



Greenfield Garden Club Newsletter

Vol. 22 No. 12

December 2014

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December Meeting

We will meet at the home of Becky George for a new dinner-themed potluck holiday party. Instead of a potluck sweet or savory appetizer/dessert, please bring a favorite potluck dinner item - salad, casserole, bread/muffins/rolls, vegetarian dish, non-vegetarian dish, dessert - you get the idea! I know we're good at potlucks, so pencil us in on your calendar, and put your thinking caps on!

Please also feel free to bring your favorite winter beverage. The club will have a non-alcoholic punch available.

Back by popular demand is the annual Yankee Swap! If you would like to participate, please bring a wrapped gift with you - something in the \$15 range would be appropriate. A gift need not be related to gardening, but somehow we always find fun, member-appropriate gifts!

Directions: Madison Street is on the north side of High Street (Rte 2A) in Greenfield, in between Sanderson Street and Maple Street. As you come up Madison, go past Tulip Street, and keep bearing to the right. You will automatically be on Madison Circle. Directly ahead of you is a dead-end portion that contains a few houses, including number 61. Depending on the snow, you may need to be creative in your parking. Remember that this is a residential area, and try not to block anyone's driveway. You may need to park further along Madison Circle - but it's a circle, so you will never be too far away to walk! Perhaps you can carpool with friends to lessen the congestion. You can locate the address on Google Maps and plan your route. Let it snow! We wish you and yours a safe, festive, and peaceful holiday season! Cheers!

President's Report

December is here, and with it the promise of a new year, and a fresh slate. I already know that I will have some pruning to do next spring, as my Chinese Chestnut trees took a beating with the heavy snow from the November 26 storm. I also wonder if I'll be able to find the kale and Brussels sprouts under the 10 inches we received here in Leyden! The deer will be out any day now to try and browse my holly and rhododendrons. Time to get the chicken wire out and drill holes for stringing the bars of Irish Spring soap. I hope you are already scoping out your Yankee Swap gift for our holiday party! We decided to make it a potluck dinner this year, since we are meeting during the dinner hours. This will be a great time to relax and unwind from the already busy holiday season. Soon too, the letters will go out for grant proposals, while our new annual meeting date (see sidebar) will kick off the new year of monthly meetings on Monday, January 19th. Please plan to join us - it will be an evening in the mountains of Nepal! Wassail to one and all!

Laura Schlaikjer

Laura Schlaikjer

UPCOMING EVENTS

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend any and all meetings!

December Meeting:

Friday, December 12th

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

**Holiday Party, Pot Luck Dinner,
and Optional Yankee Swap**

**At the home of Becky George,
61 Madison Circle, Greenfield,
MA**

Next Steering Committee

Meeting TBA- check the website

Annual Meeting:

NEW DATE & TIME:

**MONDAY, JANUARY 19th,
5:30 - 8:00 PM**

There will not be a January Newsletter. Be on the lookout for the Annual Meeting mailing which should be arriving in your mailbox via snail mail. Looking forward to another great year of programs!

Treasurer's Report

Jean Wall

Balance as of November 23, 2014: \$5,328.88

Income: \$.13

Expenses: \$213.52

Income: Interest

Expenses: Newsletter printing, stamps

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

Annual Meeting

by Linda Tyler

Plans for the Annual Meeting have been evolving, and a new date, time and location have been chosen. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause. Please save **Monday, January 19, 5:30 – 8:00PM** on your calendars for a very special evening!

Your Regional Garden News — Zone 5, Dec. 1 to 31, compiled by Dolly Gagnon

Here's what's happening in your gardening region:

1. Learn about seed starting. Before you know it, you'll be starting seeds for next year's garden! Beginning in late January, you can start growing seeds for broccoli, leeks, lettuce, cabbage, and other cold-weather vegetables. Get your plants off to the best start by learning how to start seeds for these delicious and nutritious vegetables indoors. See Margaret's advice: <http://awaytogarden.com/when-to-start-what-vegetable-seed-calculators/>
2. Decorate for the birds. Do you enjoy watching the birds throughout the winter? Make your garden an even more enticing place for them to visit by decorating outdoor trees and shrubs with birdseed ornaments. See this easy DIY ornament project: <http://www.saltwater-kids.com/2010/12/thrifty-gifts-bird-seed-ornaments-for.html>
3. What you need to start seeds. Be prepared when it's time to start seeds in the new year. Sprouting seeds need a few things to grow into strong transplants: heat, water and light. Gather your materials now so that you can turn your attention to shopping for seeds in January. Needful things for this project: a seeding heat mat, ultimate growing system and tabletop grow light.
4. Holiday gifts for gardeners: ornaments, tools, muscle rub, drying rack, bird feeder, garden bench, gazing ball, grow lights, mason bee tube, heated bird water dish, compost bin, work gloves, books.

Wreaths

by Linda Tyler

The club had a great turnout at the November meeting at Chapley Gardens. Many new to making wreaths walked away with beautiful wreaths to decorate their homes. In addition to wreaths two people chose to make kissing balls under Stacey Chapley's tutelage. They turned out beautifully! A huge thank you to

Stacey for hosting the November meeting every year and providing us with an assortment of greens to transform into wreaths.

The Garden in Winter – a Tale for the Season

<http://gardeningintunewithnature.bangordailynews.com/2014/11/11/vegetables/the-garden-in-winter-2/>

(Author's Note: The following essay is composed of excerpts from *The New England Gardener's Year* by Reeser Manley and Marjorie Peronto, published in April, 2013 by Cadent Publishing and distributed by Tilbury House Publishers, Thomaston, Maine.)

“As I write, snow is falling outside my Maine window, and indoors all around me half a hundred garden catalogues are in bloom.” – *Katharine S. White*

November brings the first hard freeze, the kind that forms ice needles on the bright red and yellow leaves of highbush blueberries and the still-green foliage of raspberries, the kind that rimes the tawny pappus of goldenrod and aster seedheads. In the woods at the edge of Marjorie's Garden, the tamaracks are golden. The vegetable garden sleeps, all but the beds sown to winter oats. They look out of place, out of season, bright green swaths of grassy leaves dripping rainwater into the soil, their roots mining minerals leached beyond the reach of tomato or squash roots. In spring we will turn over the oats and return those minerals to the roots of summer vegetables.

Leaves have all fallen, except for the dry brown leaves of garden oaks and the still-green leaves of a peach tree that has no inkling how to behave in a Maine garden. Persistent winter fruits, berries and seed capsules of the garden's trees and shrubs give reason to pause as I stroll around the November garden.

In December comes a brief interlude, lasting only a few hours, when snow works magic in the garden. Often it is early in the morning after the season's first real snowstorm. I awake to a landscape of stark contrasts, snow packed in branch forks, dark green fir boughs bending under their loads, brown seedheads wearing gnome-like hats of white, clusters of golden seed capsules crowned with snow at the tips of enkianthus twigs, and the north-facing side of the old pine's furrowed trunk whitewashed with wind-packed snow.

On such mornings the garden is mostly a blank canvas. The lines of the garden beds are buried, along with most of the herbaceous plants and smaller shrubs. Plants that catch my eye, like the enkianthus, do so because they offer contrast in color and texture to the whiteness. It is tempting to take credit for the sighting of the enkianthus, to say that we framed it with the fireside window for mornings like this one, to pretend to have that much foresight.

Winter days can pull a gardener away from the fire. Trying to stay on the invisible garden paths, I visit some of my favorite trees, the yellow birches with their shaggy honey-gold bark, a sight that always warms my heart on a sunny winter morning, and the old white pine. I wish we had planted a beech tree for the dried paper-like leaves that hang on through the cold months, giving voice to the winter winds.

Wild turkey tracks emerge from the woods and cross the garden after surmounting an old canoe propped upside down on cinder blocks. I find the snow shovel and clear a few square yards to nearly bare ground, then throw down cracked corn, hoping the turkeys will check back later in the day.

Suddenly it is snowing again, a shower of feathery flakes floating down from the high branches of a yellow birch where a single black-capped bird pecks at a sunflower seed taken from the porch feeder. Snow drifts through blue sky. Chickadee snow.

I find other excuses to stay in the garden, absorbed by the magic of the place, until my knees start hurting and I begin to see the garden from Katharine White's point of view. A sizable stack of garden catalogs have arrived in the mail over the holidays. When tramping through the snow is no longer fun, it's time to sit in a rocker by the fire and repaint the canvas outside the window.

Persistent Winter Fruits

From November until the midwinter thaw, the red berries of winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), a deciduous native shrub, will brighten both woods and garden, as will the larger red fruits of the American cranberry viburnum (*Viburnum opulus* var. *trilobum*). Both of these provide late winter food for songbirds. Some gardeners compete with the birds for the viburnum fruits, preserving them in jams or jellies with, I suspect, a lot of added sugar. After tasting these berries straight from the shrub, I understand why the birds eat them only as a last resort. I read that the winterberry fruits are also highly astringent and, as I think about it, I can recall winters in which the fruits of both plants were left to wither on the branches.

Not all persistent fruits are red and showy. The waxy gray berries of northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) hug its twigs through the winter, eventually to be eaten by songbirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds. These are the same berries that we harvest for scenting of bayberry candles.

Not all persistent fruits are berries. The pale brown to red-brown seedheads of meadowsweet (*Spiraea latifolia*) persist through winter, extending the usefulness of this native shrub in the garden. And I love to watch the snow build up around the

summersweet clethra (*Clethra alnifolia*) in Marjorie's Garden until only the uppermost dried seedheads remain exposed. I imagine a field mouse beneath the snow, snuggled close to the ground with a cache of seed, waiting for the thaw.

Hunkering Down, Waiting for April

What a great snow! The garden is now covered with a foot-deep insulating blanket that will protect plant roots from killing temperatures, at least until the next thaw, and birds, including goldfinches, nuthatches, chickadees, a male cardinal, and an American tree sparrow, are in a feeding frenzy at the porch feeder. The Christmas tree is now in the garden, propped up by the root system of a fallen spruce, close to the spot where I clear away the snow and scatter cracked corn for the blue jays, mourning doves, crows, and wild turkeys. It was a good tree, a fir that Lynne chose on a street corner lot the day after Thanksgiving. It spent more than a month inside our home, presents wrapped in colorful paper accumulating under its branches. On weekends and during the holiday break, Marjorie and I sipped pre-dawn coffee by the woodstove and the light of this tree, listening to carols playing softly in the background.

Taking down the tree always saddens me. We remove the ornaments collected over the years, carefully wrapping each one in paper before packing them all away in boxes, then unwind the strings of lights, fir needles dropping at our feet as we circle the tree. Suddenly there is only the small tree, its trunk propped up in water that it no longer uses, and it drops a trail of needles as I lift it from its stand and carry it outside. For the rest of the day, there is the faint smell of balsam in a corner of the room.

If I lived in a city, I would never throw out my Christmas tree, never leave it at the curb with cardboard and wrapping paper. I would cart it into the closest woods, where birds could seek shelter among its branches, at least for one winter. This is the message of Brad Kessler's tale, *The Woodcutters Christmas*. A small book perfect for a winter evening read, it tells the story of a night in New York City when abandoned Christmas trees cried out and a woodcutter's life was changed forever. Read it before you take down your tree.

Despite the cold and the whiteness of the landscape, there are still tangible connections to the garden. Buckets of compost and wood ashes need to be emptied, and this means shoveling a long path through new snow to garden beds where the ashes are spread and then on to compost piles at the back of the garden. The piles are brick hard, and all I can do to cover fresh compost is throw on straw and cover it with snow.



Greenfield Garden Club
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The following vendors have agreed to provide the listed discounts for members who show their membership card when making a purchase. We really appreciate their support.

Please respect their offers by remembering these generous discounts are for our club members only, and only when your card is presented.

Backyard Birds Strong Ave. Northampton 10% off regularly priced items except thistle birdseed
Baystate Perennial Route 5/10 Whately 10% off regular priced plants
Chapley Gardens 397 Greenfield Road – RT 5/10 Deerfield 10% off regular priced plants and pond supplies
Fairview Gardens 8 Main St. Northfield 10% off everything except cut flowers
Five Acre Farms 110 Hinsdale Rd., Northfield 10% off regular priced plants
Glenbrook Gardens 54 Glenbrook Drive Greenfield 10% off regular priced plants and products
Greenfield Farmers' Cooperative (Agway) High Street Greenfield 10% anything garden related
LaSalle Florists Rte. 5/10 Whately 10% off regular priced plants
O'Brien Nurserymen, 40 Wells Road, Granby, CT 10% off plants
Silver Gardens 23 Picket Lane, Greenfield – 10% off daylilies
Sugarloaf Nursery 25 Amherst Rd, Sunderland- 10% off regular priced plants
Warm Colors Apiary 2 South Mill River Road South Deerfield – 10% off
Wilder Hill Gardens 351 So. Shirkshire Rd., Conway, 10% off plants and consultations

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