



June 2020

The GRAPEVINE

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Report of the President— Dorothy Williams

Seeds, Seedlings and Mystery plants.

During the rainy days of Corvid-19, I cleaned. On sunny days, I weeded. I discovered lots of seed packets from years of thinking I would plant them, but didn't. Checking the expiration dates, I discovered several were years old. I emailed Terry Holman for advice. Here is what she said:

I've been told that typically seeds stored in a cool dark place can germinate many years after their stated expiration date. The older the seed is, the longer it may take to germinate, however.

I've heard stories of a man who came upon an old gourd in his granny's attic that she had placed in the attic to dry and cure 75 years before. In remembrance, he took the gourd outside, cleaned the dried seeds from it in order to create a birdhouse and later discovered that the seeds germinated!

My friend, Barbara Melera used to own The D. Landreth Seed Company, now defunct but was operating from 1784. She has told me many stories of seeds germinating after 50 -100 years of dry storage, but they took longer to germinate with less than 100% germination rate. There's life in an old seed...But it can take more time to germinate than a fresher seed.

To avoid fungal diseases, always use a clean container with drainage holes underneath with a container under it. Always water from below and don't let your seedlings sit in water for too long.

A cleaned, foam egg carton works well if you cut the top off to form the drainage/ watering bottom piece and place a small drainage hole in the bottom of each egg cup. Then nest them together, fill the cups with soil, plant the seeds at depth requested and place on sunny window sill. Water as needed every couple of days. You can also perform a germination test first. Take 10 seeds and place on moistened paper towels and fold them inside a plastic bag. Check every few days to check on germinated seeds. This can take 2-21 days. To determine percent germination, simply multiply number of seeds germinated by 10. Then use this knowledge to increase number of seeds planted to obtain the crop plants desired.

Always start seeds in a sterile seed mix, especially for old seeds. If impossible to do this, generously sprinkle cinnamon on top of your planting. Cinnamon is an anti fungal and will help reduce fungal diseases.

For the record, I've been able to start seeds dated to expire at least a decade past the expiration date.

Good luck!
Terry

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P.S. The plants in this photo are from a packet of seeds called “Fragrant Flower Mix” which I purchased from Barbara Melara. The architect who designed the American Airlines Flight 93 Memorial in PA contacted Barbara to have a special packet of wildflowers created to add scent to the emotional experience visiting the Memorial. Does anyone recognize this plant or is this in fact another weed?



Horticulture Report – by Sue Betz

Shall I call this a Garden Rant, or "Don't Do what we Do or they do"

We moved into a development that provides services for those that want a break from garden chores and old home repairs. The landscape management is handled by a hard working and dedicated landscape company and crew. There is about 70 acres of lovely park land with ponds, piers, and soon to be completed public bike path. For fussy gardeners like me the grounds committee has set up a no prune list so we aren't faced with grasses that are cut down and "Crape Murder" that happens in the fall. There's a lot more I would like added to the list. That is not going to happen. Our Spring blooming Drumstick Alliums were pulled out this spring and volunteer Baby Tears in the Flagstone Patio were also weeded out. Luckily the second year there were a few left and they are spreading. The workmen don't go on the patio after I talked to them about the error.

Now down to one of the important points of living in a landscape managed community, and that is the applications of Pesticides, Herbicides, and Fertilizers. The truth of the matter is my husband Fred has a lush lawn fetish so last fall our mainly dead lawn was replaced. We compromised by eliminating most of one side and all of the backyard lawn. I must say the replacement sod is very lush and green and Fred decided it needed more fertilizer even after it had already been fertilized by our landscape contractor. So we contributed to the runoff into our river the Tred Avon that is right down the street. Please refrain from doing what we did! Our landscape crew decided to spot apply weed killer to our lawn. There was a slight breeze that drifted the spray into my Perennial Bed so the plants in the front sections of the bed died. I pulled those out and planted a few more who are also stressed. I will need to replace the soil before I plant again. Don't do what they do! Our neighbor planted a new lawn last fall and it was coming along fine this spring until our busy landscape crew burned the new tender blades of grass with an over application of fertilizer and pre-emergence. You can see the lawnmower burn tracks. Don't do what they do!

According to a New York Times article homeowners use up to 10 times more pesticides per acre than a farmer. We can change what we do in our yards. Other facts from NY Times article, May 18, 2020:

1. Try to eliminate some lawn - Plant trees, Shrubs, Grasses, and Flowers, and Ground Covers.
2. Do not spray the lawn for weeds - It's Toxic! Pull the weeds by hand. It's a natural antidepressant.
3. Do not spray for Mosquitos - Use an oscillating fan. The insecticide kills beneficial insects as well. The global insect die off is so very high (there will be no insects in 100 hundred years). Insects are responsible for pollinating about 75 of all flowering plants including 1/3 of human worlds food supply. When we kill the weeds and bugs, we are also poisoning turtles, tree frogs, bats, song birds, skinks, and Screech owls. There are other reasons for the decline in insect population, heat waves can cause male insects to become sterile. Loss of habitat can cause decline as well. Synthetic pesticides are endocrine disrupters which can contribute to human health problems including autism, ADHD, and diabetes.

Please do what is good for our community,

What did you do during covid-19 imposed exile? - by Ingrid Blanton

Last year I replanted and redesigned my backyard gardens. While recuperating from recent surgery, I spent a great deal of time enjoying the fruits of my labor. Beginning July 4th I invite members and friends to come and take a look at the results. Please keep groups to three or four and make an appointment to let me know you plan to visit, phone number 410 253-9413. I would enjoy a visit.



Another story—by Meryl Nolan

Every morning I take some time to sit on my deck with a cup of coffee and observe nature. “The Art of Healing Comes from Nature” - Paralelsus.

That being said, Gil Jr. is still with me as the airports are still closed. He encouraged me to go on some adventures together to various wildlife reserves in the area. Blackwater Wildlife Refuge was at the top of the list although we had been there many times before. The highlight was seeing nine Bald Eagles.

Next was Wyle Island National Reserve. The wild roses were in bloom so the air was sweet. Our walk was in an old growth forest and the trees were identified by markers as to what they were.

I wanted to visit Assateague Island National Seashore as it had been a long time since I last visited. After seeing the ponies, we sat on the beach as it was windy and foggy. We did walk up to the lighthouse and saw the view over the Chincoteague. The Whitehaven Ferry was taken on the way back. She is a cable ferry and can take three cars. On the passage we saw two osprey nests which were occupied.

Most recently we visit the Eastern Neck Island Wildlife Refuge. My favorite part was the butterfly garden. Various volunteers take care of the beds.

In conclusion I recommend getting outside for whatever reason. Very uplifting and there is a lot to observe in nature. So treat yourself, I did.

Another story—by Marie Davis



Several week before covid-19 changed our lives, I took a colored pencil class offered by Anna Harding. The class took place at Atkins Arboretum, always a super place to visit. The assignment was to draw a butterfly, and I chose a Monarch. As I am rather slow when I paint and draw, I didn't complete the assignment the day of class. During this imposed exile, I therefore had no excuse not to complete the project. Along with painting in pastel, colored pencil is a favorite medium and I have learned a lot from taking various classes over the past few years.

Better Homes and Gardens “America’s Best Front Yard” – by Marie Davis as reported by Pat Gray

What fun for all of Oxford to learn that Oxford residents Russ and Pat Gray have made it to the top ten front yards chosen in this competition.

When Pat learned about the “2nd Annual America’s Best Front Yard” competition it was close to the deadline to send an entry and she wasn’t quite sure how she would/could get it all together in time. The next day when she collected her mail, there was a card from Pat’s sister-in-law who had seen the ad and thought it perfect for Russ and Pat to enter their garden. All the details of how to enter were included on the card and Pat went to work.

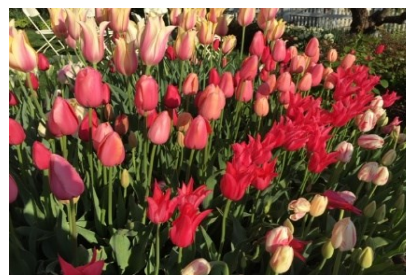
One stipulation was that the photos used to enter the competition had not been used for any other purpose than the owner’s own use. That was easy as Russ and Pat had taken many photos over the years just for their own enjoyment and to create a history of what they had created.

Pat’s brother and wife were married in the garden a few years ago and many other anniversary, engagement, and sentimental photos have been taken in their gardens. Some folks who ask if they can use the garden are strangers to Russ and Pat and they welcome anyone who wants to use their gardens as their backdrop to commemorate special occasions.

During this difficult time of covid-19, Pat remembers fondly one particular visit. An Easton EMT had read about what Russ and Pat had created in their gardens and decided that on her only day off she just needed to see something that would bring her joy and peace. Along with Oxford residents and visitors, the Grays have been able to look back over the years with happy memories of family gatherings and bringing friends and family together for such occasions as the celebration of Oxford Day held in April each year.

We all wish Russ and Pat the best of luck as they await the final decision about who will be the winner of the 2020 competition which will probably not be until September. No matter the outcome, we are all so happy for both of them to be recognized in this way by a national magazine.

Here are just a few photos of how beautiful the tulips look in the spring:



Russ and Pat are most grateful to friends and neighbors who voted for their garden!

Summer Gardening during a Covid-19 Pandemic – by Terry Holman, District I -Horticulture Chairman

My friends, the world is so different than it was just a mere year ago. First and foremost, life without garden clubbing is different. I'm sure that you all feel the same way. I have spent the better part of 18 years in garden club and their activities. How to you keep your sanity when your routines become nonexistent? This Covid-19 Pandemic has changed how we operate, what we do and how we do it. I believe strongly that gardening is an brilliant way to spend your time. It provides exercise, peace, and an excellent view of our environment.

Here are some suggestions for summer gardening activities:

Plant a seed:

I don't know about the rest of you, but I see the world differently now. Every person is a potential vector of disease. Yikes! The last thing I want to do is look over transplants of flowers, vegetables, and herbs in a home store, imagining how many other hands have fondled them while socially distancing with a mask and likely donning gloves. Looking at seed packets used to be a fun thing to do but how many folks have pawed through them? This does not promote a satisfying experience.



I personally feel safer ordering my seeds from online seed companies. This greatly reduces my stress and I feel safer knowing that they come from the source, not a busy stand at a home store. While I cannot make recommendations officially, I can say that you can order from any number of well-known online seed sources and enjoy visually gorgeous photos of the plants and their attributes. You may be inspired to try something new or different.

Growing from seed is much cheaper in cost compared from growing from transplants which are typically limited in cultivar type. Martha Stewart featured a recent article of a seed company who sold seed for very unusual types of squash and other vegetables along with recipes from culinary chefs who experimented with them. This sounds interesting!

It is also so rewarding to watch the seeds germinate and grow. Will you have 100% success with each seed? No. Will you learn something from the experience? Yes. Everyone I know tends to grow from their personal gardening disasters. Gardeners are always hopeful souls. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

Repel Critters:

My new personal seed starter tip is to spray bitter apple spray onto fresh seedlings and the soil around them. Bitter Apple spray is typically used to keep puppies from eating your furniture. The bunnies and other critters don't like the taste. They may take a bite or two, however. I respray every week or so to keep them at bay. This is available at pet stores. A little goes a long way. If you are curious, you can taste it and then you'll see why it works!

The PERFECT Time to Start Summer Planting:

My friend, Barbara Melera, of Harvesting-History, has recently shared that July 4 is the BEST time to plant seeds of squash, melons, sunflowers, and zinnia. The soil is very warm (80 degrees F.) and the seeds germinate and grow quickly without the fungal and other diseases seen if planted too early in April-May. Apparently, nobody planted squash, melons, sunflowers, and zinnia until the 4th of July for the past 100 years and NEVER from a transplant! A knowledge of gardening history is necessary for more successful gardening adventures!

Increase Pollinators and Pollination:

I've learned that planting flowers as nectar sources helps bring in the pollinators that are required for effective pollination of vegetables. Misshapen vegetables are often caused by incomplete pollination. I typically interplant nectar laden flowers between vegetables in groups. If you plant flowers, the pollinators will come. If you have put off planting your garden, you can go online, order your seeds, and plant the seeds as soon as you get them. There is still plenty of time for summer gardening. I always recommend the

Terry Holman, (cont'd.)

compact, spineless squash as they are extremely productive but keep to a more reasonable dwarf stature. Try growing hot peppers as they grow well in zone 7 and perform well in most gardens.

Tomato Volunteer Tip:

I typically grow 4-12 bushes of tomatoes every year. I adore all types of pollinators and try my best NOT to kill any caterpillars on my tomatoes. Typically, I allow one of my tomato volunteers to grow ONLY for the purpose of hosting caterpillars that munch on my other tomato plants. I move caterpillars to my brave volunteer tomato plant. This way, I find an effective way to live with my fellow creatures while snacking on my tomatoes.

Butterfly Crop:

For my annual Black Swallowtail project, I always plant several packets of Italian parsley seed now, soaking them a few days in water before planting to speed up the germination time by a week. Parsley is a host plant for this species of butterfly which includes dill, rue, and curly parsley. Plant zinnias adjacent to parsley and you will have all the basic ingredients for attracting black swallowtails to your garden. All you need do is wait for the butterflies to lay eggs and then the fun begins.



Plant Summer corms: Participate in our, Got the Covid-19 Blues? – Join the “Think Pink” Gladiolus

growing challenge. Doris Key, our District Director and her board requested a fun growing challenge for the summer. “Glads” seemed to be a perfect feature plant for this opportunity. Since this is our very first Club Growing Challenge, it will be interesting. A limited number of growing kits were delivered to your garden club presidents this week, based on 30% of each club’s membership. We are asking a donation of \$4 for each kit of 10 grade 1 corms, limited one to each club member. Once planted, it typically should bloom 80-85 days. Since gladiolus appear to be perennials in zone 7 these days, you can plant them knowing this in your gardens or try planting them in containers with drainage. The container should be 12” tall and wide. Plant the glad corms so they are roughly 2” apart and 6” deep and water routinely. When they bloom, the effect is stunning and resembles a lovely traditional mass floral arrangement.

If you do not want perennial gladiolus...pull the corms and stems after the blooms have faded. Photo: *Gladiolus* ‘Attraction’ First place club winner, based on % of flowering spikes from their members, will receive \$100, 2nd place-\$75 and 3rd place-\$50. This activity should provide some positive gardening experiences.

The deadline to submit an email with a pic of a blooming gladiolus flower spike with the grower is due to me no later than October 1, 2020. My email address is: thereseholman@gmail.com. Ensure that you send your name, your club name, and a jpeg of your flowering gladiolus spike.

Do not let Covid-19 steal your gardening joys!

“To Plant a Garden
Is
To Believe in Tomorrow”

Audrey Hepburn

Conservation Report June 2020 – by June Middleton (excerpted from Bay Journal)

Covid-19 and Conservation Matters in Maryland

Single use polystyrene food containers.

The effective date for the implementation of the ban on single use polystyrene food containers in Maryland has been moved from July 1st to October 1st. The reason given for this change was that food service establishments did not have sufficient time or demand to deplete existing stocks of polystyrene containers. Enforcement of this ban, with a \$250 fine per infraction, is relegated to the counties. Some jurisdictions, including Baltimore, enacted their own ban in October 2019.

Stimulus funding.

Maryland received \$4.1 billion in stimulus funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce to aid fisheries impacted by COVID 19. These businesses include commercial waterman, charter fishing boats, oyster and clam farming, seafood wholesalers and processors.

Pollution Control

Maryland's stay at home order for all but essential workers has curtailed field work in environmental control measures. A projected loss in tax revenues has led to more than half of Maryland jurisdictions surveyed to indicate that it is "highly likely" that environmental program budgets will be reduced.

Shad restoration

Each year since 1977 over a million shad hatchlings have been released into regional waterways. This year there was no hatchling release.

A major shad reproduction site is the Susquehanna River. The three dams in the lower Susquehanna serve as a barrier to migration of shad to spawning grounds in the river. Fish lifts have been constructed to allow shad to bypass the dams. These lifts must be operated by workers who were classified as non-essential by COVID 19 rulings. Once it was determined that federal law takes precedence, the lifts were reopened. But by then it was May and the major shad migration was over. There were 435 shad (approximately 10% of normal) that passed the Conowingo Dam but only 1 shad was recorded as reaching breeding grounds. Meanwhile 35 northern snakeheads were observed passing through the Conowingo lift; only a few were caught. At this point it was decided to close the lifts. A bad year for shad.

Meanwhile crab prices reached record levels. Normally restaurants consume 75% of the crab harvest. This year individuals became the major consumers. Low supply and high demand led to prices of \$220 per bushel at the dock in early May. This is approximately 60% higher than previously recorded. These prices are not expected to continue.

Honoring Our Veterans—by Marie Davis

Although our annual recognition of veterans was not the usual gathering at Oxford Park with residents, families, and friends, OGC was able to lay wreath beside the Blue Star Marker and displayed a list of those who have past on during the past year.



OGC Picket Fence—by Marie Davis

Watch out around town for the garden club's picket fence. It was a fun project. Many thanks to Terry for the use of her paints.



Front



Back

Looking ahead—refer to the 2020-2021 Yearbook

Programs as follows may not take place because of continued covid-19 restrictions. Notification will be forthcoming as to the status of OGC activities going forward.

September 3, 2020— “Plant this not That” a program presented by OGC member Carol Jelich, Master Gardener. Carol will talk about what native plants best replace invasive plants.

September TBD—Garden party at the home of OGC member Marie Davis. As the June scheduled garden party was postponed due to covid-19 restrictions, Tom and Marie have offered to host the garden party sometime in September should restrictions allow.

October 1, 2020—”New Lives for Old Gardens” by Ted Martini will discuss the process necessary to restore historic gardens.

November 5, 2020—”A Maryland Bay-Wise Landscape” by Mikaela Boley, Senior Agent Associate for the University Of MD extension service in Talbot County. Mikaela will help us increase understanding of how our home gardening and landscape practices impact the Bay and how we can do better.

December 10, 2020—Holiday Luncheon at the home of OGC member Peggy Lott. Please bring a wrapped gift valued no more than \$20.00 for the fun gift exchange. (remember no hogging gits).

December, 2020 TBD—”Wreaths Across America” will be celebrated at Hurlock Veterans Cemetery.

January 7, 2021- “Microgreens” by Terry Holman, OGC member. Terry will instruct the audience on how to garden from our windowsill to get a nutritious and tasty harvest in just a few weeks.

February 4, 2021- “The Role of the Worker Honey Bee” by Liza Ghezzi. Liza will teach us about the role of the honey bee and how we can help sustain them.

March 4, 2021- “Lavender and Pollinators” by Jay Falstead owner of Calico Farms. Jay will help us learn more about lavender and its uses. NOTE this may be a field trip, more details to follow.

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