring!

Saturday, March 28, 7:00 p.m. – **Here Comes the Sun!** Spring concert by the Pioneer Valley Gay Men’s Chorus. All Souls Church, Greenfield. \$15/\$10, free to children 12 and under.

Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.: **Garden Expo at Five Acre Farm**, Northfield. Greenhouse tours, vendors. Use your 10% member discount on purchases.

President’s Report

Laura Schlaikjer

It’s hard to believe that March is here. Although we are moving forward in time, the temperature gauge seems to be stuck on zero! The water for my mother’s chickens is completely frozen over by the time I collect it in the early evening in order to thaw it out overnight and bring out fresh water in the morning. The snow is so deep the deer are going to be starving by the time the snow starts to recede. I see they have gotten though the netting over the rhododendrons and many leaves are missing, and the arborvitae are getting that distinctly nibbled look. Perhaps it’s time to adopt a dog!

I would like to invite members into a discussion about **Trap Plain** and the **Extravaganza**. The Steering Committee has begun the conversation, but I know this will not be a quick process. Trap Plain is owned by the Town of Greenfield. The Garden Club describes it as the location of our “display gardens.” This is also where we hold the annual plant sale (the Extravaganza) and where we sell the tickets for the garden tour.

Here’s the dilemma: we do not have enough volunteers to maintain the gardens properly, and parking for the plant sale is slim to non-existent. Do we want to continue to use/maintain this small piece of land, or let it go and find another home? Do we need a home? If we decide to try to keep up the gardens, what about the plant sale? Is the parking problem solvable? If not, where could we move it that would let us leave plants off the night before, and have high visibility and plenty of parking? Would you be interested in seeing vendors/crafters added to the event?

I welcome any and all ideas about both of these issues. Please join us at one of our steering committee meetings, or send an email with your ideas and suggestions to:

greenfieldgardenclub@yahoo.com

I look forward to seeing you at a future club event!

What to do in the Garden in March

Compiled by Dolly Gagnon

With all the snow that's still on the ground, it's hard to think of gardening, at least from my perspective. Things are bound to get better, Garden Club members, right?

Here are some internet-researched March garden "chores" for our Zone 5.

We preface this list with advice from *A Way to Garden* blogger Margaret Roach:

Work in your yard and garden "if and when the snow melts, the ground defrosts, and mud starts to drain off and dry. If and when. Not before! The biggest caveat: Don't walk or work in soggy soil, or tread on sodden lawns. Even if the snow melts, I don't tread unnecessarily on frozen lawns. Love your soil, and protect it."

- Prune out winter damage to shrubs and trees.
- Apply dormant spray to fruit trees.
- Cut down dry ornamental grasses to prepare for new growth.
- Remove winter mulch, lightly cultivate soil, if thawed.
- Fertilize spring bulbs when green shoots appear.

- Gather your seed-starting supplies.
- Organize your seeds and dispose of those too old to germinate.
- Sow seeds indoors for tender perennials, annual vegetables and flowers.
- Select potatoes and store in cool, dark area until the soil warms enough to plant.
- Plant seeds and seedlings of cool-season vegetables (peas, spinach, etc.)

- Plant bare-root trees, roses, shrubs and vines.
- Plant bare-root perennial vegetables (asparagus, rhubarb, etc.)
- Plant or transplant frost-tolerant perennials.

- Go through old chemicals and fertilizers. Properly dispose of anything that is old and ineffectual.

Are you a terroirist?

February's Garden Club meeting took us to Tea Trekker in Northampton (and, in our imagination, to China's ancient tea-growing areas). As we sipped three deliciously different varieties of oolong, our hosts Mary Lou and Robert Heiss explained a quality new to many of us: terroir.

Many foods – including tea, wine, coffee, chocolate – taste a bit different depending on where they were grown. That difference is terroir – the effect of soil, climate, and the plant's adaptations to its surroundings. The word terroir comes from the French *terre*, land.

On Feb. 25, Greening Greenfield showed the film *Open Sesame: The Story of Seeds*, which also presented a kind of terroir. The documentary explored the need for selecting crops and saving seed based on which plants do well in each region. As large corporations replaced small seed-farms, we lost many heritage varieties and locally-adapted strains. *Open Sesame* urged us to regain resilience and independence by buying heirloom seeds and foods to support small-farm seed growers and by becoming backyard garden seed savers ourselves.

Officers 2015

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Learn Small Fruit Cultivation at Bug Hill

Our friends at Bug Hill Farm in Ashfield have announced their 2015 series of workshops, beginning with **Small Fruit Cultivation: Pruning, Propagation & Soil Health** on Saturday, April 18 (rain date May 2), 9:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m., followed by lunch and a self-guided farm tour.

Teaching the workshop will be soil and small fruit specialists Sonia Schloemann and Julie Stultz from the University of Massachusetts.

Other upcoming events at Bug Hill Farm include:

Permaculture Techniques for Small Fruit Growers – May 16

Ten Essential Medicinal Herbs for a Healthy Life – May 30

Tom Wessels on Upland and Wetland Successional Patterns – June 6

The series of workshops continues through summer and fall.

Cost for each program is \$45—\$55. Registration is necessary. Find details and registration link at www.bughillfarm.org/

Bug Hill Farm specializes in growing unusual fruits including raspberries, gooseberries, currants, blueberries, alpine strawberries, native elderberry and elderflower, native Aronia (chokeberries), and honeyberries.

Treat your houseplants to a spring spa

by Susan Farber

If you're sick and tired of winter, imagine how your houseplants feel. Most are native to tropical climates, and gray New England is the last place they'd pick to spend a winter. But the longer and stronger daylight of March means they're awakening from their winter dormancy, so now's the time to give them some special attention.

A good place to begin is to give them a bath in the kitchen sink or shower. You can wipe large leaves, or spray with tepid water. Be on the lookout for bug infestations, and snip off dead leaves and leggy branches. A good pruning now will help them maintain their shape when their spring growth spurt begins.

After bath-time, let each plant drain and air-dry well, because too much water is the major cause of death for houseplants in winter.

Plants don't want to be fed in winter, but half-strength fertilizing is recommended as we move into early spring.

It's a good time to get to know more about each variety of plant you grow. A search through garden books or the internet might inform you that Cyclamen, while toxic to cats and dogs, is fed to pigs to improve the flavor of their meat; or why Dieffenbachia's common name is "dumb cane." (Hint: It has nothing to do with its IQ.) Besides fun facts, you might also learn useful information on each plant's unique needs for care – for example, I learned that I stupidly killed my most favorite Rex begonia by overwatering.

Now is a good time to repot plants that have outgrown their containers or need dividing. (Exception: winter-blooming plants prefer repotting in early fall). I've always begrudgingly followed advice to move plants to a slightly larger pot but wondered, "Can't I put it in an extra-large container and skip the transplanting chore next year?" No, say the experts, with two good reasons why. A plant in a too-big pot will put its energy into growing roots, not showy leaves, and a too-big pot usually ends up holding too much water – and did I mention that over-watering is the top cause of indoor-plant death?

Newly repotted or divided plants need extra-special care. Keep them out of direct sun for a while, and hold off fertilizing for a month. Drooping leaves are not always a cry out for more water; the plant may just need time to recover.

If you divide your houseplants and end up with too many, remember that the Garden Club will happily sell your donated houseplants at the Extravaganza in late May!

Garden Club to select, announce grant winners

As our newsletter goes to print (and pixels), we await the final requests to our Garden Club's 2015 Grant Program to support education linking children with gardening, plant science, ecology, and related topics.

Following the March 1 deadline, the Grant Committee will convene on Thursday, March 12 to review the proposals and discuss their merits. Last year's grant review was a delightful time, and committee members left feeling very good about the interest in gardening with our children right here in Franklin County.

If you are on the Grant Committee but have not yet had a chance to RSVP, please do so right away. We need to give the headcount to the restaurant. Remember to bring a pen, cash for your meal, and a generous, open mind.

In mid-March, the list of winners will be posted on the Garden Club website and on our Facebook page.

Treasurer's Report

Jean Wall

Balance as of February 22, 2015.....	\$5,598.31
Income (February):	\$291.00
<i>Dues, Donation, Annual Meeting, Programs</i>	
Expenses (February)	\$144.32
<i>Newsletter Printing, Programs</i>	

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

BULBS

Smith College Bulb Show – March 7–22

Opening lecture, Friday March 6, 7:30 p.m. in the Campus Center Carroll Room.

Lyman Conservatory, 10–4 daily, and until 8 Friday–Sunday. \$5 donation.

Did you know they have an after-show bulb sale? Saturday, March 28. Conservatory Members get first crack from 9–noon. General Public can purchase noon–3, and again on Sunday from 9–3.

Mount Holyoke Spring Bulb Show – March 7–22. Talcott Greenhouse & Botanic Gardens 10 - 4 daily. Free.

Berkshire Botanical Garden Bulb Show – Mon–Fri March 2–6, 9–13, and 16–20. Fitzpatrick Greenhouse. Free. Tables will be set-up for indoor picnickers. You may order bulbs on display for fall delivery.



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.