

THE REAL DIRT

The Garden Club of America's Horticulture Quarterly Publication

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Sanguinaria canadensis



Hepatica nobilis var. obtusa

SPRING EPHEMERALS

Spring ephemerals are easily my favorite garden flowers. I've loved their quiet, magical and fleeting beauty since I was a child. What is an ephemeral plant? Ephemeral means transitory or quickly fading. These plants emerge quickly, bloom, set seed, and die back to the ground. Here are three that I especially love and grow:

Anemone blanda, Windflower, Grecian Windflower

Windflowers are rooted by tuberous roots with daisy like deep blue flowers and lancinated leaves. They are native to Greece. The flowers open with the morning sun and close in the evening. They are 4" tall, carpet-forming, creeping perennials and require rich, well-drained soil and sun. These deer and rodent resistant naturalizers display well among daffodils, in rock gardens or in masses under shrubs and trees. Pink and white varieties are also available.



Anemone blanda

Photo from Missouri Botanical Garden

Hepatica nobilis var. *obtusa*, Round-lobed Hepatica

Hepatica are commonly called liverwort because of their liver shaped leaves which have three-lobes with rounded tips. The dainty pinkish blue flowers open from hairy buds in early April. I find the leaves are almost as pretty as the flowers. Hepatica is widespread in Eastern North America, growing well in dry, acid woods soils. It self-sows easily and may be propagated by division after flowering. White, blue and lavender flowers are available in commerce. These treasures must be viewed up close to be appreciated; at the edge of the garden path or at eye level in a terraced garden.



Hepatica nobilis var. *obtusa*

Courtesy of Photographer, Doug Sherman and on the cover,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Sanguinaria canadensis, Bloodroot

Bloodroot derives its name from the red stems, red rhizomes and red sap once used by the Native Americans as a dye and war paint. Emerging in April, the tightly rolled leaf slowly unfurls revealing the flower bud. The simple star like white flowers close in the evening and open with the morning sun. Bloodroot forms colonies by way of rhizomes, preferring humus rich, slightly acid woodland soil. It likes moderate moisture with good drainage. The plant prefers shade where the leaves seem to last longer than in more open areas. It self-sows readily and may be divided in spring or fall. Bloodroot is indigenous to Eastern North America. There is a double flowered form and a pink single flowered form that I purchased last year and am anxiously awaiting its arrival this spring. Bloodroot a beautiful candidate for the front of the woodland border, growing ten inches tall.



Sanguinaria canadensis

Photos from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center,

Digital Photo Library

J.W. Smith, Photographer

Cover photo of *S. canadensis*, by Julie Makin

by Lydia Wallis
Zone III Horticulture Representative
Southampton Garden Club

Fabulous Forever Ferns

Like a delicious chocolate truffle, certain ferns make me salivate. With incomparable beauty and texture, ferns are mainstays for the woodland garden canvas. I have a small urban garden with no room for ferns that don't earn their space. While some of my other ferns have occasionally been sent to the compost heap, these three ferns can rest easy, they're not going anywhere!

Having a strong evergreen foundation for the woodland garden is essential. For this reason and more, one of my favorite ferns is the four-foot high *Dryopteris wallichiana*. It offers evergreen aristocratic beauty with an elegant erect vase shape and dramatic dark hairy scales decorating its spring fronds. It looks smashing paired with a variegated large leafed perennial like *Symphytum x uplandicum* 'Axminster Gold'.

Staying closer to the ground, weaving an extraordinary tapestry of delicate ferny lusciousness is the *Adiantum venustum* or Himalayan maidenhair fern. This evergreen beauty carpets the ground growing only six inches tall, but three feet wide. It erupts in spring with pinky bronze foliage hanging from wiry black stems. Try planting some black mondo grass near this fern for a color echo between the fern's stems and the grass's blades. Yowzer!

Lastly, the *Athyrium otophorum*, or eared lady fern, wins the prize for the most exquisite color. This deciduous fern features dark burgundy stems with chartreuse spring fronds that subtly change color to a more ivory green as summer approaches. I have mine planted in a mass of *Oxalis oregana* to highlight this amazing color transformation.

All three ferns thrive in light-to-dappled shade with regular water and decent drainage. Paint your garden canvas with *Dryopteris wallichiana*, *Adiantum venustum* and *Athyrium otophorum* and you'll have fabulous ferny friends forever!



Adiantum venustum



Dryopteris wallichiana

Photos and article by Megan Smith
Seattle Garden Club

Freeman Medal Process

Selecting a plant for consideration for the Freeman Medal can seem daunting. It seemed difficult at first, racking my brain to come up with a worthy candidate. But here are a few suggestions on how to go about it:

- Speak to your Visiting Gardens Chairperson about taking an outing to a Botanical Garden, Arboretum, Public Park, private garden tour or specialty nursery.
- Call friends who are interested in plants and plan to visit a few of the above together and include a fun lunch as well.
- Visit as many plant sales as you can, sponsored by local organizations (plant societies, garden clubs, libraries, etc) and talk to their plant experts about native plants.
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What to look for:

- Ask yourself, is this a native species that bees like? And what about birds and butterflies?
- Will it perform well in a variety of conditions (wet, dry, sun or shade)?
- Is it known to be resistant to deer damage?
- Will it help with erosion control?
- Will it grow in a large portion of the United States?
- And aside from its ornamental value, are there other uses (medicinal or culinary)?
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If you've checked off the majority of characteristics above, your plant could be a contender for the Freeman Medal.

Next, check if it has been nominated before via FreemanMedal@GCAmerica.Org. You'll receive a quick reply and guidance for submission.

And lastly, just jump in and do it! You will learn so much from this worthwhile endeavor!!

Alice Wade
Garden Club of Madison
Zone IV

Helleborus orientalis



Hellebores, also known as Lenten roses or Winter roses, seem to be the perfect perennial with their late-winter bloom producing long-lasting, exquisitely colored, nodding flowers which boost our spirits in dreary, cold weather. Their handsome foliage is often evergreen, providing winter interest even before they bloom. Plus, Hellebores are hardy plants, and tolerate a wide range of growing conditions in zones 4-9, including drought. They are available in a great variety of colors and flower forms. And, deer do not eat them! Hellebores really are the perfect perennial.

Native to Western European mountains, Hellebores will thrive in many conditions. Do not think of them as “shade plants;” they are shade-tolerant plants. Grow them in part sun to dappled shade in well-drained, humusy soil and do not overwater. Protect them from winter wind to avoid any scorching of their leathery, deep green leaves. Hellebores are clump-forming and grow their roots in fall and winter and set their buds in late summer. This perennial is perfect for woodland gardens or naturalizing; they look beautiful grouped by bloom type or in a mix.

To learn about propagating Hellebores, see *The Real Dirt* issue #5, spring 2006. If you buy potted Hellebores, know that they may not bloom the first winter after planting, but they will grow vigorously once they are established. The easiest way to propagate Hellebores is to focus on the variety that self-seeds freely (*Helleborus orientalis*) and let your garden grow these perfect perennials by itself.

Photos and article by, Jill Mountcastle
The Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton, Zone VII

Migration of Butterflies

To stand in a forest of Oyamel fir trees, *Abies religiosa*, 10,000 feet above sea level, and be surrounded by millions of Monarch Butterflies, is the thrill of a lifetime. In February, I went to Michoacan, Mexico with my daughters to see the amazing Monarchs in their winter retreat.

They fly over 2500 miles from east of the Mississippi to this magical spot. None of them have ever been there before now. They are the fourth generation of the butterflies who left Mexico the spring before to head north where they reproduce the next generations. Each generation heads further north, laying eggs on milkweed so the caterpillars can eat those leaves before forming their pupae. The new generation of butterflies continues the cycles until late summer. This last group must feed heavily on nectar in order to prepare for the long journey back to Mexico and their chance to rest and get ready for their trip back north in the spring. The loss of milkweed in the US, and of the fir trees in Mexico have caused a huge reduction in the Monarch population. Much work and study is being done to improve the situation.

After hiking up or riding a horse to see the Monarchs, we looked up in the trees and saw thousands of orange and black butterflies, huddled together for warmth and protection. Once they are sunny and warm, many will fly all around creating a magical moment. A sight I will never forget!

by Clare Stewart
Zone VI Horticulture Representative



Monarch Butterflies in Abies religiosa, Photos by Clare Stewart

Cypress Preserve P4P Project

Greenville Garden Club
Greenville, Mississippi

Partners for Plants (P4P) is a joint initiative of The Garden Club of America's Conservation and Horticulture Committees to restore native habitat on federal, state, and local public lands. Club volunteers work with botanists and other horticulture experts to monitor and protect rare, endangered and medicinal plants; to remove invasive plants; and to restore and replant with native plants by collecting and propagating seeds. The recently revised guidelines for Partners for Plants have expanded opportunities for GCA Clubs around the country. The 150 acres minimum for a project is no longer a requirement. This prompted the Greenville Garden Club to contact p4p@gcamerica.org to start a new P4P project in 2018/19.

In the 1930s, the Greenville Garden Club purchased 16 acres of urban forest land, including three cypress sloughs, with the purpose of preserving the property in its natural state and saving it from urban development. The GGC maintained the property until 2002, when it gave a conservation easement to the Greenville Cypress Preserve Trust and turned over management of the property to the trustees. Members of the GGC make up the majority of the GCPT. The GGC and the GCPT have enlisted nearly 60 volunteers from the community. They will attend educational sessions from a local botanist, Lynn Libous Bailey of the USDA and Emile Gardener from the USDA forestry service. They will physically help remove invasive plants, mainly Chinese Privet, Japanese honeysuckle and Euonymus. A Weed Wrangle® will take place later in April.

The second phase of this P4P will occur in the summer. The Greenville Garden Club, and their affiliated youth garden organization, the Dirt Daubers, and other community volunteers will plant native plants including chickasaw plum trees, nuttall, water and shumard oaks and other native plants from the delta.

P4P projects such as this are encouraged to request funding. Projects may receive a maximum of \$3000 in a given year and a maximum of \$6000 over three years. Then, projects need to take a year off from funding although they are encouraged to remain as a P4P project as long as they continue their involvement. GCA grants are available to clubs for their P4P projects for expenses related to the project. Priority is given to requests to compensate a botanical expert for time and expertise working with the club. GCA grants are meant for larger expenses and must always be related to restoring native habitat.

Please visit the P4P page on your GCA members area. Here you can view the Project Database and see other clubs' projects and all their important work in native habitat restoration. Contact p4p@gcamerica.org if you want to start a P4P project with your club.

Submitted by,
Liz Lavezzorio VC P4P Horticulture
Janet Manning VC P4P Conservation



Becky Wineman & Lynn Libous-Bailey
from the GGC
remove privet with an uprooter in
GCPT

ASK MS. FLORA HORTUS



Got Weeds?

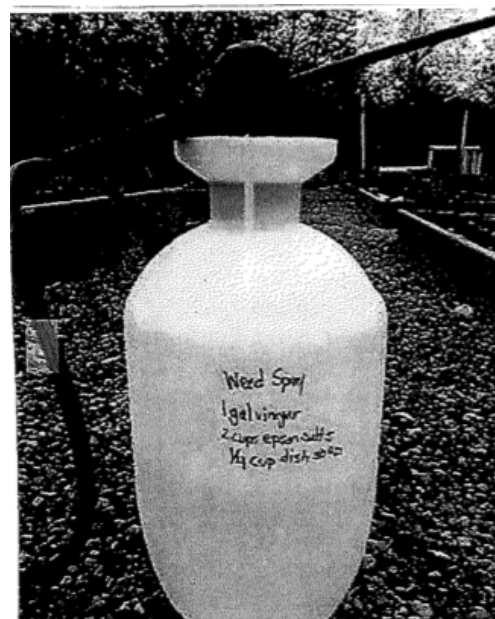
Weeds Be Gone:

- 1 Gallon Vinegar
- 2 cups Epsom Salt
- 1/4 cup Dawn dish soap (the blue original)

It will kill anything you spray it on. Just mix and spray in the morning, after the dew has evaporated. Walk away. Come back after dinner and the weeds are all gone!

This is cheaper than anything you can buy anywhere! Never buy Roundup again!!

Submitted by Ellen Goodwin
Zone V Horticulture Representative



Solution for the Fungus Gnat Problem from the Winter issue of *The Real Dirt*

Several years ago I was reading about natural remedies to common plant problems, and I learned that cinnamon is a natural fungicide. It turns out that fungus gnats eat a special fungus that commonly grows on the top of damp soil in potted plants. I always had lots of fungus gnats in February when my amaryllis were growing in my sunny bay window. If you get rid of the fungus (which I never see), you get rid of the gnats! So now when I pot up my amaryllis bulbs after Christmas, I water them well, then dust the top of the soil with cinnamon, and no gnats! It's nice to have the house smell like cinnamon and get rid of the little gnats at the same time!!! There are many interesting uses for cinnamon that are worth exploring.

Nancy Linz
Garden Club of Cincinnati

Dear Flora: *How do I keep the deer from eating my tulips?*

Jacqueline van der Kloet, the director of the Keukenhof Garden in Holland, once said that if you want to grow tulips and you have deer, you must plant the tulips with a body guard of daffodils. I took this to heart and the deer have not eaten a single tulip since. In areas where I am planting tulips, I plant *Narcissus cyclamineus* with them. The daffodils come up early and bloom, the deer take a whiff of them and avoid that part of the garden until the bulbs are gone. There is a *N. cyclamineus* to go with every color scheme and the deer hate them all. Just remember to plan this in the spring when you see where your tulips are or will be!

Submitted by Betsy McCoy
Zone V Horticulture Representative

Dear Flora: *With all the warnings about pesticides and pollinators, what is the best way to manage pests in the home landscape?*

While every home landscape has its own challenges, most local extension services agree that a holistic approach using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) which reduces pesticide use (least toxic, narrow spectrum), and encourages diversity in the landscape, will produce a balanced ecosystem.

Dear Flora: *What should we expect for the coming year re: winter moth?*

The Cape Cod extension service reports that Spring 2017 had good rainfall which built up *Entomophaga maimaiga*, an introduced soil borne fungus that is a natural predator to the winter moth, greatly reducing the population. While winter moth numbers are down, trees have been severely compromised with the combination of severe drought and past winter moth damage. These stressed trees are vulnerable to secondary invasion from borers resulting in more tree decline and tree mortality. What can the home owner do? Although we're too late for many trees, if the drought continues, water vulnerable trees during dry periods.

Dear Flora: *I don't have grow lights or heat mats, but I like to grow seedlings. What should I try?*

Fall/winter sowing is an excellent way to grow many plants, especially perennials, trees and shrubs that are native to your USDA Zone. The New England Wild Flower society encourages sowing directly into pots or flats that will remain outdoors throughout the winter. Protect the seeds from animal activity by covering the flats with hardware cloth and let Mother Nature do the stratifying work for you. The Horticulture landing page of the GCA website also has instructions for winter sowing in plastic water jugs - no special equipment is needed!

Peggy Mayfield
Zone I Horticulture Representative

BOOK REVIEW

Native Ferns Moss & Grasses

By William Cullina

I have had many of Bill Cullina's books on my garden library shelves for years. Native Ferns Moss & Grasses is amongst them. I have always used them as reference material, and wandered the pages of beautiful photography for both inspiration and visual education as well as for reference. It was not until asked to write a review that I actually sat down to read this particular book, and focused on the amount of detailed, well organized information it contained. Mr. Cullina is passionate about these plant materials; ferns, moss, and grass. He considers them vehicles of form and texture in the garden space, which is what we all try to achieve. All of his books are formatted in a similar fashion which allows one to easily move from one of his publications to another. It is perhaps the reason I have always used them as reference material.

I can now understand why one could be comfortable just visually perusing the book for the photography. Reading the sidebars to the photographs gives so much information, which in itself is a separate entity of facts. He has a photo of the invasive Asian wiggly worm and all pertinent details of why this has become a serious problem in our leaf litter. This important information is transpired in one photo and in a sidebar.

Definitions of terminology: exactly what is a native plant (something one needs to know for submissions for the Freeman Medal Award) is important. I might note the New England Wild Flower Society has its name on the cover of this book directly under the Author's name. Mr. Cullina was employed as Director of Horticulture Research for a number of years. The New England Wild Flower Society is one of the pillars of wild flower research in our country.

Grasses are a popular theme in garden design. There are many books available on the subject, one of which I will review for the summer issue of *The Real Dirt*. What William Cullina brings to the table is an overview of native grasses, sedges and rushes. At the time this book was published, there was no comprehensive reference to this native family of plants. It is vast, with more than 1,500 species native to North America. Cullina has selected the species with the most ornamental potential for this book.

Cullina highlights the importance of planting native species in our gardens. This has been emphasized in recent publications for many reasons; such as providing host plants for beneficial insects, for pollinator habitat, and for restoration, and erosion control. Cullina also discusses propagation as well as collection, cleaning and storage of seeds in great detail.

My intention is not to give short attention to ferns and moss, which add so much perspective to the garden. However, with limited space, and with other GCA publications highlighting grasses, I simply want to emphasize how valuable this book is for the incorporation of native species of grasses in the landscape.

Gail Hamsher
Library Committee
Stonington Garden Club, Zone II

