

Sow and Tell

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

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Upcoming Events

- Sept 14 Virtual Board Meeting
10am**
- Sept 16-17 Drop Off Donations
Noon - 6pm**
- Sept 18 Yard Sale
8am - Noon**
- Sept 21 Virtual General Meeting
10am**
- Sept 28 President's Project
9:30am**
- Oct 12 Virtual Board Meeting
10am**
- Oct 13 Clean Up Day
9:30am**
- Oct 19 General Meeting
10am**

September has arrived along with our 2021-2022 program year. In spite of the caution COVID requires, I think we have a great year ahead of us thanks to your flexibility. Some of our meetings will be held virtually and, hopefully, some in person. Watch your email from Five Hills for meeting location.



There are gardening opportunities at Meadowlark Garden, at our civic gardens and at the President's Project garden. Participating in these gives us time together, in person!

Our yearbooks are now being distributed. Thank you, Jill Hecht, for editing it and "making it happen." Thank you to all who contributed to it. The Standing Committee Chairs put much effort into planning our year. I look forward to seeing everyone's contributions unfold as we proceed through the year.

The list of members who have worked to get us ready for the year would fill the page. Thank you for your numerous contributions! I appreciate your talents and your patience!

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WE ARE READY TO GET GOING!

Shelia

I have struggled with what my President's Project should be. This summer I was approached by a fellow member with the idea of landscaping the plant boxes in Glyndon Park along Beulah Road. The plant boxes there are in dire need of improvement. This was an idea I could truly get excited about. I approached the horticulturist with the Town of Vienna, completed the application and have the project approved. The requirement is our plants need to be Virginia natives, deer resistant, and shade hardy.



HELP! PLEASE MAKE ME BEAUTIFUL!



Work on the plant boxes will begin Tuesday, September 28 at 9:30. I hope you will join me in creating Healthy Surroundings!

If you will please help with this beautification project, email me at screswell@verizon.net.

Program For September 21st Meeting

Growing Autumn Wildflowers for Your Garden: Asters to Witch Hazel

Nancy Vehrs, the President of the Virginia Native Plant Society, will walk us through the delights and benefits of growing native wildflowers in the autumn garden. She will show how a variety of native plants can bring color, form, and life to the fall landscape. Along the way, she will emphasize the importance of native plants and their ecological superiority to traditional garden plants associated with fall.

Thank you, Brigitte Hartke, for suggesting and helping us to secure this month's speaker.

Val Plisko - Program Chair

MEMBERSHIP

Yearbooks are out and you should have your's by now or will very soon. A thank you to the following people for delivering the books:

Valerie Warner
Anne Nelson
Joanne Menke
Julia Smith
Shelia Creswell
Gail Gile

Please remember to let me know if you have a guest attending our meeting so I can introduce them.

Andy Bothwell - Membership Chair

Jane Schmiedekamp - Horticulture and Design Chair

Hope your trees survived the cicadas and summer heat and are standing tall for a restful fall. Our focus this year will be our yards and the greening of our community. We have an opportunity to start where we are to bring health and green back to our world.

The following books can increase your knowledge and provide some peaceful fall reading while you aren't outside gardening....

Nature's Best Hope (A new approach to conservation that starts in your yard) by Douglas Tallamy

The Nature of Oaks (The rich ecology of our most essential native trees) by Douglas Tallamy

Finding the Mother Tree (Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest) Suzanne Simard

Last year I planted a live oak tree in the center of my back yard. It was about five feet tall and has grown about 6 inches over the summer. I visualize a huge tree with draping limbs like the live oaks in South Carolina and Georgia. My grandson asked me why I didn't start a little bigger.. I knew what he meant. The tree was almost \$200 and was about as heavy as I could manage to plant. So now it sits and I wait. I say nice things to it each day and hope it understands that it is prized and has been chosen as a life force for this time and place. I haven't named it yet, but I will. I will watch over it this first winter in my yard and hope it will be here 200 years from now.

Horticulture: Bring a specimen leaf, berry, or other part of fruit you grow in your yard.



Design: Make an arrangement which includes a fruit or berry or an herb from your garden or neighborhood.

Mark your Calendar!

Five Hills Fall Clean up Day

Wednesday, October 13, 9:30 am



Meadowlark Gardens

Five Hills is back volunteering at Meadowlark. Thanks to Willow Prall who set things up for us we have now been accepted as one of the volunteer groups at that beautiful garden. Willow has been on the staff at Meadowlark this summer.



We will be volunteering the first Tuesday of each month weather permitting. In September Nancy Walker, Julia Smith, Val Plisko, Lura Marshall and Noreen Linnemann were the Five Hill volunteers. We worked in the area near the Korean Bell Gardens.

Meadowlark has asked that our volunteer group each month be limited to five people. If you are interested in volunteering in October or November, please contact Noreen Linnemann at noreenlinnemann@gmail.com or 703 281-1770.

Noreen Linnemann - Civic Chair

American Sycamore

Submitted by Elizabeth Huebner

The tree for this month's conservation article is the American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) native to this area. It is also known as American planetree, western plane, occidental plane, buttonwood, and water beech.

An American sycamore tree can often be easily distinguished from other trees by its mottled bark which flakes off in large irregular masses, leaving the surface mottled and gray, greenish-white and brown. The bark of all trees must yield to a growing trunk by stretching, splitting, or infilling. The sycamore rigid bark tissue lacks the elasticity of the bark of some other trees, it is incapable of stretching to accommodate the growth of the wood underneath, so the tree sloughs it off.

A sycamore can grow to massive proportions, typically reaching up to 98 to 131 ft high and 4.9 to 6.6 ft in diameter when grown in deep soils. The largest of the species have been measured to 174 ft, and nearly 13 ft in diameter. Larger specimens were recorded in historical times.

The sycamore tree is often divided near the ground into several secondary trunks, very free from branches. Spreading limbs at the top make an irregular, open head. Roots are fibrous. The trunks of large trees are often hollow.

Another peculiarity is the way the leaves grow sticky, green buds. In early August, most trees in general will have—nestled in the axils of their leaves—the tiny forming bud which will produce the leaves of the coming year. The sycamore branch apparently has no such buds. Instead, there is an enlargement of the petiole which encloses the bud in a tight-fitting case at the base of the petiole.

- **Bark:** Dark reddish brown, broken into oblong plate-like scales; higher on the tree, it is smooth and light gray; separates freely into thin plates which peel off and leave the surface pale yellow, or white, or greenish. Branchlets at first pale green, coated with thick pale tomentum, later dark green and smooth, finally become light gray or light reddish brown.

- **Wood:** Light brown, tinged with red; heavy, weak, difficult to split. Largely used for furniture and interior finish of houses, butcher's blocks.

- **Winter buds:** Large, stinky, sticky, green, and three-scaled, they form in summer within the petiole of the full-grown leaf.

- **Leaves:** Alternate, palmately nerved, broadly ovate, or orbicular, 4 to 9 in long, truncate, or cordate or wedge-shaped at base, decurrent on the petiole. Three to five-lobed by broad shallow sinuses rounded in the bottom; lobes acuminate, toothed, or entire, or undulate. They come out of the bud plicate, pale green coated with pale tomentum; when full grown are bright yellow green above, paler beneath. In autumn they turn brown and wither before falling.



Photo courtesy of Winnie Frost (GFGC)



Leaf in Fall

American Sycamore (continued)

- **Leaves (continued):** Petioles long, enlarged at base and inclosing the buds. Stipules with spreading, toothed borders, conspicuous on young shoots, caducous.
- **Flowers:** May, with the leaves; monoecious, borne in dense heads. Staminate and pistillate heads on separate peduncles. Staminate heads dark red, on axillary peduncles; pistillate heads light green tinged with red, on longer terminal peduncles. Calyx of staminate flowers three to six tiny scale-like sepals, slightly united at the base, half as long as the pointed petals. Of pistillate flowers three to six, usually four, rounded sepals, much shorter than the acute petals.
- **Stamens:** In staminate flowers as many of the divisions of the calyx and opposite to them; filaments short; anthers elongated, two-celled; cells opening by lateral slits; connectives hairy.
- **Pistil:** Ovary superior, one-celled, sessile, ovate-oblong, surrounded at base by long, jointed, pale hairs; styles long, incurved, red, stigmatic, ovules one or two.
- **Fruit:** Brown heads, solitary or rarely clustered, 1 in in diameter, hanging on slender stems three to six inches long; persistent through the winter. These heads are composed of achenes about two-thirds of an inch in length.

The American sycamore is able to endure a big city environment and was formerly extensively planted as a shade tree. Its wood has been used extensively for butcher's blocks, boxes and crates; although coarse-grained and difficult to work, it has also been used to make furniture, siding, and musical instruments.

American sycamore is susceptible to plane anthracnose disease an introduced fungus found naturally on the Oriental plane *P. orientalis*, which has evolved considerable resistance to the disease. Although rarely killed or even seriously harmed, American sycamore is commonly partially defoliated by the disease during mid and late spring, but trees generally recover by mid-summer, rendering it unsightly as a specimen tree.

Sometimes mistaken for frost damage, the disease manifests in early spring, wilting new leaves and causing mature leaves to turn brown along the veins. Infected leaves typically shrivel and fall, so that by summer the tree is regrowing its foliage. Cankers form on twigs and branches near infected leaves, serving to spread the disease by spore production and weakening the tree. Because cankers restrict the flow of nutrients, twigs and branches afflicted by cankers eventually die. Witch's broom is a symptom reflecting the cycle of twigs dying.

As a result of the fungus' damage, American sycamore is often avoided as a landscape tree, and the more resistant London plane (*P. × hispanica*; hybrid *P. occidentalis* × *P. orientalis*) is planted instead.

Of historical interest: the terms under which the New York Stock Exchange was formed are called the "Buttonwood Agreement," because it was signed under a buttonwood (sycamore) tree at 68 Wall Street, New York City in 1792.