

The Garden Clippings

Somerset Garden Club

2013

AUTUMN



President's Message

By Arlene Blissell

Summer came and went in too much of a hurry, bringing a wealth of flowers and a bounty of vegetables. In late August we watched the sumac transforming to brilliant red and blaze orange, maples began changing to their colorful dresses in September and the nighttime insects created a familiar serenade. The scent of grasses drying in meadows is familiar and lets me know that fall has really arrived. I am sure autumn will pass just as quickly as summer, but in the meantime I am looking forward to cool evenings and the scent of wood smoke. Add the intense colors of pumpkins, mums and Indian corn, and fall is a joy of sights and smells.

Mums have replaced annuals in the hayrick planters, followed by seasonal greens for Light Up Night in Somerset November 23. We're planning another small flower show in November, a great time to enjoy the creativity of our members. Our Christmas wreath sale is an important fund raiser, one we all work hard to make a success. As always, all are encouraged to help and share the camaraderie of some very wonderful friends.

The holidays will be upon us, whether we are ready or not. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's will all pass, leaving us to snuggle in for another Somerset County winter. Enjoy the time spent with family and loved ones and cherish these moments.

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CONSERVATION

Recycling Junk Mail

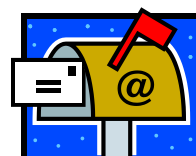
Junk mail pollutes our mailboxes and the environment. Reduce junk mail by calling the companies directly, or visit CatalogChoice.org to get on a "do not mail" list. Here are some good ideas for turning junk mail into treasures from earth911.com:

Use shredded paper as mulch or packing material.

Cut the corner from envelopes. Then snip another tiny piece from the triangle tip to create a small funnel to use to refill small containers, like salt or pepper.

Make small gift bags using a pattern from junkmailgems.com, then click on blog.

Make paper beads from catalog pages. Go to thejunkwave.com and click on the blog for instructions.



HORTICULTURE

Christmas Cactus

If you are nurturing a new Christmas cactus for the November flower show challenge, consider these suggestions, which also apply if you plan to exhibit a mature plant. The key to getting Christmas cactus to flower during the holiday season is proper light exposure, correct temperatures and limited watering. Because this plant is thermo-photoperiodic, it will set buds when day length is about equal to night length and when the temperature drops to 50 to 60 degrees F for several weeks.

Soil: Well-drained soil is a must for Christmas cactus. When planting your plugs, use a commercially packaged potting mix for succulent plants or mix your own. The ideal soil for Christmas cactus is composed of equal parts of garden loam amended with 1/8th part dehydrated cow manure, leaf mold and clean coarse builders' sand. Some sources simply suggest three parts potting soil to one part sand or potting medium.

Light: Christmas cactus can adapt to low light, but more abundant blooms are produced on plants exposed to filtered high light intensity. However, in the fall plants need 12-13 hours of total darkness to set new buds. Some gardeners put them in a closet or unused bathroom each night so they get absolutely no artificial light. During the day place your plants in a sunny location. If you want to grow it in a south or west window, shade the plant with glass or net curtains, but no light diffusion is needed on the north or east.

Temperature: Christmas cactus prefers cool temperatures around 50 degrees, give or take, during the fall when they are setting buds. The rest of the year they prefer 60-80 degrees. Some gardeners keep them in their cool basement during the fall, where it is also dark at night. Remember

that the plant must receive light during the day while remaining cool.

Water: Normally, when fall first arrives, water the plant only well enough to prevent wilting. Give the plant no water during the month of October. Cautiously resume light watering in late October, but don't saturate to the roots or the stems will get flabby from over watering. If the atmosphere is dry, place pot on a tray of pebbles kept moist. These are tropical cacti that like humidity, so feel free to mist with distilled water.

Fertilizer: Feed with 20-20-20 houseplant fertilizer several times a year but never during the fall when plants are trying to set buds.

Winter: After plant is finished blooming, let it rest by withholding water for six weeks. When new growth appears, top-dress with fresh soil and resume watering to keep soil fairly moist. Re-pot judiciously because a Christmas cactus prefers to be pot-bound.

Next Summer: Plants can be moved outdoors, but keep them in a shady or semi-shady location because direct sunlight can burn the leaves. When it's time to bring the plants back inside in the fall, slowly adjust the plants to life indoors by gradually increasing the number of hours they spend indoors each day. The length of time between watering will vary with the air temperature, amount of light, rate of growth and relative humidity. During the summer it's usually best to water so that the soil is continually moist but well drained.

Shaping: Prune the Christmas cactus a month or so after blooming. This will encourage the plant to branch out, especially after a period of "rest" has been granted. It will not look very pretty after the blossoms have faded. Some gardeners wait until March, when new growth begins, to prune. Pg 2

CLUB NEWS

Meeting Place and Schedule

Monday, September 9, we returned to the Dressler Center at the corner of Harrison and Tayman Avenues for our monthly meetings. For many club members it felt like coming home. We are grateful to Laurel Arts for their support.

Tuesday, October 15, 11:00 am is our fall luncheon at Café Fratelli. The cost is \$15. It's not too late to register for the dried arrangement for the Amanda Dowie Dried Flower Contest, so contact Arlene if you're interested. We'll have large gourds from the Springs auction for sale for \$2 along with broom corn for \$2 a bunch for your harvest decorating.

Monday, November 11, 11:00 am at the Dressler Center. We will be wiring pinecones and bows for our Christmas wreath sale late in November.

Monday, December 9, 11:00 am is our annual Christmas covered-dish luncheon at the Grace United Methodist Church, 320 Felgar Road.

Johnstown Summer Flower Show

"The Literary Gardener" was presented by the Garden Club of Johnstown August 16-17 at the Cambria County Library on Main Street. The theme was cleverly appropriate for the library location, and well-known book titles were creatively interpreted in flowers. This Standard Flower Show was free and open to the public. Among the judges were Somerset Garden Club experts Nancy Bittner, Sheila Croushore and Sandy Pritchard, and several of our other members also attended.



Flight 93 Chapel Beautification

In July several area garden clubs joined forces to weed, trim and mulch the beds at the the Flight 93 Chapel on Stutzmantown Road, including the Children's Peace Garden and the Heroes' Garden featuring a dark obelisk monument entitled "Crew of Flight 93." On a beautiful morning in early September club members met under Jane Sotomayor's direction to weed and plant mums in time for the memorial observance of September 11. Afterward workers enjoyed a delicious Italian lunch at Fratelli's in Somerset.



Early arrivals and Jane Sotomayor, committee chair, prepare for a summer morning of weeding and pruning with friends from neighboring garden clubs.



Manicured Heroes' Garden, featuring the United Airlines' "Crew of Flight 93" memorial.

On September 4, the following club gardeners met to weed, trim and plant at Flight 93 Chapel: Arlene, Barb, Darryl, Eleanor, Jane, Linda D. and Marge, plus Clare from Bedford.



Children's Peace Garden



NATURE

Enjoying Autumn Birds

Inexperienced backyard birders may think autumn is a bad time to attract birds, but in fact attracting autumn birds can be a fantastic opportunity to see both migrant species and arriving winter residents. By attracting these birds, birders can not only enjoy a backyard fall flock but also see passing migrants they might not see at other times.

It is a popular bird-feeding myth that leaving bird feeders up during fall migration will stop birds from migrating, condemning them to a cold death as winter sets in. In reality, feeders give migrating birds an easy and convenient spot to refuel on their long journey, and offering foods high in fat and oil will help tired birds replenish their energy reserves in a nutritious way. Suet, black oil sunflower seed and nyjer (thistle) seed are some of the most popular fall bird foods, and leaving leaf litter on the ground will give birds the opportunity to forage for nuts and insects as well.

Trees and shrubs with berries or fruits are another vital source of fall food that will attract autumn birds. Many native fruits, such as spicebush and dogwood, are produced in the fall and are high in fat. By their timing, and because of the high caloric value of fat (9 calories per gram vs. 4 calories for sugar), they are ideally suited to the nutrient needs of migratory birds. Some of these fruits persist into winter, when the high fat content helps keep resident birds warm when the temperature drops. Migration can be thirsty work, particularly as small streams and other natural water sources may dry up and become inaccessible during the last hot days of summer. Providing fresh, clean water in a bird bath will attract autumn birds, but keep the bird bath free of fallen leaves and other debris. Switch to a heated bird bath in late fall as overnight freezes become more common.

Birds need a safe place to rest, whether they're passing through on migration or establishing winter territories. Leave birdhouses up or put up bird roost boxes in early fall to provide safe, comfortable shelter.

[Http://birding.about.com/od/birdhouses/a/birdroostbox.htm](http://birding.about.com/od/birdhouses/a/birdroostbox.htm) gives instructions. Use fall prunings to build a brush pile that augments natural cover. Planting evergreen shrubs and trees will also help provide shelter for birds in every season. These trees are particularly attractive in autumn as deciduous trees are losing their leaves.

Autumn birds face a lot of risks as they migrate long distances, and exhausted birds are more susceptible to predators, illness and injury. Likewise, inexperienced juvenile birds that have not migrated before may not be as aware of the hazards on their journey. Backyard birders can work to keep autumn birds safe by keeping cats away, keeping feeders and baths clean to minimize illness among large migrating flocks, and using multiple techniques to prevent window collisions, including encouraging a "Lights Out" campaign for commercial buildings during peak fall migration.

While providing for birds' basic needs of food, water and shelter is the best way to attract them to your backyard, there are simple steps that can bring an even larger, more varied fall flock to your door. Offer a wide variety of foods to attract migrating birds with different tastes. Plan bird-friendly landscaping with flowers and foliage that last well into autumn. Add artificial color to your yard with a gazing ball or yard sculptures to attract birds' attention. By taking steps to meet birds' basic needs in autumn, backyard birders can not only enjoy attracting fall birds but also be satisfied knowing they've helped birds survive their annual migration so they are sure to return in spring.



Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns. ~ George Eliot

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST



December Events at Phipps Conservatory

Go Natural ... With Arrangements, December 1 at 1:30 pm. Arrangements made from pine, moss, berries, and natural materials you can find readily. With an addition of a few flowers, you are good to go through the holiday season!

Conifer Identification in Winter, December 7 at 1:30 pm. Learn how to identify winter trees by their cones, branches and shapes.

Taking Care of Your Christmas Flowers, December 15 1:30 pm. It's not just poinsettias! Learn about a wide range of holiday plants and what you can do to help them last through the winter. For more information see www.phipps.conservatory.org.

Wineries Tour with Johnstown Club, Wednesday, October 2. Meet at Glades Pike Winery at 11:00 am for the first tasting; bus will then take us to Stone Villa Winery and Greendance at Sandhill Berry Farms. Garden tour included. Club will pay for bus and tastings, but bring your lunch or buy it on your own at Sandhill.

Club Christmas Flower Show in November

We will hold a Small-Standard Flower Show Saturday, November 16, from 10:00 to 4:00 and Sunday the 17th from 1:00 to 4:00 at the Berlin Borough Building in conjunction with the Pius Springs Women's Club Christmas Home Tour. The theme is "Rejoice." Design categories include "The Little Drummer Boy" (creative miniature design), "Joy to the World" (creative small design) and "We Three Kings" (a parallel style design). Many horticulture categories are also available. You may sign up at the October meeting or contact Sheila.



Our club lost three great women recently, and we all mourn their absence. Grace Carey was well known around Somerset, including as a waitress in several restaurants. A past president 1998-99, she worked very hard for the club, especially chairing our Christmas wreath sale. Grace was an intrepid, inexhaustible gatherer of the perfect pine cone.

Ethel Rayman chaired the Horticulture Therapy committee, her caring nature given a great outlet working with residents at a local nursing home. She loved to cook and bake cakes, and she had lovely gardens at her home. She was a past winner of the Amanda Dowie contest and flower show designs. Ethel is remembered for her patient, loving nature and for her faithfulness in her club affiliations, from our garden club to the Eastern Star.

Helen Stockwell joined the garden club in 2009 and soon became a favored friend to so many. She chaired the newsletter committee from 2010 until she became too ill to continue. Helen was a gifted artist, using paint and pencil to create many cherished works. Her delightfully blunt demeanor (what you saw was what you got) sometimes hid a generous, loving, funny personality. Helen enjoyed cooking, gardening, canning and spending time with loved ones.

We will miss all these remarkable women, as will all who knew them. It is with true regret we say good-bye.

"They who go feel not the pain of parting; it is they who stay behind that suffer." - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Newsletter Deadlines

Fall Issue	September 15
Winter Issue	December 15
Spring Issue	March 15
Summer Issue	June 15

Email articles to Linda DeLia at signoradelia@comcast.net

Members Involved on District and State Level

We all know how much work our members do to make our club the wonderful organization it is. Some may not realize the energy expended on the district and state level. Sheila Croushore is district assistant director, plus she is responsible for the environmental/conservation club program. Arlene Blissell is the horticulture therapy chair. Nerita Brant is the nominating chair and the parliamentarian. Jane Sotomayor chairs the hospitality and ways and means committees. Nancy Bittner chairs the district flower show schedule committee.

On the state level Nerita Brant is the financial secretary. Jane Sotomayor is the chaplain and chairs the memorial and historic gardens/arboreta committee; in addition, Jane is the alternate state chair for District VI. Nancy Bittner is the flower show evaluation chair. Judy Rach is the investment chair, and John Sotomayor is the investment appointed member. Sheila Croushore is the co-chair of the Laurel Highlands Council and chairs the youth activities/Girl Scout committee, preschool through grade 6.

We all owe them our gratitude, for without such dedicated volunteers our individual clubs could not begin to enjoy the success we do. We appreciate their willingness to devote time and effort on the district and state levels.



Scholarships

Our scholarship recipient this year is Michael Ringler, a graduate of Salisbury-Elk Lick High School and currently enrolled at Frostburg State University. His studies include a major in biology, with a minor in forestry. This is Michael's third scholarship of \$500. We also donated \$500 to the GCFP for their program.



Autumn Offering

I shall be Autumn
this Halloween,
with leaf draped skirt, and folds of
boysenberry velvet wine
flowing to the ground.

Brown stained face,
eyes rimmed in gold,
nails dripping sunset,
a crown of twigs
to cover my head.

You may gather from me
the spring of my youth,
my summer of maturity,
and hold onto with me
the solace of these days
of remembering
before the frost.

~ Judith A. Lawrence

