

RCCG NEWS

Presidents Corner | Garden History | Field Trips | Weeds | Earth Day |

RCCG Contact Information

Email:

rockcreekgarden@gmail.com

Website:

rockcreekcommunitygarden.org

Important Dates

Sunday, May 4 - First

Inspection: Garden Must Be
Started

Sunday May 4 - Plant Swap at
the Garden

Saturday, October 4 - Garden
Potluck

Sunday, October 5, Rain Date for
Garden Potluck

October 18 - Saturday - Fall
Clean up

October 19 - Sunday - Final
Inspection



Presidents Corner: Join me in saluting garden “All Stars”

Happy Spring fellow gardeners. Hope folks are getting a great start at gardening or at least planning it. Thanks to all who helped during the spring cleanup, it takes all of us to make the garden work. Speaking of volunteering, every year we recognize especially noteworthy volunteers. We celebrate all our volunteers but these select set did above and beyond. Please join me in congratulating these gardeners below. I’ve also included a short description of their noteworthy contributions. All the gardeners get a gift card

1

**PRESIDENT’S
MESSAGE**

4

**INTO THE
WEEDS**

5

EART DAY

6

**FEATURED
GARDENER
Brian Hellman**

Garden All Stars:

Sonya Sutton was noteworthy in her flawless execution of lead inspector duties. As was **Lena Heron** for tireless work as inspection manager. A great job especially considering she's such a relatively new gardener.

Anita Albertson for tireless work running the weeds team and tracking all our volunteers.

Tom Geary and **Katherine Lenard** did a great job on the weed team especially cleaning up around the flower and herb garden.

Susan Davis organized the amendment orders and oversaw the delivery and distribution. Fantastic job as she's done for many years.

Ellie Selden (Tom Selden's daughter) and **Genna Rollins** also did a great job tracking and ensuring the amendment distribution process went well during spring cleanup day.

Bernie Dorr, who has unfortunately left the garden this season but for years did a fantastic job ensuring our water system ran smoothly.

John Mitchell has been doing our trash for the past couple of years and does a fantastic job. He's also been taking care of our gas-powered mowers and tillers, often assisted by **Mike Conlow** who we also recognize.

Bob Keith has been doing other tool repair as some of our shovels, rakes, and pitchforks.

Mike Magor took care of our lovely dogwood which is in the center of the garden as a memorial to a long-time gardener. As an aside it is very near bloom and maybe by the time you read this it will be in full bloom for spring.

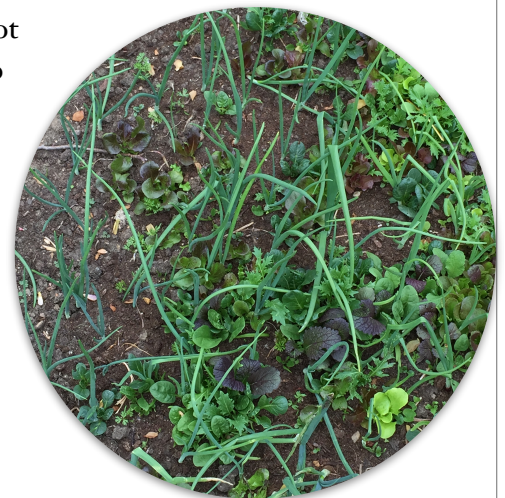
Fencing is one of the most labor-intensive jobs we have and **Doug Beakes** stands out for working rabbit fencing for gardens in the B row,

Judy Reiter and **Peggy Cloherty** organized our garden potluck which was so lovely on late summer night.

Finally, **Pam Ross** planned garden related excursions which while not officially garden sponsored are a great way for groups of gardeners to see other gardens and botanical delights in and around the area.

Again, a virtual hand for all the awardees. Happy gardening to all. Please keep up volunteering for our community.

Joe Nelson, President RCCGA



Help Document the Story of Rock Creek Park's Community Gardens!

This summer, students from George Mason University will be working on a project to document the rich stories and everyday life of Rock Creek Park community gardens. They will be gathering oral histories, taking photos, and learning how these spaces bring people together—especially local residents from immigrant, minority, and low-income communities.

From May 19 to June 27, student researchers (from George Mason's Folklore, Cultural Studies, and Anthropology programs) will be visiting the gardens in order to learn how the gardens support community building, mentoring, and food security. They will be taking pictures of the gardens, so feel free to tell them if you would rather not be in a photograph.

They are currently looking for **10–15 gardeners** willing to be interviewed for about 45 minutes to an hour. These conversations can happen right in the gardens or at another location it that is more convenient for you. Questions will only be related to your work as a gardener, and if you prefer, all information can be anonymized. They would like to line up volunteers before they officially begin fieldwork on **May 24**. If you're interested in participating or have any questions, feel free to reach out to Debra Lattanzi Shutika at dshutika@gmu.edu.

They also plan on sharing their findings with the community in an in-person event the week of **June 25–27**. So stay tuned for that!

This effort is being encouraged by our National Park Service hosts, and the final report and photographs will go to the NPS archives. This material may also provide us with some useful historical content for our



Into the Weeds

By Anita Albertson, Invasive Weed Team

Everyone in our community garden has weeds. A weed is any plant that you don't want where it is - a cherry tomato plant growing in your strawberries might be a tasty volunteer, but it is a weed if it has jumped to where you don't want it. Mint and garlic chives are delicious, but if they are crowding out your basil and tomatoes - they are weeds!

We all have them! The birds, bunnies, wind, voles all bring their seeds and drop them into our plots. Roots, rhizomes, and corms creep sneakily by the fence line.....under the soil lots is brewing.

It's magical but also challenging because as gardeners we want some things to thrive and other things to cease and desist.

Each gardener is responsible for their own plot which includes the interior as well as their fence lines and the public paths surrounding their plot.

We - as the invasive weed team members - are supplementary - trying to get ahead of problems before they become out of hand. If I saw a dandelion about to go to seed, I would dig it up if I could, or pick it before it scatters its seed everywhere. Certain plants are more aggressive than others - but the goal remains the same - we are aiming to address weeds before they become everyone's headache.

Our job as the Weed Team - is to support the public spaces within and around our community garden by weeding, dead-heading, and educating others about weeds (the good, the bad and the really bad).

Weeds have life cycles - over the late winter/early spring you might find weeds that aren't 'bad' until they go to seed. Chickweed, Purple Dead Nettle, Creeping Charlie, Bitter Cress - these hold the soil in place, protecting from erosion during the winter - and often enrich the soil binding nitrogen and many can be edible (read up on it first) - but once they go to seed - they can crowd out the plants you want to grow. So we'd aim to remove them before they seed.

As the earth warms up - other weeds will show up - things like wild mustard, and pinellia ternata (only RCCG calls it lily weed), more chickweed, dichondra repens - many of these are non-native, invasive and pernicious. Wild mustard is edible, but seeds and crowds out other things. Dichondra is a stepable plant that likes moisture and has to be dug out removing the top few inches where it grows. Pinellia Ternata needs to be dug out like a dandelion to assure one has gotten the rhizomes.

Later in the summer while some of the other plants continue - additional plants show up - Yellow cress, Lesser celandine, crab grass, wire grass, mugwort, bindweed, morning glory, purslane, lambs' ear, pig weeds, thistles, nut-sedges, etc show up. Some of them have rhizomes, some have superhighways of roots, mugwort and wire grass can regrow with the smallest amount of root.

We also need to be on the look out for ivies, bushes, and trees - usually volunteers sowed inadvertently by birds or little mammals.

I don't expect you to know the names - (honestly, I often get the names confused myself- it seems each season I have to relearn them!)

Celebrating Earth Day 2025

By Alice Doyle

How will you celebrate Earth Day this year? Earth Day will be held on April 22, 2025, and I while I would argue that every day should be Earth Day, I encourage you to take some time this month to recognize the occasion. Whether its spending time working in the garden, taking a hike through Rock Creek Park, listening to bird song, or recycling at home, there are lots of ways you can honor the Earth!

This year's official theme for Earth Day is "Our Power, Our Planet" which focuses on worldwide renewable energy and sets a goal of tripling the production of electric energy by 2030. For more information on this year's theme and how to get involved visit: <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2025/>

Here are a few suggestions on how to honor the Earth this April:

- ✿ Grow your own! We are so lucky to be a part of this historic community garden and to have the opportunity to grow our own food. Share your extras with a friend or a neighbor. The fruits, vegetables and herbs we grow in our own gardens are packed with nutrients and lacking pesticides or other harmful chemicals. It doesn't get much better than that!
- ✿ Shop locally and visit your farmers market for local cheese, honey, bread, and other products. By shopping from local producers and growers, you are supporting the local economy and reducing your carbon footprint. Products travel shorter distances to reach you, often are not treated with pesticides or filled with preservatives and are better for the Earth and for you. For a list of local farmers markets in DC, Maryland and Virginia visit: <https://washington.org/visit-dc/washington-dc-farmers-markets>
- ✿ Make your clothes last and buy second-hand. Give up fast fashion. Take time to repair clothes rather than simply throwing them away. Visit your local secondhand clothing store to see what they have in stock. You may be surprised by the quality of the items you find there. Americans throw out, on average, 65 lbs. of clothes per year per person, and when they do donate them to secondhand stores, they are often still in perfectly good condition. You may also find the things you need through a local Buy Nothing Group rather than buying new.
- ✿ Take a hike. Whether you choose to explore a trail in Rock Creek Park or go further afield to someplace like the Shannondoah National Park in Virginia, take time to get out into nature and decompress. Spending time in nature has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, boost immune health, enhance mood and mental health, and much more. Although we certainly accrue these wonderful benefits when we spend time in our lovely community garden, I encourage you to also take time to walk in nature and to find and new places to immerse yourself in nature in our own city and region. If you don't have anyone to hike with, reach out to a friend and ask them to join you. You can also consider joining a local hiking group based on your fitness level and interests.
- ✿ Read a book about the environment or nature. There are many excellent books written on this topic. As your librarian what their favorite book is on nature or the environment, or check out this recommended list of books: <https://www.earthday.org/book-list/>

Featured Gardener - Brian Hellman

By Susan Galbraith

We welcome to RCCG garden this year Brian Heilman. He and his family live about ten blocks north of RCCG and has been on the waiting list about five seasons. In the meantime he's tried backyard gardening at home but has been frustrated in his efforts by too much shade in his yard.

When I caught up with Brian, he had already made a good start in his C-row plot, planting beets, carrots, kale, spinach, peas, okra, cantaloupe, spinach. I was impressed with his industry.

Brian told me, "I was going to put in some starters but hadn't started anything yet. But honestly, I don't know how good my seeds are. But I feel blessed to have joined the community. I've already met several gardeners, and everyone have been great. I've learning about the history of the folks who had Victory gardens. My grandfather had a Victory Garden.



You have a fascinating family tree. Well, yes, I had a great grandfather born in Odessa, Ukraine -- before Ukraine was Ukraine -- and they immigrated to Iowa in the 1830's. And I have a brother and sister, and both of them are beekeepers. Especially my brother, it seems like the bees find him.

Tell me, why do you garden? Fellow Gardener Jim Prust always reminded me there are so many different reasons that bring gardeners here, and that we should be mindful of that -- and compassionate.

I knew someone from the old country. He was Calabrese, and he would only eat fruit off his own trees. I always thought there was something magical to eat fresh and something you've grown.

So, what do you do when you're not gardening? Well, I work with something called Surge which has to do with solar energy in industrial and commercial applications. And what's exciting is the new tempered glass is flexible so you can attach to curved surfaces with glue that lasts twenty-five years, made by Green Watts out of San Diego. And of course, Maryland and the District give good credits. I'm also about community solar sharing.

And you are also very involved with the Bethesda Community Center. Tell me a little bit about that. Yes. Everybody wants a community Center, but, like gardening, it means different things and to different people. Along with some others, I want to keep it community focused. There is a big event March 29, going from morning until 5 p.m. The Office of Planning for the District is calling it a Disposition Hearing at the Center with a hearing at 3 p.m. The Mayor has been focused previously about affordable housing --which we all should be behind, but does it have to go on top of a community center? I think not. My own hope is that we can get a cultural- and performance-themed center and invite our Maryland neighbors in to join us.

So, how have you found our community so far? As a newbie, it's been wonderful to see so much sharing of information, strategies, and history. I look forward to more sharing of community. And by the way, I was bequeathed several black current bushes in my plot, and I'd love to pass some on.

I reminded Brian of the Plant Swap coming up May 4. I also asked him if his wife, who is Pakistani would share a delectable recipe

Garden Field Trips 2025

Run by Pam Ross

I am beginning to think about field trips I can organize this year. Last year several of us went to the Philadelphia Flower Show in early March and/or Hillwood Gardens in late April.

Following are some ideas I had in mind for this year. I'd also love to get your input about these suggestions or other places consider.

☼ Late May/early June - Star Bright Farm (in White Hall, MD, 1 hr drive)

- lavender is in full bloom during that time
- later in the season you can see other things in their gardens/beautiful farm. I think they also offer classes and I can investigate that once they're open for the season.

☼ Late June/early July - Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens

- this would be a much bring trip so that the flowers haven't closed up in the heat of the day.

☼ July or September - Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA (2 hr drive)

- these are spectacular gardens that you could easily spend a whole day exploring.
- If anyone else wanted to make it an overnight trip, I'd add Chanticleer Gardens in Wayne, PA because it's also amazing and I bet many garden members haven't heard of it

Poetry Corner

From Alice Doyle

Oh, how fresh the wind is blowing!

See! The sky is bright and clear,

Oh, how green the grass is growing!

April! April! Are you here?

—Dora R. Goodale (1866–1953)

In honor of Earth Day:

An Earth Song

It's an earth song,—

And I've been waiting long for an earth song.

It's a spring song,—

And I've been waiting long for a spring song.

Strong as the shoots of a new plant

Strong as the bursting of new buds

Strong as the coming of the first child from its
mother's womb.

It's an earth song,

A body song,

A spring song,

I have been waiting long for this spring song.

= Langston Hughes (1901–1967)

Haiku by Susan Galbraith,

Digging in the dirt,

wiggles wiggle up from black,

and songbirds return.

Radishes – oh my! –

'French breakfasts,' dark bread and salt –

Let's crunch into bliss!

Haiku by Pam Ross

Climbing hydrangea you

Looked so very dead but

You were just kidding!

My dog says it's spring

Because she knows the bunnies

Ate all my tulips

**My gloves and old tools

Anxiously await the day

The shed door opens

Crocus last just days

And yet they promise years of

Springs to come again

**I bought lots of seeds

After dreaming of gardens

Tended by others

My back's hurting, check

My knees ache, check, so I

Know it must be spring

Fifteen dollars is

A small price to pay for four

Seasons of jelly

Avoiding planting regrets

By Stephanie Bruce, Inspection team lead

Hi Fellow Gardeners! I hope you are enjoying Spring as much as I am. I still don't feel I've been in the garden that long, but I've been on the inspections team for at least 7 years now, and I was asked to share what plantings have gardeners come to regret, or that may end up creating issues for you or your neighbors. Many of these I've learned myself the hard way; others are from seasoned gardeners' suggestions. Do you have any garden regrets? Here are the top Nominees!

MINT

What's the issue? Mint spread vigorously via underground roots. A single small plant may have you digging roots and tamping down spread for the entire summer, and years to come!

Suggestion: Some people bury a planter or pot to help contain the roots

GARLIC CHIVES:

What's the issue: These spread vigorously by seed in the fall, and form tight clumps that often grow through fencing. Digging out can put holes in the fencing

Suggestion: Plan to cut before flowering (that's the best time to eat these, anyway), and all plants should be deadheaded before seeds ripen in the late summer/fall.

TALL CROPS (Corn, sunflowers and others) and **DENSE** Crops (shrubs, irises)

What's the issue: very tall crops, especially any with dense growth, can create quite a bit of shade. Plan ahead now to make sure that shade is not falling on your neighbor's plot.

Suggestion: plant any very dense or very tall crops at the South end (or West Side if you are doing a single N-S row) of your own plot. Or plant so that the shade falls on the common chipped pathways.

JERUSELAM ARTICHOKES (AKA Sunchokes)

What's the issue: Not only do these grow tall and dense (see shade issues, above), but they grow enthusiastically from hearty tubers. It can be very difficult to dig every last tuber when harvesting, and these can take over without vigilance.

Suggestion: Mostly just be aware that these will need vigilance. If you are trying to eradicate, dig in the fall and again in early spring as any shoots appear. Can take 2-3 years to completely eliminate. Also, see recommendations for tall plants, above

I want to be the first to say, all of these are food items, so please don't think anyone is saying you cannot grow them. But especially for new gardeners, a little planning may prevent regret.

Happy Spring!