

# Sow and Tell

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## President's Message

Where is spring? Everything is just waiting for Mother Nature to stop being so fickle and give us some consistent spring weather. It is nice to see some of the trees with blossoms. I guess when all the trees are starting to bud out we will be complaining about the pollen count.

When I was in Tokyo last month the cherry blossoms were at peak. What a thrill it was to see them showing off their color! I saw so many beautiful gardens on my trip. The Japanese really have an eye and skill for creating beautiful gardens. Thank you, Julia, for taking over while I was traveling.

Speaking of gardens, we are making progress on our "Blue Star" garden. The plaque has been reset on a beautiful stone. Now it is up to our club to make the garden around it. Thanks to all of you for your support on this worthy project. Our rededication is Saturday, April 28 at 10:00 am. I hope all of you will be able to be present. A big thanks to Barbara Tozzi for coordinating the rededication activities.

Willow Prall has been busy sprucing up her house and gardens in preparation for our flower show on May 1. It is going to be a lovely day and a fun time for our members to show off their talents with designs and gardening skills. Lisa Adelman has done a fabulous job setting up our flower show and I know it will be a great success.

It was so nice to see so many of our Five Hills members at the Landscape Design School. One of my goals for our club was to have more members involved in the Schools, and we sure are achieving that objective. Hopefully some of you will be able to attend the NCAGC Conference on April 13 and 14 for another learning experience.

It is so rewarding to be involved in a garden club that is so active and involved in so many activities. The best part is being able to spend time together as we learn more about gardening, participate in community activities and develop lasting friendships.

In Friendship,  
Noreen

General Meeting: Tuesday, April 17

*April 17 General Meeting Program*

**Ready . . . Set . . . SHOW !!**



**Flower  
Show!**

This meeting is dedicated to going over the Flower Show schedule for our May Day Flower Show. This will be a home show, generously hosted by Willow Prall. The title is "The Merry Month of May". Our judges will cover the horticulture, as well as specific designs in the schedule. We hope to allay your concerns and answer all your questions!

*"The sun was warm but the wind was chill.  
You know how it is with an April day:  
When the sun is out and the wind is still,  
You're one month on in the middle of May:  
But if you so much as dare to speak,  
a cloud come over the sunlit arch,  
And wind comes off a frozen peak,  
And you're two months back in the middle of March."*  
— Robert Frost, *Two Tramps in Mud Time*, 1926



CALENDAR

- Tues, April 3 Meadowlark Gardens Volunteers, 9 am
- Mon, April 2-7 NGC Trip to Gardens in Georgia
- Wed, April 11 Landscape Design Gen. Meeting & Conf.
- Mon, April 23 Braddock Glen Garden Therapy, 9:15 am
- Mon, April 23/24 (put on hold) Field Trip to Anne Marie Gardens, Solomons, Maryland
- Wed, April 25 Environmental & Gardening Consultant Mtg
- Sat, April 28 Vienna Blue Star Memorial By-way Rededication
- Tues, May 1 "Merry Month of May" Flower Show
- Wed, May 2 Meadowlark Gardens Volunteers, 9 am
- Sat, May 12 Plant Sale & Garden Faire, Freeman Store
- Tues, May 15 Five Hills Annual Plant Exchange
- Thurs, June 7 Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Field Trip

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## Upcoming Events

Sunday, April 29 Vienna's "Walk on the Hill" and Green Expo, 9 am to 1 pm

Held each spring since 1974, 'Walk on the Hill' is perhaps Vienna's loveliest event, offering self-guided tours through approximately fifty participating yards and gardens in Vienna's historic Windover Heights neighborhood. Come 'Walk on the Hill' to enjoy lovely gardens, live entertainment, and refreshments, and to learn more about efforts of the Community Enhancement Commission to make Vienna more sustainable at the Green Expo. Visit this link for an event brochure and map: <https://www.viennava.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3853>

In addition to participating in the "Walk on the Hill", you can enjoy Ayr Hill's Flower Show, from 2 to 5 pm, at the home of AHGC member Louise Davidson, 307 Windover Avenue, NW. Entitled "Bringing Nature to Your Home", this show will be held in conjunction with the Walk. Find the

Connection Newspaper's article on the flower show here: <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2018/apr/02/ayr-hill-garden-club-host-flower-show-vienna/>

Saturday, April 21, 8 am - 1 pm  
Town of Vienna Native Plant Sale

To be held at the Vienna Community Center Parking Lot. Don't miss the opportunity to enrich your gardens with plants from Hill House Native Plants Farm and Nursery.

Saturday, May 12, 9 am - 1 pm  
Ayr Hill Plant Sale & Garden Faire, Freeman Hs. Str.

With a special focus on native plants and plants proven to grow well in Virginia; many are from their members' own gardens. There will also be annuals, note cards, gardening books and paraphernalia. Proceeds are used to maintain the public gardens.

## Communications

Monday April 23, 9:15  
Garden Therapy at Braddock Glen

We will meet at Braddock Glen on Monday, April 23 at 9:15 for our final session of this year. The residents will be designing colorful spring arrangements with fresh flowers and greenery from Twinbrook Florist. Our volunteers are Shelia Creswell, Debbie Doody, and Rosemarie Jaksetic. Braddock Glen is located at 4027 Olley Lane in Fairfax. See you all then!!  
~ Gail Gile and Janet Kremer

"The Merry Month of May" Show NEEDS YOU!

There are still ten entry spaces to fill in our upcoming flower show. Please consider choosing one of them, and having an entry in our once-every-two-years event. Don't miss this opportunity to play

with flowers and have fun while you are doing it. It's said, "nothing ventured, nothing gained" — put your creativity to work and see what you come up with, as this is a fine opportunity to learn and grow. Spaces left unfilled fall to members already working hard to put on the show, so please, let's all be a part of what promises to be an exciting day!

Refreshments Needed for the Blue Star Rededication Ceremony

Members are needed to bake cookies for after the rededication. Please contact Rosemarie Jaksetic to offer to bake one batch. Also, we need another helper on Saturday, April 28 at the event. We are looking for a container from which to serve lemonade. Please contact Rosemarie Jaksetic before our meeting to help with any of these.

## INTERESTED IN IRISES?

by Karen Lucas

A few years ago, the Five Hills Garden Club made an excursion to Haymarket to visit an iris farm. It has since been closed, but it has left me with a deep appreciation for this flower. The ones I ordered have bloomed each year and supplied me with more plants to populate other corners of my garden at the bay. We are now clearing out our home and planning a move to a condo nearby, so I was looking over old garden magazines (to toss) and became confused and a little alarmed at my lack of knowledge of the “other irises”. I have discovered some information I hope might be helpful to you.

Two great web sites for Iris information are: 1. The American Iris Society ([irises.org](http://irises.org)) and 2. the Missouri Botanical Garden at ([missouribotanicalgarden.org](http://missouribotanicalgarden.org)). Below is just an outline to get you started and a few pictures to tempt you.

### Bearded Iris (German)



This is the most recognized iris on the planet. The “beard” or fuzzy growth on the lower petals (falls) are a giveaway! The Iris Society has divided them into six categories for judging, mostly on size and blooming season. The petals drop down. They range in size from 8 to over

30 inches, like moist well-drained soil, and full sun. Division should be in late summer or early fall. Raised beds or a slope gives them the good drainage they need.

### Beardless (The Rest)

**Japanese Iris** (Kaempferi, butterfly)

Have been grown in Japan for over 500 years. They come in solids and bicolors, and like all the irises, are resistant to rabbits and deer. Their dramatic bloom is large ruffled, and petals are



flatter than their bearded cousins. They make excellent cut flowers. They require moist soil and can grow along ponds or wetter areas.

### Siberian Iris

These plants are hardy and their grass-like foliage remains a good filler after their bloom ends. There are fewer hybrids but several bi- and tri-colors. They bloom just after the bearded iris and show off best in clumps and are a good selection for rain gardens.



### Louisiana Iris

An under-used native plant (Gulf Coast). It has a large (4 to 6 inches) flower, and the petals are horizontal like the Japanese iris. They prefer moist rich soil, and there are many cultivars for our area. They are noted for “flashes” of gold color near the center.



### Wild Iris

Blue Flag Iris is native to our NE. It grows three to five feet. The Yellow Flag Iris native to England, grows in water up to 12 inches, spreads easily and becomes invasive in open swampy areas.





**Iris Cristata**

A low grower (3 to 6 inches), some native, short stems, blue, lilac to white with gold crests. Will naturalize.



**Iris x hollandica (Dutch Iris)**

Grows from a bulb not a rhizome. They are short-lived, and some treat them as annuals. Plant in fall in a site with full sun to part shade. Zones 5-9. An orchid-like flower blooms on a long stem earlier than the beards.



Horticulture Projects for April's Hort Table:

Bring in a horticultural specimen from your garden in a proportional green bottle. Label it correctly. Suggestions include flowering branches.

Design Theme: No design assignment. Plan and work on a design to enter in the Flower Show in May.

*(flowering quince, Meadowlark, April 15)*

On the subject of horticultural specimens ~

Be surveying your gardens in the coming weeks to identify and prepare the plants you plan to share at our May annual plant exchange. This has been a perennial favorite event in our club; we share our plants and, in explaining their particular requirements, qualities and foibles, we learn a great deal of useful information from each other. Most of us can look around our gardens and remember from whom we received many of the stars in our flower beds. They multiply, we divide, and we all reap the rewards of our most delightful hobby — one that keeps on giving to us, in so many ways, over many years. Please include with your plants a little information about them if possible.



## Technological Advances in Farming

by Elizabeth Huebner

Here I am, thinking about what you might be interested in reading. This article is a bit unusual for a garden club newsletter, but we all eat, and thus I thought many of us would be interested in the progressive processes whereby our food is grown. I came across an article in the Costco Connection which was related to my Easter conversation with my brother-in-law about some of my mid-west cousins and their farming of large tracts of land (12,000 acres) and how it differs from the 1950 to 1970 era. Technology has come to our most progressive farms in some of the most amazing ways. Can you imagine vacuuming up the bugs in your fields of strawberries instead of spraying them?

**Farmers today use GPS to run combines and track yield data** as they harvest corn. The John Deere Combine has an air-conditioned cab with screens that monitor the harvest, the farmer keeps his hands off the wheel—the combine drives autonomously. It straddles 8 rows at a time, removing corn from the stalks, then shucking and shelling it. Once the storage area in the combine is full, the press of a button creates a cascade of kernels from the combine into a separate tractor bed driven alongside of the combine. Turning the machine is where the farmer must act, as the combine and other machines often do not yet manage this maneuver without human intervention, but they are working on that, too.

Automatically harvesting corn isn't all this combine is doing. Seven different screens blink and flash as they collect all sorts of data points, measuring the productivity of each acre and mapping the topography of the land. The information will ultimately help the farmer operate more efficiently. It is the future of farming because fewer people want to farm our land.

Farmers face an ever-expanding global population, labor shortages, environmental challenges,

sustainability and food safety concerns, and of course, the pressure to stay competitive. These issues effect the smallest family farm to the largest growing operations. Many growers are turning to technology to help overcome many of these obstacles.

Just as the first tractors created efficiencies in the field, so are modern technologies emerging today. iPads, drones, GPS systems, optical sorters, artificial intelligence, data-driven processes and much more are taking their place along side shovels and shears. In some cases, technology is eliminating the traditional field altogether. The results allow for smarter labor practices, fewer environmental impacts and safer food-handling processes. In all cases the introduction of technology is helping farmers grow more with less. Agri-tech equipment and investment, benefits the farmer, the U. S. and the world by continually technologically advancing to drive costs down to meet the growing need.

The old saying, 'If you're standing still, you're running backwards'" is true in farming. The technology is changing so rapidly, if you are not keeping up, you are losing money, and the ability to stay on the farm. Data gathering starts with soil sampling an empty field. Learning what nutrients are in the soil helps determine what to plant and where. It also indicates how best to care for the crop once it is planted, and which nutrients need to be replenished to keep the crop healthy and thriving. This way, rather than blanketing a whole field with the same amount of water and fertilizer, the farmer can dole out only specific amounts (ounces vs gallons) of what each acre needs to thrive. The process called variable rate application, is done via a GPS-guided tractor. It also encourages use of beneficial crops (rye, turnips, and radishes) to help replenish the soil, thus healthier food, healthier land and higher yields.

Farmers are becoming better environmentalists with technology, managing the farm with many fewer people and saving time to work on other business tasks.

**Imagine the “bug vacuum”.** It is a big, yellow machine that straddles rows of strawberries, sucking up harmful lygus bugs as easily as your vacuum cleaner sucks up dirt from carpet. Left to its own devices, the lygus bug, also called tarnished plant bug, is a destructive insect that causes severe damage in fruit orchards. They also feed on strawberries and several vegetable crops and ornamental plants causing a misshapen and unmarketable fruit. The vacuum gently removes bugs from the plant canopy, leaving the flower blossoms and fruit completely intact. This mechanical solution greatly reduces the need for chemical pest control and is used in both organic and conventional fields.



Strawberry farmers also are using a machine called the Mercado, a self-driving machine that straddles several rows and holds harvested berries, empty boxes or anything else farm employees need.

Workers set the pace of the Mercado to match the rate at which they pick strawberries and can stop it to take breaks. Now the Agrobot company is working on a robotic strawberry picker that is being tested; they want to improve upon the less-ergonomically-pleasing jobs and allow humans to do the things they’re most uniquely suited to do.

**Then there is Go Green’s climate-controlled greenhouse,** located in a busy residential area of Encinitas, California where one is met with endless tables of perfectly spaced, bright green organic butter lettuce. The ambience is warm and bright, with music; a robot rolls by, spraying garlic extract on the crop to ward off any unwelcome bugs. The greenhouse keeps out pests, bad weather and other contaminants; it is close to its market and cuts transportation costs while bringing fresher food to consumers. The lettuces grow from soil pods in 20-foot channels that look like rain gutters that keep roots submerged in a constantly cycling closed-loop irrigation system monitored by computer.

Staff check the program daily when they log in. It tells them seed this today, transplant that today,

harvest this today. Go Green is different in that they seed every day and harvest every day, whereas most farms seed for the season, and then they wait and harvest it. The program includes a Wikipedia-style resource section to help identify any plant health issues employees might encounter. They can know where each plant is, how it is cared for; monitor and adjust greenhouse conditions, and track inventory, orders, sales and shipments.

Many of the repetitive, undesirable jobs are automated while employees ensure quality.

Machines create the soil sushi, plant the seeds and water seedlings and growing plants. Pesticides are never used. Humans move the lettuce around the greenhouse and hand-harvest it. Machines box and label the product.

Windset Farms noticed the conventional strawberry industry has come under scrutiny for high concentrations of pesticide, chemicals used in land fumigation and issues surrounding water usage and runoff. Windset is among the first in the United States to grow strawberries hydroponically. They grow produce in massive, climate-controlled greenhouses full of technological advances and bring fresh produce (tomatoes, bell peppers and cucumbers and now strawberries) to tables year-round, using minimal resources. Again, they have daily harvests, planting, etc. Windset’s water consumption is up to 10 times more efficient than land farming, depending on the crop. Their closed-loop irrigation system continuously recycles water until it is completely absorbed by the plants. They have their own on-site water treatment system that filters, sterilizes and recirculates waste-and rainwater. Windset does get bugs in the greenhouses but use beneficial bugs to target the ‘bad’ bugs. They use sticky yellow sheets placed around the greenhouse to trap other harmful bugs.

This gives me hope that our food can be grown and harvested without great expenditures of back-breaking labor in the future. And we might benefit from some of these ideas in our own back yards in the future. Let me know what you think.

Many thanks to Costco.

Saturday, April 28, 2018, 10 am

## Blue Star Rededication Ceremony

Plans are underway for our Blue Star Memorial rededication ceremony at the end of the month. Barbara Tozzi and her team of volunteers have been working to make this a great success. This will be a very special event in that we honor those who have served, are serving, and will be serving our nation through their work in the Armed Forces. An example of the invitation we are issuing is below. Our program will include the names of those who served who are relatives of the members of our club.



*Do you need a refresher on the tag specifications for your flower show entries? Here is some helpful information from Ann Balch.*

## Plant Naming and Classification for Flower Show Entries

Each Horticulture entry should be identified using the binomial nomenclature, as follows:

**Genus** - Capitalized, and underlined (or italicized)

**Species** - Not capitalized, but underlined (or italicized)

**Variety or Cultivar** - In single quotation marks; capitalized; not underlined or italicized.

Some common examples would be:

Hosta sieboldiana 'Elegans'

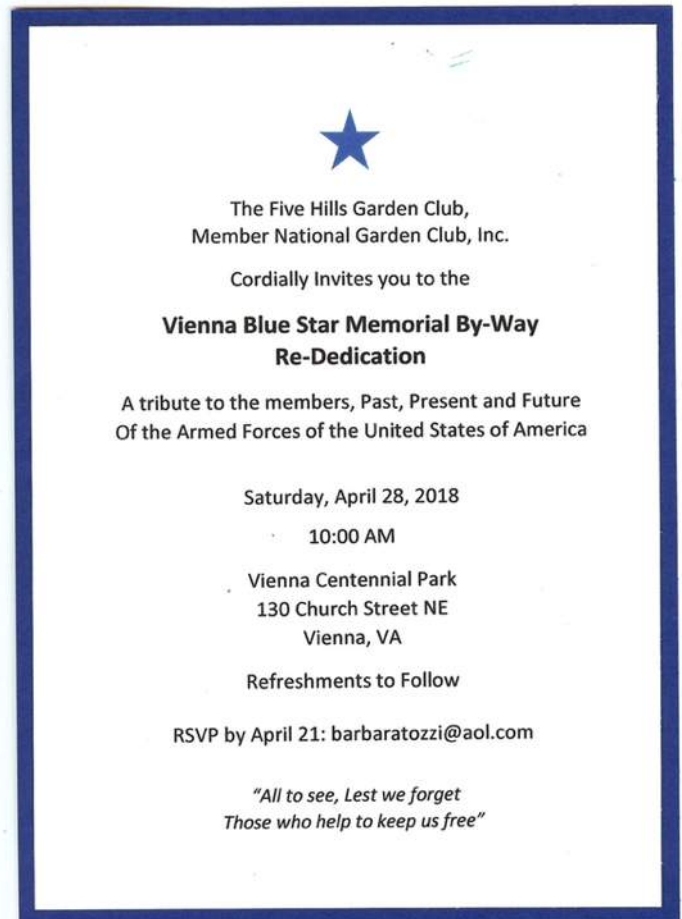
Echinacea purpurea 'Kim's Knee High'

Echinacea 'Tomato Soup'

Narcissus 'King Alfred' Salvia guaranitica

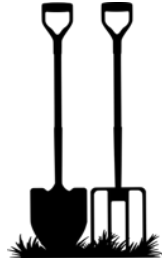
**Note:** Correct spelling is important. Hybrids often do not have a species. And a straight species will not have a variety/cultivar.

If you wish, you can include the common name, for example: Echinacea purpurea 'Kim's Knee High' (Purple coneflower)





## Recent Events and Field Trips



Five Hills members worked diligently to get our Blue Star Memorial Plaque ready for the upcoming rededication ceremony later this month. Noreen Linneman chose this as her President's Project. Well done, members!! What an improvement!! Upkeep was done on our other sites as well.





## Recent Events and Field Trips

*On Wednesday, April 11, Five Hills members and friends embarked on a field trip to Lincoln's Cottage in Washington, DC. This trip, as usual masterfully organized by our outgoing field trip chair, Karen Fleming, had been scheduled to occur on an earlier date, but bad weather and snow had forced a cancellation.*



*Spring is in full swing! Take advantage!*

Meadowlark's Keith Tomlinson continues to lead weekly native wildflower walks on Sundays — April 29, May 6 and 13, May 20 and 27, and June 3. There will be a free spring garden tour on May 5. Gardens will open at 6 am on May 19 for artists and photographers.

