

# Sow and Tell

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday, I know I did.

We have a lot coming up in the next few months. Some great speakers and plenty of hands-on activity. I'm anxious to learn from our January program about how to make art out of invasive species; and of course, learning more about the Eastern Bluebirds at our February program. Our meeting in March is to prepare us for our flower show in April!

We will need to repeat our vote on the by-law change to apply for 501c3 status. Several club members informed me that they did not hear me at the December meeting when we took the vote. I also neglected to call the meeting to order so our December vote didn't count.

It's time for us to put together a nominating committee for our next two-year officer term coming up in June. Please consider serving as one of our officers. We need officers as VP/Membership, Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer. When these positions are filled by our nominating committee, our incoming president Joy Salpini, will be asking members to serve as committee chairs. All of these positions are vital for Five Hills to continue to be the outstanding club that we are. You will be required to attend the board meetings as well as the general meeting. I know it takes extra time to serve on our board but it is so rewarding and it is also a great way to get to know all the other members of Five Hills. Please let our nominating committee know if you are interested in taking one of these positions.

I want to remind members that COVID is picking up again. If you feel sick, please stay home. And finally, just a reminder, if the schools are closed because of inclement weather the general meeting will be canceled; if the schools are delayed we will start our meeting on time.

Andy Bothwell

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

- 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

### Program for January 16, 2024 Meeting

#### **Patterson Clark: Creating with the Invasive Cast-Offs**

Program chair—Val Plisko

Visual journalist Patterson Clark takes a novel approach to dealing with the refuse of invasive species by turning it into beautiful works of art. He harvests exotic invasive vegetation to extract paper fibers, pigments, and lumber, which converge at a printing press to make art that celebrates the bounty and inherent qualities of alien weeds. Harvesting exotic invasive vegetation from parks, alleys and private land helps make room for the return of native plants and associated animals.



## CONSERVATION

Conservation Chair—Elizabeth Huebner

The following article is contributed by Willow Prall, who has done an outstanding job of removing invasive species vines from her local park.

### **Controlling English Ivy Saves Trees and Combats Climate Change**

English Ivy is everywhere, in our neighborhoods, along our roads, and in our parks. It climbs over fences, covers sheds, and carpets forest floors. Unfortunately, many people think English Ivy is a benign plant that grows in the shade, where nothing else grows.

The truth is English Ivy is harmful in many ways. Even if well-manicured and contained on the ground, English Ivy provides a resting spot for mosquitos on hot days or hides puddles where they can breed, and who wants that! More importantly, when it covers forest floors it displaces native plants, and eliminates needed and productive biodiversity. When it climbs trees it harms and eventually kills them, which eliminates the important environmental benefits trees provide, such as wildlife habitat, preventing stormwater from entering streams, cooling our environment, and combatting climate change.

Trees are one of our best tools for capturing carbon dioxide, which is necessary to fight global warming. According to the US Forest Service, America's forests sequester about 16% of the annual emissions from the United States. Because trees are such excellent carbon sinks, there are large scale reforestation efforts underway. President Biden's [Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan](#) calls for more than one billion new trees to be planted over the next 10 years. In addition, the government's experts know that controlling invasive species that kill trees is an important strategy for enhancing carbon capture.

We as individuals also have an important role to play in controlling English Ivy at home and in our natural areas. Otherwise it covers everything in its path, and when left unchecked, English Ivy grows vertically (by rootlets on the stem). On trees, the weight of the vine weakens and breaks limbs, which can make trees more susceptible to infections, and over time the vines cover trees so totally that they die. But that's not all. When English Ivy goes vertical it matures. It then will flower and set fruit. Birds then eat and disperse the fruit, spreading the English Ivy invasion.

Homeowners can protect their costly landscaping and help the environment by eliminating English Ivy from their gardens or, at a minimum, by keeping it from growing up trees. Wearing gloves, cut all the vines on a tree about two feet up and again at ground level. There is no need to pull the vines off the tree. Deprived of water and nutrients from the soil, the vines will wither. You will have to repeat this occasionally if you do not remove all the ivy. Hand pulling after a rain softens the soil is the best way to get rid of English Ivy. The debris should go in the trash. Do not compost it or put it out with the brush collection as it will continue to grow and spread in these locations.

The good news is that there are lots of alternative native ground covers that will support pollinators and our environment. You can find excellent suggestions in the [Native Plants for Northern Virginia](#) guide, such as Virginia Creeper and ferns.

You also can help our neighborhoods, forests, and parks by becoming a member of Plant NOVA Natives.

***Plant NOVA Natives** is the joint outreach campaign of a grand coalition of non-profit, governmental, and private groups, plus hundreds of individuals, all working to reverse the decline of native plants and wildlife in Northern Virginia. Our strategy is to encourage residents as well as public and commercial entities to install native plants as the first step toward creating wildlife habitat and functioning ecosystems on their own properties. All are welcome to participate in this collective action movement!*

***Plant NOVA Trees** is a focused drive of the Plant NOVA Natives campaign to increase native tree canopy in Northern Virginia by encouraging residents and businesses to plant new trees and preserve the ones we already have. [www.plantnovatrees.org](http://www.plantnovatrees.org)*

## Hospitality Reminder

Hospitality Chair—Lura Marshall; co-chair—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. Roberta and I thank you all for your efforts this year. Please remember that we only have 2 members that are gluten free and 2 that are vegetarian, and a couple that have cannot have seeds. I say this so that you are not making a lot of these items.



## HORTICULTURE & DESIGN

Horticulture and Design Chair—Jane Schmiedekamp

Committee members: Helen Mertz, Anita Parke, Margaret Bain

Spring is coming and you can be ready to make a bouquet or more formal design with your flowers. Here are some step by step tips for extending the life of cut flowers.

### Tools and Materials

|                                      |               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Stem-cutting shears or sharp pruners | Selected Vase |
| Pail                                 | Water         |
| 7-up                                 | Bleach        |

**Cut flowers.** Cut flowers in your garden in the morning before the dew has dried, or in the early evening. With stem-cutting shears or sharp pruners, snip above a node or dormant bud to spur new blooms. Put stems in a pail of lukewarm water as you cut them. Keep in mind that flowers with hollow stems do not have a long vase life.

**Recut Stems.** Recut stems on a slant indoors under water to eliminate air bubbles that block uptake of food and water. Certain types of flowers (including celosia, sunflower, and zinnia) benefit from scalding the stem ends in boiling water for 20 seconds or over a candle flame to stop nutrient-rich sap from oozing. To prevent decay, remove bruised leaves and foliage below the water line.

**Condition flowers.** Condition flowers several hours before arranging. Rest stems in lukewarm water in a cool, dark place so they can absorb water.

**Arrange flowers.** Arrange conditioned flowers in a vase of warm (110 degrees F) water. To slow aging, place the vase in a well ventilated cool place (as low as 38 degrees F). Don't store flowers near unsealed fruits and vegetables which produce ethylene, a gas that hastens ripening, or in the case of flowers, aging.

**Add water.** Freshly cut flowers have enough stored sugars to survive in a vase for a few days, but if you would like to add a preservative try a homemade version. Tests have shown that commercial floral preservatives to be less effective than the following formula; the sugar in the 7-up provides energy for the flowers, and the bleach controls bacteria. If you need more liquid, just increase the amounts proportionately.

1 cup regular 7-up  
1 cup water  
1/2 teaspoon household bleach

**Change water.** Change water every couple of days. In mixed bouquets, some of the flowers may give off sap that is toxic to other varieties in the vase shortening their vase life, a process that is avoided by frequently refreshing the water.



## Horticulture Discussion Topic:

Do you care for and feed the birds? Come prepared to show and tell what you feed them and any special provisions you make to care for birds.

Photo by Tina Nord



### Garden Therapy

Garden Therapy co-chairs—Willow Prall and Anne Nelson

Garden Therapy Committee will have a new Volunteer sign-up sheet available for circulation at the January 2024 General meeting. Willow & Anne will contact each month’s volunteers one week before to verify date, time, and new activity.

Please note that all dates are tentative, as we strive to schedule the first Tuesday of each month to coordinate with Iliff Nursing Home’s schedule. A few times, their August Healthcare ownership team had to bump our Garden Therapy program to accommodate their corporate meetings, or other conflicts, so we kindly rescheduled for next day or pushed into following week.

Thank you for volunteering. We appreciate your efforts. May you all enjoy a healthy, happy, adventurous, prosperous New Year and with beautifully bountiful gardens!

### 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://FairfaxCounty.gov/emergency/readyfairfax/makeanemergencykit).

# FIVE HILLS GARDEN CLUB 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



*Pic Stitch*









