

# Sow and Tell

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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

On a recent trip to some national parks in Utah, I enjoyed learning about and identifying new trees, shrubs, plants, and a few critters too. I imagine that most of us are curious about the names of plants we've never seen when we travel. Among the plants I can now identify are the manzanita shrub (of which there are 15 varieties) and the sego lily, the state flower of Utah. But it's also enjoyable to return to the flora and fauna with which we are familiar and that make us feel "at home", the good old maples and eastern oak trees. On two occasions in the parks, I came across these words from Lyndon Baines Johnson, spoken as president while dedicating The Wilderness Act of 1964.

*If future generations are to remember us more with gratitude than with contempt or sorrow, we must achieve more than the miracles of technology. We must also leave them a glimpse of the world as it was created, not just as it looked when we got through with it.*

This speaks directly to one of the missions of the club, to be conservationists ourselves and to be educators of the public and of the next generation. Five Hills Garden Club has much to be proud of in terms of our efforts to educate ourselves and others and in our efforts to support organizations dedicated to protecting the natural world for the next generation, leaving them "a glimpse of the world as it was created."

I hope to see you at the meeting next week on Tuesday, October 15. ~ Julia



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## NEXT MEETING

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15**

We meet at 9:30 am in the lower level of  
Vienna Presbyterian Church  
124 Park Street NE, Vienna, VA

OCTOBER PROGRAM



## “Vertical Gardening Made Easy”

Kathy Jentz, the editor and publisher of “Washington Gardener” magazine since 2005, a highly regarded publication and web site, will share her secrets of vertical gardening. Kathy will detail the benefits of vertical gardening and inspire us to create our own vertical gardens.

A confessed ‘plant-a-holic’, Kathy has rid her garden of turf grass and filled the space with planting beds. It was when she began to run out of gardening space that she found herself looking up, and she now looks for any structures that can support vines and climbers. “If there’s a cure for this plant sickness, I don’t want it.” We would have to agree, Kathy.



nemophilist (n) a haunter of woods; one who loves the forest for its beauty and solitude

CALENDAR

Tues. Oct. 1	Meadowlark Work Day
Wed. Oct. 2 - Thur. Oct. 3	Luray & Birdsong Pleasure Gardens Field Trip
Tues. Oct. 8	Board Meeting / NCAGC State Meeting
Tues. Oct. 15	General Meeting
Wed. Oct. 16	Bulb Planting with the Preschool at Vienna Pres. Church
Mon. Oct. 21	Garden Therapy ~ “Autumn / Halloween”
Thur. Oct. 24 - Fri. Oct. 25	NCAGC Central Atlantic Region Conference
Sat. Oct. 26 - Sun. Oct. 27	NCA Design Symposium
Tues. Nov. 5	Meadowlark Work Day
Thur. Nov. 7	Strathmore Mansion Holiday Market Field Trip
Tues. Nov. 12	Board Meeting/ Judges Council Morning of Design
Thur. Nov. 14 - Fri. Nov 15	<i>Gardening Studies School Course III</i>
Tues. Nov. 19	General Meeting
Sat. Nov. 30	Decorate Vienna Presbyterian Church Facility

## Garden Therapy

Our first garden therapy session of the year will be on Monday, October 21 at 9:15 at Braddock Glen Assisted Living Center located at 4027 Olley Lane in Fairfax. The residents will be creating autumn floral arrangements with yellow butterfly pics for their dining room tables. Once again, Margaret Fleegal is willing to donate all the flowers and greens. Our volunteers are Karen Fleming, Karen Lucas, Lura Marshall, Val Plisko, Anne Nelson and Shelia Creswell. We are grateful for all our volunteers and their willingness to bring joy to those at Braddock Glen! Gail Gile and Janet Kremer

## Send Us Your Wonderful Photos!

If you have taken photos while on a field trip or at one of our various events or activities, whether at Meadowlark or another of our community work events, or at a Garden Therapy session, please send your photos in to your

editor ( [BrigitteHartke@gmail.com](mailto:BrigitteHartke@gmail.com) ) as well as to Jill Hecht ( [jhecht3765@aol.com](mailto:jhecht3765@aol.com) ) so that they may be included in our Five Hills web site's photo gallery as well as our newsletter. Please be sure to include the names of the people in your photos whenever possible.

Your pictures contribute so much and become part of the documentation of the Club's history — who we are and what we've done. Plus, it's fun for us to be able to see them, particularly if we have not been able participate in the events.

## General Meeting Parking

As always, please park your cars on the street near the church or in a nearby parking lot when you attend the general meetings. The Church has asked us not to use their parking lot. Thank you for your cooperation.

## Horticulture

Bring a cutting of a ground cover that works well for you. Indicate the name if you know it, and whether it grows in sun or shade.

## Design

Make a vertical design. One suggestion is to use a variety of materials imitating a garden in vertical style. Be creative and have fun!





## THE NIPPON DAISY: A PLANT TO BRIGHTEN UP YOUR GARDEN AT THE END OF SUMMER AND EARLY FALL

by Willow Prall

The Nippon daisy - also known as the "Montauk daisy"- may be just what you are looking for to brighten up your garden at the end of summer and early fall when most perennials have long finished blooming.

The Nippon daisy is a perennial that is considered hardy from USDA Zones 5 to 9. The botanical name of the plant is *Nipponanthemum nipponicum* and it is in the Asteraceae family. While originating in Japan, it gets its other name, the "Montauk daisy," from Montauk, Long Island, where it has become naturalized.

The Nippon daisy likes full sun and well-drained soil. It generally grows between 1.5 to 3 feet tall and forms clumps that are about 3 feet wide. Its flowers are quite large and showy, ranging between 2 and 3 inches in diameter, with white petals and a greenish yellow center. Its leaves are thick, glossy and coarsely toothed with a scent that has been described as pungent or musky.

The plant is drought tolerant and is reported to have no serious insect or disease problems, although leaf spots, stem rot and leaf miners have been listed as infrequent problems. It attracts butterflies and is considered to be deer resistant.

While the Nippon daisy is easy to care for, pruning may be necessary to prevent the plant from becoming too leggy or flopping over. Different pruning strategies exist. Some recommend pruning twice - once in the spring and once in July. Other strategies include pruning once annually or regular pruning until early July.

In addition to being a great addition to a garden, the Nippon daisy makes an excellent cut flower.



Above, Photo credit: F.D. Richards

Below, members of Five Hills Garden Club with Lesley and Tom Mack, owners of Birdsong Pleasure Garden, before a clump of Nippon daisies at the Garden on a recent field trip. Thanks to Willow for the photograph.



## Spiders in Virginia ~ They Are Good for The Environment

According to Spider ID, there are 57 confirmed species of spiders found in Virginia. It is that time of year that spiders appear, and the fears that many people have of spiders also appears. Spiders have an abundance of legs and fangs; they are venomous although the majority of species have venom that is too weak to harm humans.

Spiders are good and useful, an important part of nature and our indoor ecosystem. Spiders are predators and eat anything they can catch such as nuisance pests, gnats, silverfish, other spiders and disease-carrying insects, mosquitos.

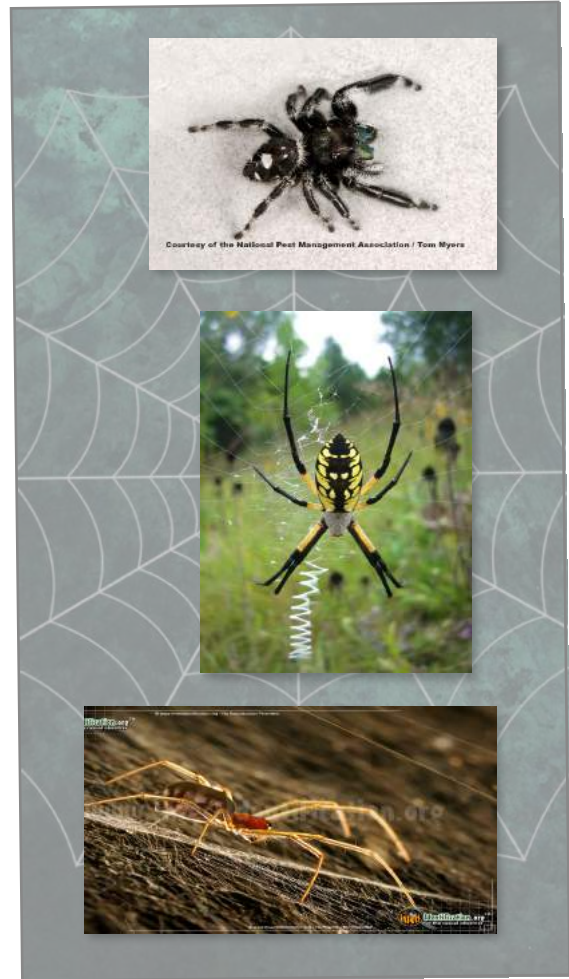
The jumping spider is a type of spider that gets its common name from its jumping ability, which it uses to catch prey. Jumping spiders belong to the Family Saticidae. There are more than 4,000 known species of jumping spiders in the world, with about 300 species found in the United States and Canada, including the zebra spider, *Salticus scenicus*. *Pictured: jumping spider, black and yellow spider, bowl and doily spider.*

## Dangerous Spiders in Virginia

Fatalities from bites from the following two spiders are rare, but you should seek medical attention immediately if bitten!

### Brown Recluse Spider (Violin Spider)

The name "violin spider" describes a characteristic marking on the brown recluse: there is a violin-shaped patch on the broad, almost heart-shaped cephalothorax (the head, as opposed to the abdomen). The overall color is usually a grayish-yellow-brown, the oblong abdomen covered with gray hairs. The legs are darker than the body and are long and slim. Females are larger than males. The webs are small, irregular, and untidy. These spiders are usually seen walking or running around, not in a web.



### Black Widow Spider

Black widow spiders have black bulbous abdomens. The way to identify them from other black spiders is a telltale red, orange or white hourglass mark on the abdomen.

Bites are painless, but muscle spasms, abdominal cramps and other symptoms develop within an hour of being bitten.

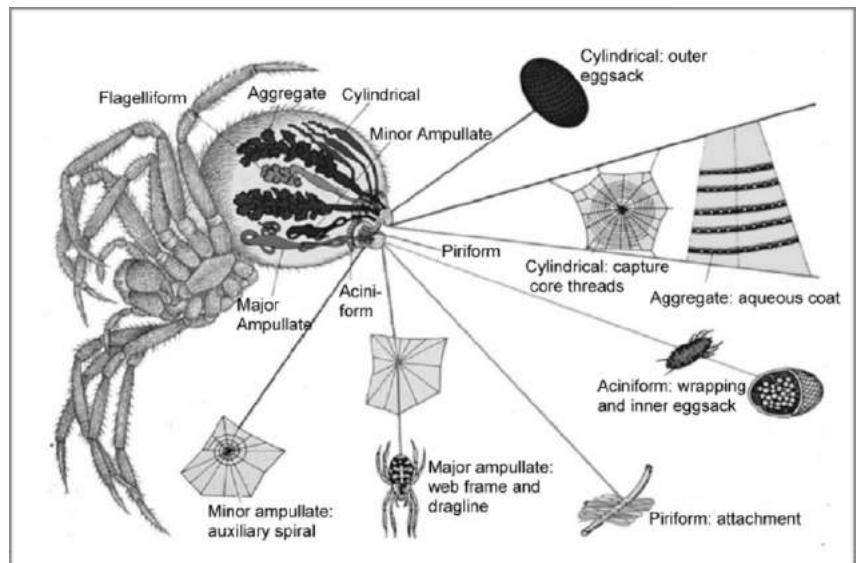




## Spider Webs are amazing:

Spiders eat the old web and rebuild them nightly; this is a barn spider's web. It's lighter than cotton but stronger than steel. Thinner than a human hair but handles loads hundreds of times its size. It can be woven into elaborate structures by minute arthropods. Legions of chemists, material scientists, and engineers study and try to mimic the silken threads that spiders create, dismantle, and re-create every day to trap prey.

Science magazine recently published a special feature on the [evolution of spider genomes and the properties and uses of spider silk](#). *The Scientist* featured a story about [transgenic silkworms](#) that are spinning "spider silk." Sporting wear companies such as Adidas, The North Face, and Patagonia are all looking for ways to produce [shoes and jackets using a synthetic spider silk](#). Kevlar was inspired by spider webs. (end)



### Night-Spider's Advice by Joyce Sidman

Build a frame  
and stick to it,  
I always say.  
Life's a circle.  
Just keep going around.  
Do your work, then  
sit back and see  
what falls in your lap.  
Eat your triumphs,  
eat your mistakes:  
that way your belly  
will always be full.  
Use what you have,  
Rest when you need to.  
Dawn will come soon enough.  
Someone has to remake  
the world each night.  
It might as well be you.

Some spiders are nocturnal. The orb spider builds a new spiral-shaped web each night, often in the same spot and using the same anchor threads. When web-making, the spider first lays down spoke threads, which will serve as walkways. Then it weaves a spiral of sticky silk to snap night insects such as flies, moths, and mosquitoes. Toward dawn, after a night of hunting, most orb spiders eat their damaged webs, which provide nutrients for a fresh batch of silk.

~ poem and science note from Joyce Sidman's children's book, "Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night"

## “Tired of Forever Mulching? The Word Among the Pros is Sedge”

by Brigitte Hartke

Over the summer I had the occasion to visit Mt. Cuba Garden in Delaware, particularly their research areas. There, researchers are studying and experimenting with many kinds of native sedges and grasses. One of my goals on the trip was to see what the sedges looked like, and to find out whether they are good alternatives to mulch, flower beds or lawns. I read that George Coombes, a research horticulturist at Mt. Cuba has been putting some 80 species and varieties of sedges through a methodical three-year trial to determine their value for home gardeners. Coombes says, “There is a sedge out there for whatever issues you need to address.”

Coombes pointed out that you have to keep applying mulch, whereas with sedge, you plant it once and it's good to go. His study will try to identify varieties that can be used as a substitutes for lawns that struggle in the shade. These would need to be cut only once a year.

In a 2017 article in *The Washington Post* entitled “*Sick of buying mulch for the garden? The pros have a different idea*”, gardening writer Adrian Higgins reported on the fast-growing use of sedges as alternatives to mulch. “Sedges are grasslike plants that are green and tufty”, and Higgins says that they have become the hottest perennials on the market.

Sedges are generally used for shadier gardens, though there are varieties that will grow in full sun if watered properly. If you have a hot, dry spot, ornamental grasses will give a similar effect. Higgins wrote that sedges are good alternatives to ubiquitous and overused ground covers such as lirioppe, vinca, pachysandra and English ivy.

Higgins points out that there is another significant difference with sedges, making them better ecological choices – many provide sustenance to caterpillars, butterflies and other pollinators. For example, Pennsylvania sedge feeds as many as three dozen species of caterpillars.

There are more than 180 species of sedges in Virginia alone. For constantly dry soil and in areas where tree

roots abound, he recommended Appalachian sedge, bristle-bristle-leaves sedge, blue sedge or Texas sedge.

“If you are planting a multitude of sedges as a ground cover, living mulch or shade lawn, it pays to buy small plug plants, space them widely and let them grow together over two or three growing seasons.”

### “Plants are Social Creatures”

Authors Thomas Rainer and Claudia West, in their book, “*Planting in a Post-Wild World*”, point out that ‘plants are the mulch’. They tell us that plants are gregarious and like to be crowded together, not separated as growing islands in an expanse of mulch. West says, “I think every gardener intuitively knows that plants should be the mulch, because we gardeners and landscape professionals are inspired by natural plant communities that we may see on a hike in a natural area. Very rarely do we see bare soil anywhere in natural, wild ecosystems.”

Thomas Rainer says to “ditch the mulch and use plants instead.” Bemoaning the American love affair with mulch, he says it is far better to cover bare garden soil with plants. Perennial ground covers discourage weeds better than mulch, and, once they become established, will require far less work than mulch, which breaks down and must be replenished or replaced. *Pictured, Thomas Rainer’s garden in Arlington, VA*

