

Sow and Tell

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

President: Andy Bothwell, 703-850-6177

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Holidays 2023

I hope everyone enjoyed helping with our Christmas wreath-making. They turned out beautifully and will be lovely additions to churches and civic buildings in Vienna. I also found it an enjoyable time to chat with fellow members at my table while we made our wreaths. There are many people to thank for our festive day. Thank you to Noreen, Nancy, and Carolyn for all the prep work they did to get the wreaths ready for us to decorate. Valerie, thank you for organizing the raffle. It was a great success (personally, I think I got the best picks!). Thank you for those that helped set up and those that helped clean up. And special thanks to our food committee for a wonderful lunch.

I wish you all a very happy holiday, take time to enjoy your family and friends and we'll see you in mid-January. Andy



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The pastor (on left) and church secretary at Wesley United Methodist Church are happy to receive wreaths from Five Hills Garden Club.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Five Hills Garden Club Spring 2024 Schedule of Meetings:

- January 9 Board Meeting, 10 am
- January 16 General Meeting: Creating with invasive cast-offs
- February 13 Board Meeting, 10 am
- February 20 General Meeting: Getting started with Eastern Bluebirds and Helping them Stay
- March 12 Board Meeting, 10 am
- March 19 General Meeting: Preparing for a Successful Flower Show—Ready, Set, Go
- April 9 Board Meeting, 10 am
- April 16 Five Hills Flower Show: For the Love of Nature
- May 14 Board Meeting, 10 am
- May 21 General Meeting: Member Plant Exchange
- June 18 Installation Lunch for New Officers

Ways and Means

Ways and Means Chair—Valerie Warriner

The holiday raffle brought out the smiles and excitement at the December meeting. Thanks for all the generous donations of home decor and decorations.



Horticulture and Design Chair—Jane Schmiedekamp

Committee members: Helen Mertz, Anita Parke, Margaret Bain

Polling Question for our membership: A couple in New York gave their 80 year old Norway Spruce to be the Rockefeller center tree this year. Would you allow your big tree to be cut to display in Rockefeller Center?

Reading Assignment for the Holidays:

Last June the Washington Post reviewed a book about birds, entitled *A Wing and a Prayer* by Anders and Beverly Gyllenhaal. Three billion birds — almost One-third of all birds in North America have disappeared in the last few decades. The authors claim we are in a war against extinction. We depend on birds for pollination, seed dispersal, fertilization, and soil formation. They are our canary in the coal mine. Fewer birds equals fewer plants, trees, flowers and vegetables. More than 8000 species of plants and flowers rely on hummingbirds for pollination. While we gobble up more land, our birds are disappearing.

OR

Rosalyn Carter was an advocate for monarch butterflies. She recognized the importance of these creatures to the future of humankind. Butterflies are the only creatures other than birds who migrate. They fly 30-50 miles a day on their way from Canada to Mexico each year. They have different life forms such as caterpillar. Read a book about monarch butterflies this holiday season to discover how they are important to our lives.



Ring in the Greens

Civic Chair—Noreen Linnemann

Heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to the Holiday Greens Workshop—we could not have created and distributed the beautiful swags and wreaths throughout the community without everyone's help. Brigitte Hartke created holiday collages of the Greens Workshop, capturing the fun, fellowship, and finished products of the annual event. Proof that many hands make light (and light-hearted) work!



Membership News

Membership Chair, Joy Salpini

Please join me in welcoming our newest member, Marsha Hendrickson, to the Five Hills Garden Club. Marsha is a friend and former neighbor of Kathy Snead and lives in Fairfax, VA. Marsha's contact details have been sent out by Andy.

Keep an eye out for Marsha's bio in January.

Hospitality

Hospitality Co-chairs, Lura Marshall and Roberta Lewis

It is really great seeing more and more reusable containers being used by our members. To continue on our reduction of using plastics and throw away products, I would like to ask members to donate any silverware that the club could use (knives, forks or spoons). We can slowly transition out of plastic to these for our lunches.

The lunches this year continue to be delicious. Thank you all for your efforts this year making nutritious as well as delicious foods. Please remember that we have only 3 members who are gluten free and 2 who are vegetarian, and a couple that have cannot have seeds. I say this so that you are not making a lot of these items.



Identifying Moles, Voles, and Shrews

What is the difference between a mole, a vole, and a shrew? I thought I knew, but I was wrong. I knew what a mole was, but the shrew was where I went wrong, I have seen them, but misidentified them as voles. I don't know if I have ever seen a vole; however, I was right that they are the guys who ate my lily bulbs. As a result of their garden destruction, I decided to research all of them and share my findings with you. This month I share a brief article that PennState Extension campus posted in February 2023 (<https://extension.psu.edu/identifying-moles-voles-and-shrews>) that differentiates the three. Next month I propose to share greater information about the biology and habits of these busy diggers.

According to Dr. Margaret C. Brittingham, Former Professor of Wildlife Resources, “All three are small mammals that can be found in your yard. Moles and shrews belong to the order Insectivora and as the name suggests feed primarily on insects and invertebrates. Moles live underground and are specialized for life underground. Their small eyes and the openings of the ears are concealed in the fur, and there are no external ears. The most noticeable



characteristic are the paddle-like forefeet which are bent sideways for digging. Their feet have large claws for digging. The hind feet are small and narrow with slender, sharp claws. Mole fur is short, soft, velvety, and when brushed offers no resistance in either direction. This adaptation allows moles to travel both forward and backward through the soil.”

Image by Michael David Hill, Wikimedia

Brittingham goes on to explain that “Shrews hunt for insects above ground and in tunnels made by moles or voles. Shrews are much smaller than moles (3 to 4 inches in body length) and are mouse-like in appearance with a long, pointed snout, a short dense coat of fur, and small eyes. Shrews do not create surface tunnels but may feed in runways or tunnels of other small mammals. A good way to identify a shrew is by its small size. A shrew will fit neatly into a tablespoon.”

Shrew image provided by G. San Juana

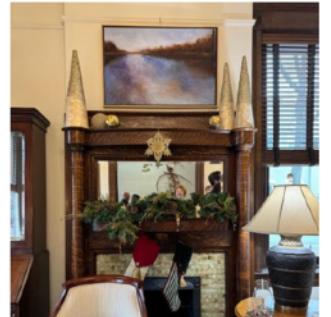




Last but not least of the pesky voles. Voles are rodents and are about the same size as moles (4 to 6 inches in body length) with relatively large black eyes, small ears, a blunt face, and prominent orange front teeth for gnawing. Meadow voles, the most common voles in Pennsylvania, are herbivores and eat a variety of grasses, seeds, and roots.

Snapshots from the Richmond Holiday Home Tours.

Photos courtesy of Lura Marshall



On Tuesday, December 12, Willow Prall Martin and Anne Nelson, co-chairs of Garden Therapy Committee, along with three volunteers, Gail Gile, Val Plisko, and Valerie Warriner presented a 3-part program to nine of the ILIFF Nursing Home residents. Willow brought in an artificial 40" pre-lit Frazier Fir tree as the centerpiece of our program. Anne lead the first and second activities. Willow lead the third.

Pinecone Ornaments. Each resident was given a set of colored mini pom-poms and a pinecone. They were instructed to push pom-poms into random pinecone spaces, with bigger red pom at the top to resemble little Christmas trees, and volunteers helped secure a pipe cleaner loop for each resident to hang their own on the tree.

Winter Snow Balls. Residents were given a white cotton snowball with a glued on pipe cleaner looped for them to hang on the tree unassisted. This ornament gave the tree a touch of winter fun. They were all able to hang both ornaments on the tree with little assistance and appeared to be proud of their accomplishments.

Evergreen bouquet in a red vase. Volunteers distributed natural greens as Willow explained each step to help residents build their bouquets. Residents were able to push pre-cut greens into the oasis in their red cups, building bouquets back to front, or at random. Final touches were red Cardinal birds and red fake berries on picks adding a lovely bright focal point.

They enjoyed using four of their senses be able to see, feel, and smell the natural textures of woody pinecones, soft cotton mini pom-poms, big white cotton balls, wiry pipe cleaners, assorted aromatic evergreens, red feathered cardinals & berries on picks, and hear the happy sounds and sing along to our background Christmas music. It was another successful event at Iliff NH. Photos by Willow P.M. and Anne N.



More Holiday Cheer



Public Safety Announcement: Winterize your Vehicle

Just as we winterize flower beds and garden plots, we should all ensure that we have a car emergency kit for winter weather. Be sure that vehicles are equipped with the following:

- Jumper Cables, Tools and Flares
- Flashlights
- Ice Scraper and Air Tire Gauge
- Phone Charger
- Blanket/Poncho and Handwarmers
- First Aid Kit
- Water and Shelf Stable Food

Many thanks to Fairfax county government for this great reminder. For more information to to [FairfaxCounty.gov/emergency/readyfairfax/makeanemergencykit](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/readyfairfax/makeanemergencykit).

