

The Garden Clippings

Somerset Garden Club

2014



President's Message

By Arlene Blissell

"Gardening is the purest of human pleasures." Francis Bacon and I certainly agree on that sentiment because I thoroughly enjoy my hours spent working in the garden. I believe being in contact with the soil is a primitive impulse, one which I have no intention of denying myself. After this severe winter I won't complain about hot weather, if it shows up at all in Somerset County. I have my fingers crossed on this one.

Maybe the severe cold of the past winter accounts for the pure beauty of my early summer flowers. The bearded iris were spectacular, as were my peonies. I hope the day lilies, echinacea and other summer blooms follow suit. My containers of annuals are especially lovely this year, and I am getting so much pleasure from the combinations I chose. I'm only sorry I can't enter them in our cancelled flower show.

I am waiting to see the first lightning bug, a true harbinger of summer. My hope is that all our members will enjoy these warm days and carry the memories into the cooler months that will follow soon enough.



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HORTICULTURE

Meet the Allium Family

Vegetables in the *Allium*, or lily, genus include onions, shallots, leeks, scallions, garlic and the herb chives. These vegetables and herbs all contain "organosulfur compounds" and have been shown to possess antioxidant properties that make them protective against health conditions like heart disease and cancer.

While *Allium* vegetables don't contain significant amounts of vitamins or minerals, they are a good source of allyl sulfides, compounds that may help lower blood pressure and hinder tumor growth. They also contain saponins that may prevent tumors and reduce cholesterol.

A particularly important nutrient in *Allium* vegetables is quercetin. This anti-inflammatory antioxidant may benefit people with

inflammatory conditions like arthritis. People who have arthritis, especially rheumatoid arthritis, have fluid between their joints that contains a significant amount of tumor necrosis factor (TNF), a highly inflammatory chemical. In studies, quercetin was able to limit the inflammatory effects of TNF, which is why these vegetables are believed to help prevent and treat arthritis. Quercetin has also been shown to reverse some age-related memory loss.

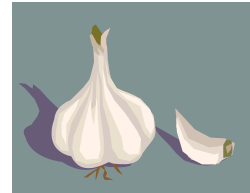
On the negative side, if you suffer from migraines, you may want to steer clear of onions, which contain an amino acid that triggers migraines in some people. If bad breath is a problem for you, cutting down on garlic and onions may help. These *Allium* vegetables contain smelly compounds that get absorbed into your bloodstream and exhaled from your lungs for hours after you eat them raw. People who suffer from irritable bowel syndrome should be careful about eating onions and garlic, as they are common IBS trigger foods and may lead to discomfort after eating them.



Everyone in Somerset County knows how to grow onions, planting the sets from late March to early April, but have you ever tried growing garlic? Garlic is always grown by planting the individual cloves from late September until November for harvest the following summer. Spring-planted garlic, on the other hand, is unlikely to form cloves.

There are two different types of garlic, soft neck and hard neck. Soft neck has several layers of many cloves, the type found in the grocery store. The hard neck types produce large bulbs with fewer, very large cloves, available at the Somerset Farmers' Market. This type puts up a stiff stalk in

the center that should be removed when it starts to curl to direct the energy to growing large bulbs. Garlic requires a pH of 6.8, so you will probably need to add lime; it also prefers well-drained soil. Mulch with wheat straw to discourage weeds, and side dress with a balanced fertilizer in the early spring next year. Don't water after the first of June. Harvest when half the leaves show some yellowing, but don't leave bulbs in the ground too long or they will split their wrappers.



Hang in a warm, dry place with leaves intact to cure for about a month, then clip tops to 1" and trim roots. Store at around 60 degrees in a dark dry place; even an out-of-the-way closet in the house works well, but refrigeration will break dormancy and promote growth.

CLUB NEWS

Summer Meeting Schedule and Location

Monday, July 14, at noon our joint picnic with Johnstown at the picnic pavilion of Trinity Lutheran Church on Tayman Avenue (route 281 S). Bring your fruit or vegetable salad by 11:30, as well as your best annual examples in clear bottles. Horticulture presentation by Fran Lansberry.

JULY FLOWER SHOW HAS BEEN CANCELLED BECAUSE OF SECURITY REASONS

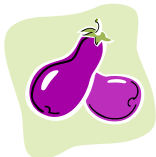
Monday, August 11, club picnic at Linda Musser's lake lot. Business meeting at 11:00; lunch at noon. Program on creating framed succulent planter.

Monday, September 8, 11:00 am, Dressler Center, Tayman and Harrison. Program: Bernie Barron.

CONSERVATION – Mulching the Summer Garden

The best time-saving measure a gardener can take is applying mulch. This goes for every garden site, from vegetable garden to flower bed. Mulched gardens are healthier, more weed free and more drought-resistant than unmulched gardens, so you'll spend less time watering, weeding and fighting pest problems.

Organic mulches include formerly living material, such as chopped leaves, straw, grass clippings, compost, wood chips, shredded bark, sawdust, pine needles and even paper. Inorganic mulches include gravel, stones and black plastic. Both types discourage weeds, but organic mulches also improve the soil as they decompose. Inorganic mulches don't break down and enrich the soil, but under certain circumstances they're the mulch of choice. For example, black plastic warms the soil and radiates heat during the night, keeping heat-loving vegetables like eggplant and tomatoes cozy and vigorous.



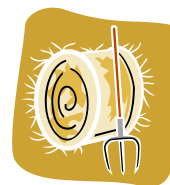
Lay organic mulch down on soil that is already weeded, creating a thick enough layer to discourage new weeds from coming up through it. Spread a 4- to 6-inch layer of mulch to completely discourage weeds in full sun, 2-3 inches in shade.

If you have trees on your property, shredding fallen leaves creates a nutrient-rich mulch for free. A lawn mower with a bagger will collect leaves and cut them into the perfect size for mulching. Nitrogen-rich clippings are an especially good choice for mulching vegetable gardens. Your vegetables will thank you for the nitrogen boost!

Despite what you may have heard, using pine-needle mulch will not make your soil significantly more acid. Wood chips aren't a great idea for vegetable and annual flower beds, though, since you'll be digging these beds every year, and the chips get in the way.



Another great mulch for the vegetable garden is straw, salt hay or weed-free hay. It looks good and has most of the benefits of the other mulches: retaining soil moisture, keeping down weeds and adding organic matter to the soil when it breaks down. But be sure the hay you use is weed and seed free, or you'll just be making trouble for your garden. And don't pull hay or straw up to the stems of vegetables or the trunks of fruit trees, or you'll be inviting slug and rodent damage.



Drawbacks: straw looks great, but it's expensive and can contain so many seeds that you have to weed out foot-high oat plants for most of the summer. Grass clippings from a late-spring mowing can result in grass growing throughout your vegetable garden. Leaves can blow away. Black plastic mulch can yield good results, but it's a bear to put down and keep down when the wind is blowing. Also it doesn't let rainwater into the soil, and at the end of the season there's a lot of plastic for the landfill, which is not a good thing.

Nonetheless, university field tests have shown that mulch can increase yields by as much as 30 percent, so it's worth thinking through the options.

Mulch Tips

Keep mulch at least an inch away from plant stems to avoid rot and fungus problems.

Leave at least half your grass clippings on the lawn. They are an important source of nutrients.

Clippings used as garden mulch should be sun-dried for a day or so. Do not use clippings from lawns treated with herbicides or toxic pest controls.

Use only leaves that have been aged at least nine months. This allows the growth-inhibiting phenols to be leached out.

Secure plastic mulch with Earth Staples. Cover the entire row before planting, and then cut planting holes as needed. You can also cut the plastic in half lengthwise, and snuggle it up near the plants from each side.

Beneath the mulch, apply a nitrogen-rich fertilizer. Organic mulch, especially leaves and wheat straw, can rob the soil of nitrogen as it is decomposing.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Somerfest July 18-20 at Laurel Arts on Tayman Avenue. Note we have cancelled our Club Flower Show. The tent would not be secure enough overnight.

Farmers' Markets in Somerset, Ligonier and Springs are open Saturday mornings all summer into fall.

Phipps Conservatory Summer Flower Show takes you on a grand journey, as small-scale trains wind through summer blooms throughout the glasshouse and the whimsical miniature world of Garden Railroad takes center stage. Featuring a variety of imaginative railroad displays enhanced by flowers, plants and interactive features, this exhibit brings the wonder of childhood to all ages.

Summer Flower Show runs through Oct. 5 from 9:30 am to 5 pm daily and until 10 pm on Fridays. Admission is \$15 for adults; \$14 for seniors and students; \$11 for children 2–18. Members and kids under 2 enter free.

Greensburg Garden Club will present a flower show July 11 and 12 at Redstone. They have a butterfly release on August 5, which Arlene says is really cool!

Annual District VI Meeting will be held September 12 at Antiochian Village in Bolivar, near Ligonier.

The Gardener

By Robert Louis Stevenson
A Child's Garden of Verses, 1885

*The gardener does not love to talk.
He makes me keep the gravel walk;
And when he puts his tools away,
He locks the door and takes the key.*

*Away behind the currant row,
Where no one else but cook may go,
Far in the plots, I see him dig,
Old and serious, brown and big.*

*He digs the flowers, green, red, and blue,
Nor wishes to be spoken to.
He digs the flowers and cuts the hay,
And never seems to want to play.*

*Silly gardener! Summer goes,
And winter comes with pinching toes,
When in the garden bare and brown
You must lay your barrow down.*

*Well now, and while the summer stays,
To profit by these garden days.
O how much wiser you would be
To play at Indian wars with me!*



NATURE

Attracting Hummingbirds

Now that summer is here, it's time to welcome Pennsylvania's smallest bird, the ruby-throated hummingbird, the only hummer found east of the Mississippi. Named for the humming sound made by their wings in flight, these birds are renowned for their small size, amazing energetic feats and iridescent beauty.

In September hummingbirds migrate to Mexico and Central American for the winter, flying nonstop for 600 miles across the Gulf of Mexico and returning to Pennsylvania in mid April or early May.

Male hummers mate with multiple females, leaving each female to build the nest, lay two eggs, incubate them and raise the young alone. During the breeding season, ruby-throated hummingbirds are found in deciduous and mixed deciduous-coniferous forests, woodland clearings and edges, parks and suburban gardens. They often are found near water, preferring areas where they can find nectar-bearing flowers, with trees and shrubs nearby for shelter and perching.

Hummingbirds are specially adapted for eating nectar from flowers, having long beaks and long tongues for consuming the nectar. Hummingbirds lack a well-developed sense of smell and are drawn to flowers by their color instead of their scent. Preferred hummingbird flowers are red, orange and pink. The tiny birds can maneuver easily around flowers because they fly backwards as well as forwards and can hover in midair. This hovering ability makes it easy for them to feed from flowers. As the birds get nectar from plants, the plants in turn get pollinated by hummingbirds.

The factor that most often determines whether hummingbirds are found in a particular area is the availability of food. By planting sources of food and providing bird feeders, you can supplement local food supplies for hummingbirds. Your plantings should include a variety of plants that flower from

May through early September. Hummingbirds are attracted to large clusters of flowers, so group the plantings so that they are conspicuous to the birds.

Once you have established your hummingbird garden, a great way to attract the birds to a specific location is to provide a hummingbird feeder designed to dispense a sugar-water solution with a 1 to 4 ratio of sugar to water. Dissolve sugar in water and let cool before hanging. Do not add food coloring! Change the solution weekly, rinsing the feeder well with plenty of hot water before adding new syrup, which can be stored in the fridge.

Hummingbirds will add precious, glittering jewels to your summer garden.

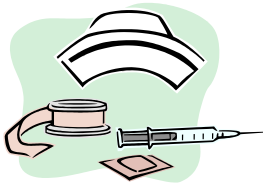


New Member Faye Girdany

Faye Girdany has lived in Somerset for 25 years, the longest she has lived anywhere. Thanks to her father's career in the Air Force, Faye was raised in the military and has lived in Texas, Las Vegas, Virginia, North and South Carolina; she even lived in Germany for five years and in Italy for six months. Since her father's family was from West Mifflin, he wanted to end his tour of duty serving near Pittsburgh. He served his final posting as a military recruiter in Bedford, where he retired; Faye's parents still live there.

It was during her senior year that their parents moved Faye and her two younger sisters to Bedford. After graduating in 1982, she attended cosmetology school and worked briefly as a hairdresser in Virginia, but she always wanted to be a nurse. When she moved to Somerset in 1987, Faye knew there was an LPN program in town and

wanted very much to attend. She graduated from the one-year LPN program in March 1990 and had her son that November. She entered the RN program at Allegany College of Maryland in Somerset in the fall of 1991 and graduated in December 1993. She later went back to school to pursue a dual degree in 2007, graduating in 2011 from Carlow University in Pittsburgh with a Bachelors/Masters in Nursing - Family Nurse Practitioner.



Faye started working as a nurse at Somerset Hospital when she graduated from LPN school and continued for 22 years, loving every minute of it. “Nursing is and has always been my calling, so to speak,” Faye says. “I have always enjoyed taking care of people and things, plants and animals.” She currently volunteers weekly at the Somerset Free Clinic that serves adults who have no insurance.

Faye has two beautiful children to a previous marriage, daughter Ashley, nearly 28, and son Tanner, 24. Ashley works at the Bedford Springs Hotel and is attending the University of Phoenix online in a program for a Bachelor of Science in Addiction. She also has experience with photography and has worked for Lifetouch Photography as well as doing private photo shoots. Ashley loves children. Tanner attended the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown for two years and went on to study taxidermy. He works at Kenny Ross Chevrolet in Somerset full time and plies his craft in his taxidermy studio on the side. [editor’s note: perfect, prophetic name for a taxidermist!] Tanner enjoys hunting and hockey.



Faye’s husband David is an orthopedic surgeon for Somerset Orthopedics at the Wheeler Building. He is passionate about baseball and can challenge most anyone to trivia. They have a second home in Cooperstown, NY, home to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Faye has recently started taking piano lessons. “Yes, at my age, and I love it! I have always wanted to do it and began about six months ago. I am also learning how to knit again, something I've always wanted to do better. I have also started studying about wines. Next on my list I'm going to learn how to speak Italian, or at least try!”

Faye is most interested in perennials. Although all flowers are beautiful to her, she thinks perennials talk a different language: “They come back to us year after year and speak! Their voice is spoken through the soil as they come back faithfully every year.” A favorite is *Paeonia*, the peonies we all know and love, a flowering plant native to Asia, southern Europe and western North America.



“I've known about the Garden Club for a while now,” Faye explains, “through my dear friend Marge, who encouraged me to join. I'm glad she did because I've met lovely ladies, and everyone has been very kind. I hope to learn more about horticulture and gardening to broaden my own hues and to lend a hand where I can. So much to look forward to in gardening and friendship!”

Gardening is cheaper than therapy -- and you get tomatoes. Author Unknown

May Plant Sale

Our annual plant and yard sale the Saturday before Mother's Day was a success, even though it rained, as it always seems to. We had slightly fewer plants for sale this year, but we nonetheless earned approximately \$1,100 for our uptown planting projects, which we completed before Memorial Day on the Diamond and around town.



The yard sale is always popular.



President Arlene and Sheila Croushore arrange the annuals.



Luckily the sale was under cover this rainy morning.



Sheila with Sandi Wirick, chair of this year's sale.



Plenty of choices, both annuals and perennials.

June Meeting: Faerie Garden Theme

Our June meeting featured a delicious lunch of strawberry chicken salad on greens, rolls and homemade cake with broiled pecan/coconut topping, served on a table featuring an enchanted faerie garden. Following was an informative and amusing talk by Shirley Neill on selecting materials and creating our own miniature gardens outdoors.



Luncheon Committee: Culinary faerie artists Linda Musser, Roberta Rager, Jackie Funk and Deb Stutzman



A sweet fairy plays her fiddle in the faerie garden.



Master Gardener Shirley Neill demonstrates how to create our own miniature faerie garden.



Stunning examples of our members' horticulture. Bring more to our July picnic with Johnstown!

RECIPE FOR JACKIE'S BROILED CAKE TOPPING

Combine 7 Tblsp. butter, 7 Tblsp. evaporated milk and one C. brown sugar in a saucepan and heat just to dissolve sugar. Cool slightly before pouring over cooled yellow cake topped with toasted pecans and coconut. Broil several minutes until thoroughly bubbly.

**Cape May County's Flower Show in Ocean City, NJ:
"O, for a Book and a Shady Nook."**

While vacationing in Ocean City in early June, Linda DeLia and her husband Tom once again enjoyed this south Jersey garden club's standard flower show in the Music Pier on Ocean City's boardwalk. Here are examples of their members' artistry.



"Ah, summer, what power you have to make us suffer and like it." - Russell Baker



The following are corrections to the Yearbook:

Nancy Bittner email: cutlass@wpia.net

Joyce Brant new address: 118 Dusty Trail Lane Berlin 15530

Mary Alice Mankamayer phone: 267-5709

Ellie Peltier address: 319 N Kimberly Ave Somerset PA 15501. Her phone is 341-8919

Roberta Rager phone: 443-3428 or 228-8309

FINAL NOTE: see www.nwf.org/phototips to learn new tricks for photographing stunning nature images.

Newsletter Deadlines

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

Email articles to Linda DeLia at signoradelia@comcast.net