

Sow and Tell

Volume 58 Issue 5, January 2018

A Publication of The Five Hills Garden Club

Member of the National Capital Area Garden Clubs, Central Atlantic Region, District III

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President's Message

"Cheers to a New Year and another chance to get it right." ~ Oprah Winfrey

Dear Gardener Friends:

It is always exciting to be able to start something new, and that includes a new year. We have a chance to write a new story for ourselves. We have the opportunity to be better human beings, better citizens and an opportunity to make a better world. As gardeners, we have the opportunity to make the world more beautiful with what we grow.

It was wonderful to have many of you come to my home for a holiday gathering. I usually take down my outdoor Christmas decorations by the beginning of Epiphany, but with all this cold weather they may be up a little longer this year. Having grown up in Pennsylvania, cold weather is not new to me; maybe it is my age, but I'm ready for some milder temperatures.

This will be my last new year's greeting to you as president of Five Hills Garden Club. It is exciting to think of all the many events that we have planned for the next several months. Being together each month for learning and sharing is something I look forward to. We are so fortunate to have such a lovely group of friends that share our special interest.

I am looking forward to our Flower Show that will be held at Willow Prall's home on May 1. We have so many talented designers and gardeners in our club that it is sure to be a wonderful event.

I wish you a wonderful and healthy 2018. Fondly, Noreen

JANUARY CALENDAR

Tuesday, January 9, Board Meeting

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, Jan 24, Environmental & Gardening Council Meeting

Inclement Weather Policy: If Fairfax County Public Schools are closed because of weather conditions, Board and Club meetings are cancelled. If there is a delayed opening, the meetings will be held as scheduled.

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Upcoming Events

Five Hills January 16 Program: National Arboretum's Friendship Garden Renewal



A new garden concept is on display at the renewed Friendship Garden at the National Arboretum. Scott Aker, head of horticulture and education at the Arboretum, will discuss and give a power point presentation on the new installation of the Friendship Garden. The garden was rededicated at a ceremony on May 22, 2017. The previous garden was avant-garde in the 1990s, but was overgrown and in need of a solution. This new garden is also cutting edge . . . come see what it's all about!

Upcoming Local Lectures:

Sunday, January 14, 7:30 - 9:00 pm Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. "Helping Nature Help Itself: Restoring the Land with Natural Processes" with Charles Smith. Free to public. A talk by local naturalist and ecologist, Charles Smith, kicks off their lecture series again this year. The interactions and relationships in plant communities form the visible framework of our living world. What we often don't see are the many other organisms interacting with plants, such as insect larvae, lesser-known pollinators, and bacterial and fungal allies. These relationships are interconnected, and we are only beginning to understand them.
Flyer: http://vnps.org/potowmack/download/Charles_Smith_Talk_Jan_2018.pdf

<http://vnps.org/potowmack/events/helping-nature-help-itself-restoring-the-land-with-natural-processes-a-talk-by-charles-smith/>

Sunday, January 21, 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m Green Spring Winter Lecture Series: "Trees Find Their Voice" with Debbie Waugh. Green Spring historian Debbie Waugh reveals what trees can tell us through the science of dendrochronology.

Hear how tree-ring dating interprets long-ago environmental events and helps to predict future trends. Discover fascinating findings of dendrochronology, from dating Viking ships to pinpointing a construction date for Green Spring's Historic House.. (Adults) \$10/person. Register online using code 290 182

Sunday January 28, 2018 1:30 pm Green Spring Winter Lecture Series: "The Humane Gardener" with Nancy Lawson. In her eloquent plea for compassion and respect toward all species, author Nancy Lawson describes why and how you should welcome wildlife to your backyard. She'll discuss planting for wildlife, providing habitats that shelter baby animals, creating gardens free of poisons and hazards, coexisting with pests, letting nature be your garden designer, and welcoming natural processes and seasonal changes. \$10/person. Register online using code 290 182 2001 or call 703-642-5173



Upcoming Events

Local Lectures, continued:

For a list of more Green Spring lectures from January 21 through March 18, follow this link: <https://nextdoor.com/events/va/springfield/harry-allen-winter-lecture-series-at-green-spring-gardens-1793892>

Sunday, February 11, 2018, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Manassas Park Community Center, 99 Adams Street, Manassas Park, Va. 20111. Come and hear Larry Weaner present his "Living in a Liberated Landscape" lecture.

Not to be missed! The event is co-sponsored by the Prince William Master Gardeners, Prince William Conservation Alliance, and the Merrimac Farm Master Naturalists.

In his lecture, Larry explores how a dynamic approach to gardening that takes advantage of plants' natural abilities to reproduce and proliferate is more rewarding – and ecologically beneficial – than static compositions of traditional horticulture. Learn how Larry combines design with the reproductive abilities of plants as well as

ecological processes to create compelling, ever-evolving landscapes that bring new meaning to partnering with nature. Using examples from his own property as well as diverse client projects, Larry will share how this give-and-take approach can result in compelling, low-maintenance landscapes that free plants to perform according to their natural abilities and liberate people from having to cater to their landscapes' every need. Following the lecture, Larry will sign copies of his book "Garden Revolution: How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change" (Timber Press, 2016).

The event is free and open to the public. Registration is requested.

<http://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/events/living-in-the-liberated-landscape/>

Monday, February 12, 6:30 - 9:00 pm. "Transparency and Twinkle" Floral Design Workshop. Atlas 42 Edge, 4032 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA. \$75 fee includes floral material, instruction, wine, beer or soda and hors d'oeuvres. With Nancy Ross Hugo, Kate Hugo Vernon and Mary Garner-Mitchell. Registration required; find more info here: <http://www.thearrangersmarket.com/>



Green Spring
Gardens in snow,
Alexandria,
Virginia.
Photographer
unknown

For the January Hort Table:

Bring in a horticultural specimen from your garden in a proportional green bottle. Label it correctly. Suggestions: Hollies, Hellebores, Witch Hazel;

OR, as an alternative, in a green bottle, a leaf from an indoor plant

Design Theme: Winter's Gifts

Design: Designer's Choice or Reflective

(Please see page 12 for a description of a Reflective Design.)



PLANNING NEW AREAS FOR GARDEN BEDS?

Easy methods that will spare your back!

~ Karen Lucas

Your garden is always changing. Trees are growing taller and bushes expand. These changes cause light levels to change on other plants or extensions over the existing lawn encourage weeds. Maybe you have been inspired to try new plants or maybe a few vegetables, or cut down on the lawn area, or make the edges more mower - friendly. If you conclude that you might want to extend your planting bed into existing lawn, I want to suggest easy ways to create those beds without back-breaking digging. Begone, days of "double digging"!

When we first moved into our current home there was a lot of land (an acre) but only a few trees and three shrubs and lots of lawn! We moved in in December and after fencing in the yard, I used an old hose to outline a sunny bed. I then brought leaf mulch and covered over the lawn with about eight inches of this free wonderful stuff. When spring came, I was delighted when I was easily able to insert my shovel and plant away with no additional digging.

Another method of gaining ground was described by Adrian Higgins last March. He described using black tarps in the warming days of spring to kill the emerging weeds.

Have you noticed that "no till" has come into favor with the message that when digging and turning over the soil all you are doing is planting the weed seeds that were on the surface and lifting deeply buried seeds nearer to the surface where they can sprout too. Also, you are disturbing the underground "critters": earthworms and beneficial organisms large and small that hang out there. Those of us who went to Brent and Becky's Nursery last spring may remember Brent telling us not to dig weeds but to cut them off just below the surface.



As the snow and wind swirl, peer out the window and make mental notes of possible sites for additions to your garden... Spring will come ... it always does.

Winter Drought

~ Elizabeth Huebner

As I was musing about what to write for this month's conservation article, I went out to blow the snow off my deck and suddenly realized that I had forgotten to check my beautiful 4-year-old rosemary bush for moisture, and now it looks like it is thoroughly dead, and I am sad. We have had so little rain/snow since September that everything is dust dry. Now, I need to worry about some of my trees and bushes, and as soon as the temperature gets up to 35 degrees for a day or so, I will have to consider watering some things, and you might want to check things in your yard for dryness.

Then I went looking for some official information on the state of moisture in our area, and this is what I found: A lack of rainfall in recent weeks has allowed moderate drought to return in much of Northern Virginia, while much of the Piedmont and southeast Virginia are now considered abnormally dry. In an update released Thursday, the U.S. Drought Monitor shows moderate drought extending from Charlottesville and Louisa northeast to Fredericksburg, Manassas and the Washington suburbs.



A moderate drought is a level of dryness that can harm crops and plants in the short term. If it lasts for many months, a drought can impact water supplies.

Abnormally dry is a classification that's not as serious as drought. It's used to describe areas that may head into a drought without more rain, or lingering minor effects in an area that has mostly recovered from a drought.

The situation in northern Virginia is dry; only 0.58 inches came during the past three weeks, which is only a quarter of normal for this time of year. Since the beginning of winter, rainfall and snowfall have been particularly deficient in Northern Virginia.

During November, nearly all of Virginia received less than normal amounts of precipitation. Consequently, stream flow gaging stations are reporting below normal to much-below-normal flows (less than the 5th percentile). Wells in the Virginia Climate Response network of groundwater level observation wells located in central Virginia continued to report below normal to much-below-normal levels. Many other wells across the state are reporting levels that are declining, but still within the normal range (above the 25th percentile). The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) representative pointed out that groundwater levels in the network's Piedmont area wells are in bedrock, below the upper soil layer. This may indicate that soil moisture levels across central Virginia are so low that extended periods of above-normal rain or snow will be needed to provide groundwater recharge. There is concern that a second consecutive winter season with low recharge may have serious impacts upon water availability during the next growing season due to low water table levels and subsequent low base flow in streams.

Should we start rain dances? No, but we should be planning to spread about two inches of mulch on our plantings as soon as possible to help retain moisture, use rain barrels, consider more drought-tolerant plants and try to have all soil covered in plants or mulch.

Here are more things you can do to ease your plants through a dry summer and even improve your landscape at the same time.

1. Assess your priorities. Survey your landscape: What areas or individual plants do you want most to save? Give top priority to irrigating established trees and shrubs; they're virtually irreplaceable. Consider perennials a second priority.

2. Identify root zones. The roots of various plants grow to different depths; the trick is to apply just enough water to moisten the roots. Most tree roots are in the top 2 feet of soil. The drip line of a tree or shrub, which runs around the perimeter of the canopy, outlines much of the root zone. Focus water there.

3. Try a root irrigator. The hose-end device has a needlelike shaft that injects water into the ground, irrigating roots directly so no water is lost to evaporation. Check garden centers for root irrigators like the one from Hound Dog Products (about \$20; 800/694-6863). Insert the shaft 6 to 12 inches or deeper into the soil around trees and shrubs. After watering in one spot along the drip line, move the irrigator to another spot until you complete one round-trip.

4. Check soil moisture. Dig down 1 foot with a trowel or spade and feel a handful of soil. An even easier way to test moisture is to use a sampling tube to "read" the soil. When you push the metal tube into the ground and twist it back

out, it extracts a 12-inch or longer core, showing in cross section how wet or dry the soil actually is. If the top 2 inches of the soil sample are dry, it's time to water. Sampling tubes are available from [XREF "<http://www.forestry-suppliers.com>" "Forestry Suppliers"] (from \$40; 800/647-5368).

5. Irrigate slowly. Slow soaking limits runoff and encourages plants to develop deep root systems that are better able to tolerate drought. The heavier your soil, the more important slow soaking is in preventing runoff. Using an oscillating sprinkler to water large areas helps reduce runoff. But if you see puddling, turn the water off for an hour, then start again. To minimize evaporation, irrigate in the early morning or evening.

6. Build watering basins. Mound soil berms around young trees and shrubs such as roses to concentrate water on the root zones. Fill the basin with a slow-running hose so water soaks in.

7. Use soaker hoses. These porous hoses ooze water along their length. Run them among flowers and shrubs or along hedges or rows of vegetables. Coil them under the drip lines of large trees; a good average length is 50 or 100 feet.

8. Apply mulch. Drought or not, spreading a layer of mulch over the soil around plants is simply good gardening. Mulch reduces evaporation, insulates roots from extreme temperature changes, and helps prevent weeds, which steal water needed by desirable plants. Spread a 3-inch layer of organic mulch such as compost or shredded bark around trees and shrubs; for flowers and vegetables, apply 1 to 2 inches. Gravel and other mineral mulches are also effective.



9. Modify lawn care. If local restrictions allow lawn irrigation, there are some things you can do to reduce the amount of water you apply. Set your mower to cut at the high end of the recommended range: 1 1/2 inches for bent grass; 2 inches for bluegrass and perennial ryegrass; 3 inches for tall fescue. Taller grass shades the soil, reducing evaporation. In early June, fertilize with 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of turf to strengthen grass before it becomes stressed. In July, cut back to a 1/2 inch of water every week; under this regime, lawns turn the color of straw and go semi-dormant through summer but bounce back after the weather cools.

10. Be water-wise with pots. Use glazed terracotta or plastic ones, which hold water better. For extra insulation, nest smaller pots inside larger ones, or bury pots up to their rims in the ground.



11. Harvest rain. Even in summer months, some rain usually falls on the Northwest, and roofs catch a lot of it. Channel runoff into a rain barrel, then use it to water container plants. Several kinds of rain barrels are available from [Gardener's Supply](#) (from \$90 for a 40-gal. barrel; 800/955-3370).

Many thanks to Sunset garden basics and the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force's monthly report.

Greens Workshop Thank You

We would like to thank all our members who made our December Greens Workshop another success. Our wreaths and sprays were beautiful. We received thank-yous from some of the recipients.

Many thanks, Maurine Thomas, Civic Chairman &
Nancy Walker, Civic Co-chairman



Announcements

Historic Vienna Inc. Commemorates the Great War Centennial

— Ann Carter

In March 2018, Historic Vienna Inc. will begin its year-long commemoration of the centennial of the Great War in Europe. Through posters, pictures, models, and artifacts, as well as special talks and historical storytelling, visitors will learn of those Vienna-area citizens that fought for Democracy and about the home front where equally patriotic citizens kept the home and industry running.

In the next few months, HVI will be preparing the exhibit. Anyone who is interested in lending Great War items or wishes to help with the exhibit should contact HVI at (703) 938-5187.



Lights & Hospitality at the Linnemann House

Thanks to our President, Noreen Linnemann, for once again opening her beautifully decorated home to us during Christmas week so that we might get together one last time before the end of the year — to enjoy the lights, friendship, food and libations! It was a special way to end another productive Five Hills year of fellowship.

Calendars for Military



Please remember to bring in your 2018 calendars. They are collected each month for the military members in appreciation of their services. Janet Kremer will deliver them to the Army's Fairfax Family Health Center. Thank you!

Church Parking

Please continue to find parking near the church but not in the Church parking lot. Thank you for your continued cooperation.



SAVE THE DATE —

Blue Star Memorial Rededication

We will have a celebration for the rededication of the Blue Star Memorial at 10 am, on Saturday, April 28, 2018. The memorial is located along the bike path at the Vienna Centennial Park. We hope everyone will attend. Anyone who would like to help with the ceremony, please call Barbara Tozzi, 703 938 3792.

Your attention and action needed!

Please notify Shelia Creswell (screswell@verizon.net) by February 28 if you or any of your relatives have served in the Armed Forces. Please send Shelia the name of the service member, your relationship to the member, the service in which he or she served along with rank, so that they may be honored for their service to the Country. Thank you.



photos: taken at the original Five Hills dedication of the memorial, 2007, by Brigitte Hartke

Editor's Note:

January 8: I'm just back from a nighttime walk down to the mailbox to bring in the mail — not much icy sleet has fallen yet. I was very excited to see that my latest issue of *Merrifield's Gardening Seminars & Events for Winter and Spring 2018* has arrived. The speakers lineup includes the Arboretum's Scott Aker, Meadowlark's Keith Tomlinson, Nicole Schermerhorn, co-owner of A Thyme to Plant at Lavender Fields Herb Farm, author and lecturer Andre Viette, orchid expert Jonathan Kavalier, Merrifield Plant Specialist Karen Rexrode, and Andy Johnson, their plant and critter specialist. These are only a few of the speakers in the winter and spring lecture series roster. As most of you know, these lectures take place at one of three Merrifield Garden Centers — Merrifield, Fair Oaks and Gainesville — and they are free to the public. Always interesting and informative, the lectures come with handouts, coffee, tea and sweet treats as well as a discount coupon which is good for the day, if not the weekend. If you aren't on their mailing list, do stop in and pick up a copy of their Seminars booklet, and while there, one of their beautiful, free calendars!

For those of you who have gone completely digital, you can find the information in Merrifield's seminar booklet here: <https://www.merrifieldgardencenter.com/2018-winter-and-spring-seminars/>

“In A Nutshell” ~
Program review by Brigitte Hartke

“Piecing Together Nature’s Puzzle” by Alonso Abugattas

In November, well-known local naturalist and environmental educator, Alonso Abugattas presented another excellent lecture for Five Hills members. As the natural resources manager for the Department of Parks and Recreation in Arlington, Alonso also co-founded the Washington Area Butterfly Club and has served as president of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Alonso invited us to explore the connectivity of the fascinating natural world. In a complex web of life, everything is connected, and even more complicated than was once thought. So, what did we learn?

90 percent of the world’s plants and fungi are symbiotically connected, through the mycorrhizal association between the plants and the fungi in the plants’ rhizosphere or root system. Alonso pointed out that when people try to dig up and transfer a plant, such as the yellow lady’s slipper, the plant often dies as a result. This is because it has been separated from the fungi it needs to survive.

Alonso quoted John Muir: *“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”*

Through another process called myco-heterotrophy, some plants — mycorrhizal ‘cheaters’ — get all or part of their food from parasitism upon the fungi, rather than from photosynthesis.

We learned that, around the world, ants are a major force in the spread of plants through a system of true mutualism — the plants help the ants with special food lures and other adaptations, and the ants carry away the seeds without harming them, in a mutual dependence. They cannot live without each other.



“First rule of intelligent tinkering: Don’t lose any of the pieces.”

Only 1.7 percent of the whole of Arlington is actually parkland. The wildlife cannot survive on 1.7 percent of the land, so we have to plant natives to ensure that the wildlife will survive.

96 percent of terrestrial birds feed their young caterpillars and sawflies. Hummingbirds, too, feed their young insects. All our 17 species of bats feed on insects, particularly moths. We learned that bat boxes are not effective. Birds cannot survive on just birdseed; they need caterpillars and insects for survival of their young. Less than 50% of the birds’ food comes from feeders even if they are coming all the time.

Program Review



Most native bees fly less than 1/2 mile when looking for nectar. If you clear the plants on which they collect nectar, you don't have native bees. If you plow the land, the soil bees are killed. In the interest of pollinators, it is best to plant straight native species. The insects have specially adapted to the forms of the flowers of these plants. Remember to include plants in your garden that provide continuous blooms available throughout the growing season to ensure a continuous source of pollen for the pollinators.

Twelve different Lepidoptera (butterflies, moths) use *Asclepias*, or milkweed, as host plants along with numerous milkweed specialists such as three milkweed bugs, several beetles, and others, not counting all the pollinators who enjoy collecting nectar on them.

If oak trees were to go extinct, the 600 species that depend *solely* on them also would go extinct — they rely only on the oaks, including their leaves and nuts. Acorns are eaten by deer, gray squirrels, chipmunks, flying squirrels, rabbits, opossums, quail, raccoons wild turkeys, wood ducks, crows, and jays, to name a few. Our native chestnuts, once our most dominant forest trees, are nearly all gone (infected with an exotic chestnut blight).

Most garden pests are non-native. Oleander aphids are from the Mediterranean region. Dogwood

anthracnose came from Asia and continues to kill our dogwoods.

Alonso spoke of a primitive, 'funky' fungus called Chytrid that is infecting amphibian species around the world, though the American bullfrog and the African clawed frog appear to be resistant to chytridiomycosis. (This is a cause for concern because they can act as carriers that can move the fungus to new locations and expose new populations that are susceptible to it.)

And finally,

*"So, naturalists observe, a flea
Has smaller fleas that on him prey;
And these have smaller still to bite 'em;
And so proceed ad infinitum."* ~ Jonathan Swift

Many thanks to Alonso for a most informative and extensive presentation on the interconnectivity of all species; unfortunately, not all of the topics he covered could be included in this article.

Consider joining Alonso's group on his Facebook page, Capital Naturalist — an excellent resource for help in identifying species and having your nature questions answered by him and other naturalists. Also, visit his blogspot on which he has posted since 2013: <http://capitalnaturalist.blogspot.com>





Cares and Concerns

Please keep Lisa Adelman in your thoughts, and feel free to send good wishes her way as she recovers from knee surgery.

Also in our thoughts is Linda Campbell who recently received a burn to her hand.

We hope they are both well on the mend and are feeling better.



Horticulture, continued from Page 4

A Reflective Design Is ...

HB. Pg. 75 A Creative design containing reflective materials giving back images of light to the viewer. Staging in front of or on a mirror is **not acceptable**.

Some of the basic elements of a creative reflective design include the following. HB. Pg. 72

- Conforming to the Principles of Design.
- Show restraint in amount of Plant material and other components.
- May have more than one point of emergence and focal area, but clarity of design is important.
- Allows any part of the design to be dominant, including the container.
- Uses plant materials, non traditional container/s with multiple openings and unconventional, man - made objects not normally associated with floral art.
- Uses components in a non-realistic manner and may contain abstraction, with plant material not necessarily in water.

