

THE REAL DIRT

The Garden Club of America's Horticulture Quarterly Publication Issue # 43

Arbor Day GCA

25th Anniversary Celebration of Partners for Plants

Where are your plants from past Annual Meetings?

Not Yet, Monarchs, Not Yet!

GCA Horticulture Committee in Phoenix in March

Book Review



Propagating White Siberian Iris

"White Swirl" is a beautiful 30" tall iris with delicate, sturdy flowers. It is disease resistant, likes sun to partial shade, naturalizes well, is deer and rabbit resistant, and attracts butterflies. Propagation methods include division (easy), seed sown in late fall into the ground (easy) and seed sown indoors in the winter (hardest). A lengthy stratification period is needed and three to five years' time until bloom and as Emerson says: *"Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience."*

Nantucket Daffodil Show



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Message from the Chairman

Spring 2017



Barbara Tuffli
Horticulture
Committee Chair

Wherever you live, the chances are that your weather this spring has been unusual. The East went from abnormally warm to freezing, tornadoes ripped across many towns in the Midwest and South, and here in California, our extended drought ended precipitously with torrential rains that caused both dams and rivers to overflow. I hope this Spring 2017 Issue of *The Real Dirt* provides inspiration for your garden this coming season.

This second year as Horticulture Chairman has absolutely flown by, and it is an honor to have served as your chairman. I wish to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every member of my committee and the liaisons with whom I have been so privileged to serve: Marilyn Donahue, First Vice Chairman (VC), Alice Thomas, VC Club & Zone Awards, Lucy Rhame, VC Freeman Medal, Sharon Blackburn, VC Partners for Plants, Katherine Shepperly, VC Propagation & Seed Share, Donna Ganson, VC 2016 Shirley Meneice Horticulture Conf., Linda Grieve, VC 2017 Shirley Meneice Horticulture Conf., Paulette Bowling, Rep. Zone I, Jocelyn Sherman, Rep. Zone II, Mary Miller, Rep. Zone III, Alice St. Claire-Long, Rep. Zone IV, Ellen Goodwin, Rep. Zone V, Clare Stewart, Rep. Zone VI, Sue Thompson, Rep. Zone VII, Anne Kinder, Rep. Zone VIII, Molly Adams, Rep. Zone IX, Lindsey Clark, Rep. Zone X, Liz Lavezzorio, Rep. Zone XI, Priscilla Growney, Rep. Zone XII, Cindy Hilson, Executive Board Liaison, Alice Farley, Zone Director Liaison, and Sarah Brown, Finance Liaison. Many thanks to Anne Gerald, our Staff Administrator, whose assistance has been invaluable. We couldn't have done it without you, Anne!

The extraordinary team effort of this committee has, this year, moved horticulture initiatives forward, engaging members of GCA clubs across the country in projects, which have had significant impact. GCA, your zones, your clubs, and your communities have benefited from the endless amounts of the time and effort you have invested. In closing, I wish to extend very special thanks to Catherine Allan, Editor of *The Real Dirt*, who rose to the challenge of this position, and to Jenny Wyatt, VC Assistant Editor, for the time and energy they have devoted this past year to producing this engaging publication filled with educational and inspiring articles, beautiful illustrations, photographs, poems, and book reviews contributed by members of our GCA clubs.

With all good wishes,
Barbara Tuffli
GCA Horticulture Committee Chairman 2015 – 2017

Editors' Update



The GCA Horticulture Committee in Phoenix, Arizona March 13, 2017.

From left to right: Alice Thomas, Molly Adams, Lucy Rhame, Sharon Blackburn, Barbara Tuffli, Alice Farley, Clare Stewart, Alice St. Claire-Long, Tootsie Crutchfield, Katherine Shepperly, Mary Miller, Donna Ganson.

Back row from left to right: Paulette Boling, Anne Kinder, Lindsey Clark, Catherine Allan, Marilyn Donahue, Jenny Wyatt, Priscilla Growney, Ellen Goodwin, Linda Grieve, Liz Lavezzorio, Sue Thompson, Lulu Lubbers and Jocelyn Sherman.

The 25th Anniversary of Partners for Plants was launched at the recent Annual Meeting in Baltimore. We will continue to commemorate this milestone in *The Real Dirt* during 2017. There are a few P4P (as it is fondly known) articles in this spring issue, with the hope that more projects will be submitted throughout the year. Please send your club's project with updates and photos to be featured in *The Real Dirt*. We would also like to include future articles on what your Annual Meeting Plants look like now. How have they survived? What are the growing conditions they've liked or not?

Gail Hamsher's book review certainly inspires us to get our hands in the dirt especially after a cold and soggy winter, northwest style! Tomatoes anyone?

We are trying a new format for *The Real Dirt*, with the hope of attracting more readers and to stay current with the times. Your comments are most welcome.

Catherine Allan Editor and Jenny Wyatt Assistant Editor
Seattle Garden Club
Zone XII

Propagating Siberian White Iris

I decided to try winter sowing. Three methods are described below. Information can be found on the Canadian Iris Society (CIS) site <http://www.cdn-iris.ca/>. "As soon as all seeds are collected, each variety should be wrapped in pantyhose material. These little tied up bundles are then put in a large bowl and covered with water, a saucer on top to hold the bundles down. The water should be drained and changed every day for at least two weeks. This soaking and rinsing treatment is to remove the seed germination inhibitor present in the seed/seed coat." If started outdoors, rain and melting snow achieve the same result. Rinse in a diluted bleach solution."

A post by ChocolateMousse <http://cubits.org/Germination/thread/view/46022/> describes a method which tricks the seeds into germinating sooner. Seeds are soaked in straight lemon juice for 24-48 hours, potted in 4" pots and placed in the refrigerator for two months.

The third is "How to Wintersow Using Milk Jugs" at <https://garden.org/thread/view/795/How-To-Wintersow/?offset=0>.

Starting in the spring of 2014, I tried each method.

The seeds in the small Pyrex dish on the right are in plain water, weighted with a second dish (CIS). Small lemon bags found in specialty kitchen shops are perfect for wrapping the seeds. The seeds on the right are in plain lemon juice without a weight. Two days later the lemon juice seeds were planted in soilless mix in 4" plastic pots. Several seeds were spaced in one pot filled 2/3 of the way with mix and topped with 1/4" of soil. A few days later the water soaked seeds were rinsed and potted the same way. Each pot was placed in a quart sized Ziploc bag, labeled and refrigerated for 8-12 weeks. The milk jug was placed outside in early March in a sheltered, north facing location as shown in the photo below. Be sure to take the top off when placing outside. After 8 weeks, the lemon soaked seed pots were taken out of the bag, placed in a saucer outdoors. They were bottom watered. The CIS seeds were left in the cold for another month. The milk jug method showed 5 very tiny, grass-like sprouts coming up.



In June, the CIS seeds were potted up in small seed starting cells. The milk jug sprouts were now several inches tall so the top of the jug was cut off. The lemon juice seeds, already outside, were showing growth. All three pots were placed in a protected warm spot with strong morning light, but no direct afternoon sun.

In July, there were 6 tiny plants appearing in the seed starting cells. I kept them on a table on my front porch and continued to bottom water. I gave away most to friends and planted the remaining few in the yard near my mother iris.

In June, 2015, two plants emerged, survived and steadily grew throughout the summer. No blooms appeared this second year.

In March, 2016, marked the start of third year, and one plant survived the winter. In June a flower bud appeared. Although deer proof, the deer could not pass up the tender flower bud and snapped it off! I'll await for Year 4!

For the complete journal visit our blog: <http://wvsprouts.blogspot.com/2014/03/sweet-siberian-iris-white-swirl.html>

by Sara Hoblitzell
Kanawha GC, Zone VII



Nantucket Daffodil Show, April 28, 29, 30, 2017

In 1974 the late Jean MacAusland, a former summer resident of Nantucket and publisher of Gourmet Magazine, encouraged the Nantucket Garden Club to invite the American Daffodil Society to sponsor a daffodil show. The first official event was in 1975. The show and the first planting of daffodils along the Sconset Road were partly financed by a sale of paintings by local artists.

Mrs. MacAusland donated thousands of bulbs, and the community assisted in the plantings of daffodil bulbs in public areas, planting one million plus bulbs across the island.

This spring's daffodil show was the 43rd daffodil flower show, financed and planned by the Nantucket Garden Club and approved by the American Daffodil Society. For the past few years the show has been held in the greenhouse at Bartlett's Farm. No admission is charged, but the donations accepted are used to buy more daffodil bulbs for planting on the island in beautiful sweeps along roadsides and bike paths. For years local landscaper, David Champoux, has donated the labor for planting.

The show is truly a community event and an unofficial start of the season. Everyone is encouraged to grow and bring in daffodils for exhibiting and judging. Children are a big part of the show. The garden club gives bulbs every fall to the school children to plant at home, and many then bring their flowers to the spring show to be judged. The show this weekend featured overall winning collections entered by Katrina Hancock, a 12-year-old student, who was specially recognized last year by the American Daffodil Society for her participation and enthusiasm. Garden club member and teacher, Ann Maury, always works closely with students to help identify and enter their daffodils during the entry times. Amazingly, after all her help with the children she managed to win Best in Show this year for her 'High Society' daffodil.

This year's 15 American Daffodil Society approved horticulture judges came from the island, trained at judging schools organized 10 years ago by member Sally Nash, and from several other states. The show also features clever and beautiful flower arrangements by children, adults, and families, as well as a section for daffodil photography. The event is joyful, as one participant explained. It is wonderful, whether in sunshine or on a foggy spring day, to be greeted by those cheerful yellow flowers as you walk into the show. Happy Spring!

by Paulette Boling
Nantucket Garden Club
Zone I GCA Horticulture Representative



Arbor Day and Earth Days Across The USA

Westport Garden Club's Native Plant Sale on Arbor Day

The rain held off and the sun made a brief appearance at the WGC Native Plant Sale on Saturday, April 22nd. Thank you to Marsha Moseley and Jo Missildine for organizing the sale, to all the WGC members (as well as husbands and daughters) who volunteered and to Kansas City Community Gardens for allowing us to hold the sale there!

by Laura Sutherland
Westport Garden Club
Zone XI



Woodside Atherton Garden Club on Arbor Day

The WAGC visited Vida Verde, an overnight environmental science camp in San Gregorio, CA, and presented the founders with a lemon tree in honor of Arbor Day. The youth, from underserved San Francisco communities, spend their time learning about conservation, visiting the ocean, cooking their food, milking goats and experiencing various leadership roles. We hope the lemon tree will help them make fresh lemonade on their visits to Vida Verde. As one of our charitable grantees, Vida Verde has become a favorite of our avid conservation-minded gardeners



Marcia Pade presenting a lemon tree to Vida Verde Co-Founders, Shawn & Laura Sears

by Marcia Pade, Conservation Chair, Woodside-Atherton Garden Club, Zone XII

Wetherill Nature Preserve, Hunts Point, Washington

“A natural place providing in perpetuity a habitat for flora and fauna of the Northwest. A retreat in which to commune with Nature.”



In 1989 Marjorie Baird, a Seattle Garden Club member and her sister bequeathed 16 acres of prime property originally purchased by their grandfather, Seattle financier Jacob Furth, to the towns of Yarrow Point and Hunts Point to protect, in perpetuity, the land from development and to preserve its wildlife and native plants. Marjorie Wetherill Baird passed away October 30, 2004 and annually for the last 14 years the Seattle Garden Club has created a work party to help maintain and beautify the Preserve.

Our work party usually consists of 10-15 members who arrive on or close to Earth Day each year to perform 2 ½ hours of work given to us by the Wetherill Nature Preserve Commissioners. We typically remove invasive weeds in a certain area as a group. This year a member of the Wetherill Nature Preserve Board, David Bergey, cleared an area for us to plant native ferns and trilliums. After our work is completed we gather our tools and attend a potluck lunch in the Hunts Point Town Hall where there is good conversation and a surprise for the lucky person who wins the drawing. Over the years, I have noticed how friends reconnect and new friendships are formed. Being surrounded by the beauty of the Preserve, listening to the calls of the many birds who reside within the Preserve and enjoying good friends make it a pleasure for the Seattle Garden Club to be involved.

by Sis Woodside
Seattle Garden Club
Zone XII

Celebrating Arbor Day, The Philipstown Way

The Philipstown Garden Club commemorated Arbor Day 2017 with it's 2016-17 provisional team planting a handsome pair of 500 pound Princeton American Elm trees. They were planted on the grounds of our two public schools in Philipstown, Haldane Central School and the Garrison Union Free School.

Elm trees have long been a distinct part of the American culture and landscape dating back to the time George Washington took his oath under a stately elm tree at the Cambridge Commons. The Princeton Elm was a cultivar developed by a Princeton Nursery, in the 1920's before the Dutch Elm disease ever hit our shores. It is the only cultivar in our region to survive the blight. Today in the city of Princeton, New Jersey, their Princeton Elm cultivars are thriving at nearly a century old.

Our provisional group has an educational hands-on project with kindergartners from Haldane Central School, in Cold Spring, NY; the other, Garrison Union Free School, in Garrison, N.Y., to participate in the plantings and learn more about the value of trees in our world. One of the school kindergarteners' mantra as they were applying the mulch was "Grow, tree, grow" which was adorable. They then sang two tree songs for us.

The 14 foot trees are a combination of donations from a provisional member, and the Rosedale Nurseries, in Hawthorne, NY.

by JoAnn Brown
The Philipstown Garden Club
Zone III



Partners for Plants, 25th Anniversary



Liz Warrick, artist
Santa Fe Garden Club
Zone XII



THE GARDEN CLUB of AMERICA

**PARTNERS FOR PLANTS
THE STORY**

IT'S OUR BIRTHDAY - YEA! HIP, HIP, HOORAY!
JUST ABOUT 25 YEARS, TO THE DAY.

IT ALL BEGAN IN 1992,
AND THE GCA LADIES KNEW JUST WHAT TO DO!

ENDANGERED PLANTS ON PUBLIC LAND,
A PROBLEM THAT WAS GETTING OUT OF HAND.

OUR FEDERAL LAND MANAGERS WERE JUST IN A STEW,
WITH SO MANY ISSUES, WHAT SHOULD THEY DO?

GCA'S, PARTNERS FOR PLANTS - A PLAN THAT WAS NEW,
GETTING VOLUNTEER HELP FOR THINGS THEY NEEDED TO DO!

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE MANAGERS JUST JUMPED AT THE CHANCE,
TO HAVE QUALIFIED VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR PROJECTS IN ADVANCE!

AND THUS, IT WAS ALL AGREED,
THAT PARTNERS FOR PLANTS WOULD FILL THE NEED.

PLANS WERE THEN DRAFTED,
AND MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING CRAFTED.

IN MAINE, ON ACADEIA NATIONAL PARK,
WAS THE FIRST PROJECT OF MANY, ON WHICH WE HAVE EMBARKED!

THE PROJECTS IN THE BEGINNING, WERE JUST A FEW,
ORGANIZED, BY ASKING, GCA FRIENDS THAT I KNEW.

FROM OCEAN TO MOUNTAIN TOP, FOREST TO BOC,
SOME OF OUR PROJECTS HAVE REALLY BEEN A SLOG!

WHETHER REMOVING INVASIVES, MAKING GRIDS OR GETTING THINGS RESEEDED,
WE WERE ALWAYS FOCUSED ON THOSE THINGS SORELY NEEDED.

THE PROJECTS AND CAMARADERIE HAVE BEEN FUN AND REWARDING,
AND HAVE KEPT OUTLAND MANAGERS, CONSTANTLY APPLAUDING!

PURSuing OUR PROJECTS AS DIRECTED,
CAN SOMETIMES END US UP, IN PLACES, QUITE UNEXPECTED!

SOME INVASIVE PLANTS HAVE QUITE AN EXTENDED REACH,
LEADING US ALL THE WAY, TO A HIDDEN NUDIST BEACH!

WITH PROJECT VOLUNTEERS FROM SO MANY SUPPORTIVE GROUPS,
WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXTEND THE RANGE OF OUR PARTNERS FOR PLANTS THROOTS.

OVER THE YEARS, THE INITIAL 6 PROJECTS HAVE BECOME 47, AS THE NEEDS HAVE
GROWN.

IN 2017, 50 NEW PROJECTS WILL TAKE PLACE, IN ALL 12 ZONES!

CRAIG GREENE, A BOTANIST AT ACADIA NATIONAL PARK SAID,
"PARTNERS FOR PLANTS IS VOLUNTEERISM AT ITS BEST",
AND YOU AND I KNOW, WE WILL NEVER LET THOSE INVASIVE PLANTS REST!

THE RESULTS OF OUR SUCCESSES IN OUR FIRST YEARS, 25,
WILL ALWAYS REMAIN AS OUR OUTLINE AND GUIDE,
AS WE CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS WITH THE UTMOST OF PRIDE

AS OUR 400 PROJECTS HAVE ALL BEEN SO NEFTY,
WHO KNOWS WHAT WE WILL HAVE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE TIME WE ARE 50!

LIZ WARRICK
FIRST PARTNERS FOR PLANTS CHAIRMAN
1992

SOMETIMES PEER PRESSURE LEADS TO GOOD RESULTS, PARTNERS FOR PLANTS

From July 2013 to June 2014 Partners for Plants experienced a big surge in growth of the number of projects largely, I believe, due to a small dose of embarrassment at both the Shirley Meneice Horticulture Conference and the NAL Conference in Washington, DC.

My counterpart on the Conservation Committee, Georgia Schell, and I worked together to promote P4P at our respective conferences. She had asked the delegates at NAL whose clubs had a project to stand up during the meeting. I decided to use that tactic as part of my presentation in October, 2013. Each zone was highlighted and the projects' names were shown on a map of their zone.

When I skipped Zone III, I saw some mystified faces in the audience. Later during the breakout sessions when the Horticulture Vice-Chairmen visited some of the individual Zone meetings, I chose the four zones that had the fewest projects in order to promote, encourage and educate the delegates about the initiative. When I walked into the Zone III meeting, after about a 30 minute interim since the big meeting, they were fired up and determined to get on board as quickly as possible. They moved from embarrassment to action very quickly.

Before the end of that fiscal year, both the Southside Garden Club and the Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties had a project up and running, the former at the Suffolk County Environmental Center at the Scully Estate and the later at Bear Mountain State Park. These two Partners for Plants projects were among 14 new ones added that year bringing the total to 41. The three other zones that had only one project each added at least one new initiative. Zone III has since added two more projects!

Partners for Plants continues to flourish thanks to the leadership of Sharon Blackburn, Diana Fish, and her successor Janet Manning.

by Alice Fraser

Trustees Garden Club, Savannah, GA.

Former VC of Partners for Plants (7/1/13-6/30/15)

PARTNERS FOR PLANTS UPDATE FROM THE GARDEN CLUB OF HARTFORD

Partners for Plants at Keney Park, a sprawling 694 acre public park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted's firm, was initiated in 2014 through the Garden Club of Hartford's Conservation Committee, under the leadership of Alice Willard and Katie Nixon and in partnership with Tom Baptist, Superintendent of the City of Hartford's Public Works Department. The project's focus was to enhance the park's five entrances. Initial Partners for Plants funding supported a design contest for landscape architecture students to develop plans to manage invasive plants and plant native pollinator-attractive trees and shrubs and for a consulting botanist who helped identify invasive species.

A team from Harvard won the competition and in the spring, summer and fall of 2015, club members, Public Works staff and community groups cleared the Barbour Street entrance, the first of five, of invasives and replaced them with native species.

Buoyed by the finished product, the gratitude of area residents and workers' enthusiasm, GCH continues to enhance the other entrances, one by one. GCH dedicated the proceeds from its 2015 biennial auction to the effort. In 2016, GCH was one of three finalists for GCA's Founder's Fund award. As a runner-up, GCH received \$10,000 for the project. The Windsor Avenue entrance has since been cleared and replanted. Three more entrances will follow.

The Civic Projects Committee, headed by Linda Lydon and Nancy Macy, became involved during this time. At Mr. Baptist's request, he and club members teamed up with Scott Heth, Executive Director of Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut, to develop a biodiversity training curriculum for DPW staff. Currently in phase two, the course is being shepherded by Katie Nixon and taught by Scott Heth and his staff. It includes information on ecology, invasives, Frederick Law Olmsted's vision for public spaces in an urban setting, and working effectively with others toward a common goal.

by Susan Rathgeber
The Garden Club of Hartford
Zone II



ADDING HISTORY TO NATIVE PLANT CHOICES

Partners for Plants project: “Habitat restoration to create native plantings at Trailside Museums and Zoo in Bear Mountain State Park,” Rockland County, New York.

A goal of Nature Centers along the Appalachian Trail to show local natural history is addressed at our Trailside Partners for Plants site with plantings of many native species. We consulted the earliest plant descriptions of Hudson Valley flora. Jane Colden (1724-1760), cited as America’s first woman botanist, wrote a Botanical Manuscript describing over 300 plants collected around her nearby home.

Cadwallader Colden, a respected physician-scientist, shared his deep interest in American plants with his daughter. He welcomed plant collectors, corresponded with European botanists and quickly adopted the new system of plant classification from writings of Carl Linnaeus. He translated Latin botanical terms for Jane to describe plants in English. With few European botanical books and her own powers of observation she achieved Linnaean botanical descriptions that were admired then and still valid today.

For each plant she detailed floral anatomy, and many had further descriptions of the plant. She gave colorful shrubs (eg: *Hamamelis virginiana*) or plants (eg: *Lobelia cardinalis*) equal space with small plants (eg: *Coptis trifolia*) overlooked by plant explorers with European interests. Obstacles to appreciate her work today include many botanical name changes. For example, her “American White Honeysuckle” becomes an Azalea, now *Rhododendron periclymenoides*. European books suggested names for entirely American genera; her “*Digitalis*, Yellow Foxglove” becomes *Aureolaria*, False Foxglove.

Our Partners for Plants Trailside work includes the Jane Colden Wildflower Garden. Her plants chosen for this sunny, dry site include over 30 species of perennials and shrubs. Further demonstration of her botanical legacy is planned with plantings in moist or shady habitats and providing current botanical names for her descriptions.

by Fenella Heckscher
Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties
Zone III

ELKHORN SLOUGH FOUNDATION IN A PARTNERS FOR PLANTS PROJECT TO SUPPORT THE TIDAL MARSH RESTORATION.

Carmel -by-the-sea Garden Club has joined forces with the Elkhorn Slough to restore the complete coastal ecosystem, channels, marshes and native coastal prairies near Carmel, California. The Slough is the second largest tract of tidal salt marshes in California. Salt marshes trap and restore ten to fifteen times more atmospheric carbon than temperate forests. It provides a habitat for 340 species of birds and other wildlife. Since 1870, nearly 50% of the tidal marshes have been lost to pastures and farmland. The foundation, through a grant from the California Fish and Wildlife, has begun purchasing farms and restoring marshland with native seedlings and seed harvesting.

In November 2016, twelve members of our club pruned and cleared the plantings of a well traveled trail at Kirby Park. We joined the Research Reserve staff in planting grass seedlings; California brome, California Oat grass and meadow barley as well as the gum plant, *Grindelia stricta*.

In March 2017, six members of our club met with Katie Profahl, the Outreach Coordinator. She said our pruning, weeding and planting efforts have resulted in fresh new growth along the Trail and very good success with the seedlings thanks to our rainfall this year.

We met with a seed master and two research coordinators to design the future location of the native seedlings along the path. They are continuing to research the optimal environments for the rare native seedlings they are growing specifically for the Slough. The goal is to visually enhance the area, to increase visitor attendance and appreciation for the importance of restoring this important marsh habitat for the benefit of flora and fauna. We had the opportunity to study seeds under the microscope and then manually extricate the seeds from their tiny covers. It did not take us long to appreciate the tedious and difficult chore of harvesting native seeds. We are excited about our partnership with the Elkhorn Slough Foundation. There are plans for us to return in the fall to check on our gum plants, grasses, and plant more seedlings in our new design for the Kirby Park trail.

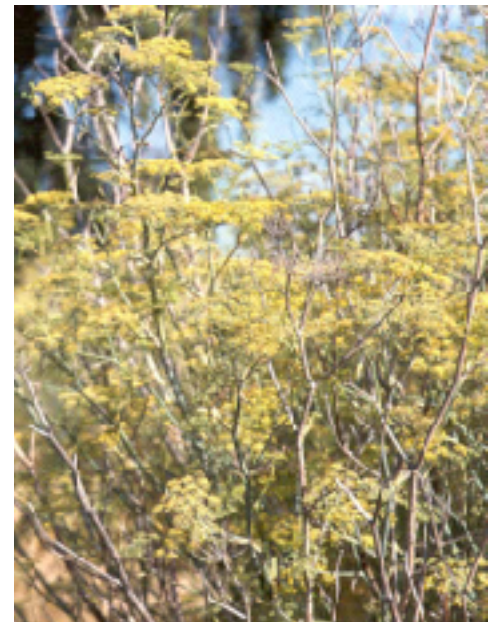
It was especially gratifying to see the educational outreach this Foundation does with local schools. They are learning scientific skills and hands on experience in their own neighborhoods.

We really feel like an important partner in the project at the Slough. Many members were not aware of this lovely area. They are very excited to see the difference we are making and are bringing their families to experience this gem less than an hour from Carmel.

by Lori Hightower
Carmel-by-the-Sea Garden Club
Zone XII



Shirley Meneice holding a fennel stock in the Elkhorn Slough with friend, Jenny Miller



Foeniculum vulgare
Fennel

BAY VISIONS

San Francisco Bay, California

Scientists agree that, to thrive, the San Francisco Bay needs 100,000 acres of tidal marshes, more than twice what exists now.

From the tiny acorn, the might oak must grow. The Woodside-Atherton Garden Club's P4P Project, a partnership with Save The Bay (STB), has restored a wetland transition zone in front of STB's native plant nursery at the Palo Alto Bay Lands. From there, we saw the opportunity to multiply our vision all around the Bay. Bay Visions emerged as an enthusiastic working committee of the six Garden Clubs of Northern California. Each of us now has a P4P Project, dispersed around San Francisco's watershed, as well as Elkhorn Slough in Monterey. We celebrate with quarterly meetings and an annual major educational event such as our Bay Visions Day, attended by 300 members in 2016.

In 2014, Doug Serrill, working with us from Save the Bay said, "With Bay Visions, the Garden Clubs have changed small restoration plots on the shores of the bay to a vision of a complete success around the bay. You have given me hope." But working together to restore the ecosystem of our Bays and Estuaries is by no means a new idea for the Garden Clubs. Our members have worked to save critical watershed properties, including Angel Island, Bair Island, Coyote Point, Crystal Springs watershed, and others.

The last living of the three women founders of Save the Bay, Silvia McLaughlin at 97, after 75 years of dedicated work to save the San Francisco Bay said, "The Garden Clubs have ALWAYS been our friends". Now and through the generations, the Garden Clubs have created natural partnerships, helping to create 347 miles of bay shore trail and a necklace of shoreline parks and reserves. There is much more to do, but we have the Vision.

by Mary Hufty and Peggie MacLeod for Bay Visions
Woodside Atherton Garden Club
Zone XII



East Palo Alto Bay Lands



Peggie and Mary digging away at rock hard fill with Kathy Trapnell in the foreground

CELEBRATING ZONE IX PARTNERS FOR PLANTS PROJECT

Big Thicket National Preserve (NPS), the first National Park Preserve, a project of the Magnolia Garden Club, TX, Zone IX

The Magnolia Garden Club has been involved in P4P projects since the early 1990s with projects in the Big Thicket National Preserve re-establishing two endangered plants: Texas Trailing Phlox and the White Firewheel; planting *Panicum amarum*, Bitter Panicum, dune plants to help stabilize the dunes destroyed by hurricanes in the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge; re-establishing a native coastal prairie with native Texas grasses and a butterfly garden in the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge planting; educating high school biology students about invasive and aquatic invasive species near and around the Neches River; and "dibbling" in the beloved Big Thicket planting 1000s of Longleaf Pine seedlings in hard hit areas decimated by hurricane winds. The Magnolia GC is committed to continuing efforts and projects by participating in this vital GCA P4Ps program.

by Vivian Todd
P4P Project Coordinator



Where are your Annual Meeting Plants?

THE GCA DAHLIA

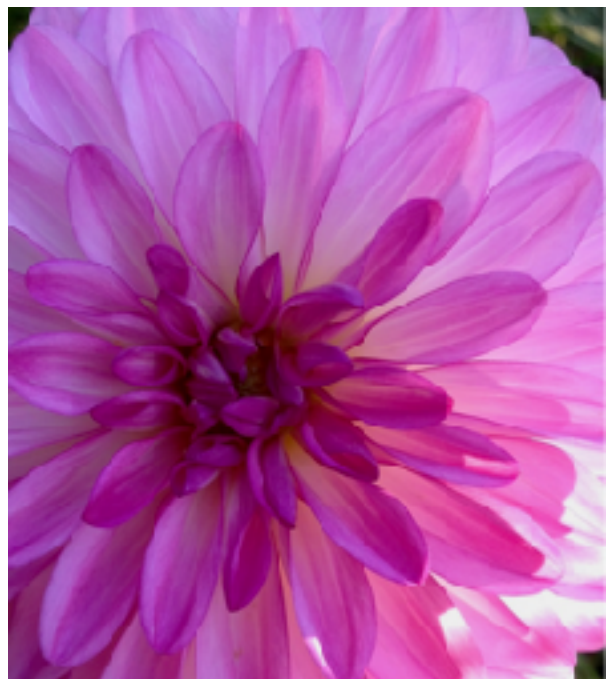
I was thrilled to be the Akron Garden Club's delegate for the 2003 GCA Annual Meeting in Rye, New York (Zone III). Included in the gift bag was a tuber of the *GCA Dahlia*. The photo on the package showed a caerulean-blue, dinner-plate dahlia, described as the "first true-blue dahlia".

I had never grown dahlias, but crossed my fingers and planted it. My tuber produced a big plant, several 4'-5' stalks, so I put a sturdy tomato cage around it to provide some support. When it came into bloom, the flowers were gorgeous, huge blooms that were PINK with a hint of yellow at the center. That fall, *The Bulletin* had an article about results with the "blue dahlia" across the country. The GCA dahlias grown on Long Island and the Cape (with low pH soil), did have blue flowers. The GCA dahlias in other parts of the country ranged from pink to lilac.

Although a surprise, the pink blooms are beautiful. I have dug the dahlia each fall, stored the tubers, and then divided each spring. From my original tuber, I have shared the GCA dahlia with Akron Garden Club members, other Zone X clubs, and given tubers to the GCA Horticulture Committee members as Christmas gifts. For our club's Flower Show in September, 2011, the "GCA Dahlia" was a cut-flower challenge class, and received a Judges' Class Commendation.

Elizabeth Martin from Bay City Garden Club (Michigan) had also received a "blue dahlia" tuber at the 2003 meeting. Attendees at the May 2012 Zone X Meeting, received a "GCA Dahlia tuber," all descendants of Elizabeth's dahlia. These have an abundance of lilac-colored, 4" flowers. The GCA "Blue" Dahlia from that 2003 Annual Meeting lives on, providing beautiful pink and lilac flowers.

by Dedee O'Neil
Akron Garden Club
Zone X



The Prairie Ecologist

Essays, photos, and discussion about prairie ecology, restoration, and management



Not Yet, Monarchs, Not Yet!

Posted on April 18, 2017 by Chris Helzer

Monarch butterflies are leaving Mexico and traveling north, as they always do. However, they're coming a lot further north than they typically do in April. The first I heard about this was a text message from conservation photographer [Michael Forsberg](#) back on April 9. Mike said he had just photographed a monarch butterfly with faded wings in his Lincoln, Nebraska backyard. "Could this be from Mexico (seems too far north)? Or could this be a local new generation (seems to early)?" Yes, exactly.

Mike and I checked with some experts who all agreed that Mike's butterfly had overwintered in Mexico and had flown all the way north to Nebraska. And yes, it was awfully far north for a monarch to be spotted at this time of year. Moreover, Mike wasn't alone in his observation. According to [Journey North's website](#), there have been numerous 2017 sightings of monarchs much further north than they are normally seen in April.

Well, good for the monarchs, right? They're getting a head start on the season, and hopefully they'll have a great year...

...Unfortunately, coming this far north this early is probably not a good thing. Ordinarily, monarchs that leave Mexico in the early spring fly as far north as the southern United States and lay eggs on milkweed plants there.

The generation that hatches from those eggs then makes their way further north, including to our Nebraska prairies. By overshooting the southern United States this spring, the early monarchs here in Nebraska have arrived before our milkweed plants are even out of the ground. There's no place for them to lay their eggs, and that could lead to big problems.



No, this wasn't a monarch from this spring. This was photographed in Minnesota in July 2015, a reasonable time and place for monarchs. There is no milkweed to be found yet in our prairies this spring.

Our Platte River Prairies land manager (Nelson Winkel) says he saw a couple of monarchs last Friday, and I got to add my own early sighting to the Journey North database this weekend. As I was driving into our family prairie with two of my kids, I saw a big butterfly out of the corner of my eye and thought "monarch??" but missed getting a good look. An hour later, though, I had a very clear look at a monarch butterfly in flight, so when I returned home I logged in and reported it. On Monday, I returned to our prairie to do some work and saw a monarch again (same one?). I followed it for a while to see what it was up to, and over the next 5-10 minutes, I watched it repeatedly hover low to the ground, fly 10 yards or so, and then hover again. It sure looked like it was searching for something, and it bypassed quite a few wildflowers, so I don't think it was looking for nectar. I'm guessing it was looking in vain for milkweed plants, but I might just be projecting. It's too early to know what this year will bring for the monarch butterfly. The Eastern North American population count in Mexico was [higher than many had anticipated](#), but still far lower than desired. Habitat loss both in North America and Mexico, pesticide impacts, landscape fragmentation, declines in milkweed populations, and weather events all threaten butterfly populations. Now, overly-ambitious monarchs taking advantage of strong tailwinds appear to be compounding their own problems. It remains to be seen how many will arrive before milkweed plants are ready for them, and what impacts those early arrivals might have. I'm hoping the majority of the population will stay south and make lots of babies that can come up here in another month or so. We'll do our best to make them welcome when they arrive.

Want to help make monarchs welcome in your area? Planting and protecting milkweed plants in your neighborhood can give monarchs somewhere to lay their eggs. Even better, do what you can to ensure a diversity of blooming plants is available throughout the growing season. Monarchs are only one of many pollinator insects that are suffering because of a lack of consistent and abundant supply of pollen and nectar. Plant native wildflowers in your yard and help keep native prairies and other natural areas in good condition so bees, butterflies, and other pollinators can find food for themselves and their offspring all season long.

Chris Helzer gave his consent to include his blog in this issue of *The Real Dirt*. Look for Chris at the 2017 Shirley Meneice Horticulture Conference in Omaha this September.

GCA Horticulture Committee March Meeting

DESERT BOTANIC GARDEN, PHOENIX, ARIZONA

The middle of March saw the Horticulture Committee visiting Arizona for our quarterly meeting and missing the snowy NYC weather. Our meetings were held at the 175-acre Desert Botanical Garden (DBG) which was a short drive from our hotel in Scottsdale. We managed to enjoy an early morning tour of the garden compliments of Columbine's members who got up early to welcome us to DBG. Established in the 1930's as an attempt to save the desert, the facility today has a world class collection of unique plants found in the southwestern United States. The cacti had begun to bloom and the site was dotted with brilliant purple, red, and yellow flowers. The majestic Saguaro cacti were everywhere, tall and full of holes made over generations by woodpeckers.

A group of enthusiastic photographers took to the grounds in the late afternoon heat to photograph our surroundings. Warning #1, the holes we saw all over the property often house snakes (one, a big king snake, started to investigate a tripod placed near it's lair.) Warning #2 do not walk off paths. Cacti have very shallow, fragile roots which collect water but they also have spines to keep animals and people away. My Patagonia hiking pants brought home a wide selection of thorns as did my equipment.

Thursday found the photography group in the mountains above Phoenix at Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park. It was already quite warm at 8:30 am when we arrived in the foothills. This is a wild park encompassing over 325 acres and not at all like the beautifully maintained and contained Desert Botanical Garden. Cacti and succulents were everywhere you looked. Our instructor, Colleen Miniuk-Sperry encouraged us to jot down a list of words describing something we wanted to shoot and then to create a haiku poem. We were astounded to realize how this simple method of quieting our left brains improved the quality of our photographs.

by Priscilla Growney
Garden Club of Honolulu
Zone XII Horticulture Representative

THE HORTICULTURE COMMITTEE GOES BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE DESERT BOTANICAL GARDENS!

What a treat to see the inner workings of one of the country's foremost botanical gardens! Adding to this hortie's excitement, our tour of the Nina Mason Pulliam Research and Horticultural Center included Wendy Hodgson, Senior Research Botanist and Curator. She's an amazing woman with a long and distinguished career, although the only indication we had of her accomplishments was the deference with which she was treated by the staff! Happily, I inadvertently snagged some extra time with her. An intriguing plant specimen caught my eye in the Research and Horticultural Center, where the rare, threatened or endangered species are grown; Wendy came to look, and probably to hurry me along; but instead we spent some time talking about the *Agyroderma pearsonii*. It's an egg shaped succulent with two fleshy leaves, which almost perches on top of the soil. The flower grows from the cleft between the leaves. Not the most beautiful but fascinating! In the not-at-all professional photo here, you'll see several just after flowering.



The next stop was the Garden's herbarium, designated as a National Resource Collection, which Wendy Hodgson directs. Here the staff prepares herbarium sheets, with part or whole plants mounted on archival paper and fully labeled. Each 'herbarium sheet' is cataloged, creating a natural history library for the use of researchers in various fields. Below is a photo of one herbarium sheet for an extremely rare Arizona plant *Cylindropuntia* cf. *spinisor* X *Cylindropuntia*.



Next my eye was caught by a stuffed toy snake curled up on top of one of the cabinets. Was that Wendy's sense of humor? What a wonderful trip!

Thank you, GCA.

by Alice St. Claire-Long
Stony Brook Garden Club
Zone IV Horticulture Representative

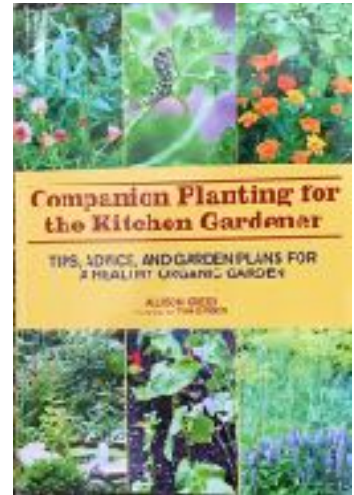
Book Review

Companion Planting for the Kitchen Gardener

By Allison Greer
Photos by Tim Greer

I am so happy I took time to read this lovely book before planning my vegetable garden for the growing season. It was filled with so many well substantiated ideas in a very organized fashion, framed by beautiful photographs.

My seed list for this season's purchase has many more annual flowers than usual. Allison uses them not only for aesthetic reasons but also as "calling cards" for beneficial insects who help control the destructive ones that impact vegetable plants. Borage, with its lovely, edible blue flower encourages the health of tomatoes and squash and deters the tomato hornworms. This plant self-sews in my vegetable garden. I plan to dig up some of the seedlings and relocate them near my tomatoes. The author claims the beneficial pollinators and insects drawn to the flowers within the garden will monitor the bad insects that lay their eggs on the leaves of the squash vine. I will therefore plan to plant some of my autumn squash amongst the plants in my perennial bed. The autumn squashes are usually more of a vine type of plant so it would work as a kind of ground cover. She also suggests that you cut the tip of the vine to encourage flower/vegetable production and to keep it under control as they are known to wander.



There is one whole section of plot designs of plants that grow well in proximity of one another. Every growing space has clusters of flowering annuals, the "drawing card" for beneficial insects. Her approach will certainly make for a more attractive vegetable garden space. I am now thinking of my raised beds as little garden "rooms" similar to the landscape design concept. I am also going to change the layout of the garden spaces. Some things need to be planted in straight lines but others actually perform better when planted in clusters amongst plants that enhance one another. An example of this concept is the use of summer savory (the very tasty herb), it "actually encourages onions to grow more vigorously and it may protect beans from Mexican bean beetles". She indicates spearmint confuses aphids. I would also add, grow it in a pot sunk into the earth as it is very aggressive. Each of these little spaces can be visually attractive and much more productive. This whole thought process evolved from reading Companion Planting for the Kitchen Gardener.

The book is thoughtfully formatted. I was able to extract lots of information I can easily apply to improve my garden. Like all gardeners, I look forward to applying these concepts to my vegetable garden in this new growing season.

by Gail Hamsher
Library Committee
Stonington Garden Club
Zone II