

The Garden Clippings

Somerset Garden Club

2015



President's Message

By Arlene Blissell

January is named after the Roman god Janus, always depicted as having two heads. He looked back at the old year and forward to the new one.

Our club can look back with pride and review the past year. We planted and tended flowers and spent time making Somerset a better place, including our Habitat house. Over the past months we worked with many groups in the area, including the dog park, Somerset Inc., Beautify the Borough, the Laurel Art Center and Meadowview Nursing home in Berlin. Our programs were varied enough to interest many of us. A favorite program was Bernie Barron from Seven Springs and her tales of decorating the resort over the last thirty years. Creating a succulent planter at our August picnic was satisfying and certainly had us digging in the dirt.

We enjoyed our October luncheon at Crazy Alice's and tried our hands at dried arrangements for the Amanda Dowie Competition. Before we knew it, we were wiring pinecones and bows onto Christmas wreaths for our annual sale and enjoying our Christmas luncheon at the Inn at Georgian Place. Where did the year go?

Looking ahead to 2015 promises more work, fun and enjoyment. In garden club we are active enough for everyone to find something they love to do, or something they want to learn more about. Let's make the New Year another one to savor successes, to pass on our knowledge and to help create a better, more beautiful world. In the meantime, stay warm and be safe while weathering another Somerset winter.

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CLUB NEWS: Winter Meeting Schedule/Locations

Monday, January 12. 11:00 am, Dressler Art Center. Program: Somerset Historical Center: Maple Syrup. **Hostesses:** Jill Walker, Nerita Brant, Shirley Brant, Elizabeth Brant

Monday, February. 11:00 am, Dressler Art Center. Program: David Blough of Somerset Floral. **Host/Hostesses:** Nancy Bittner, Jane Sotomayor, John Sotomayor

Monday, March. 11:00 am, Dressler Art Center. Program: Create a Terrarium. **Hostesses:** Jean Ogburn, Barb Witchie, Tish Will, Sandi Wirick

NOTE: Executive Board Meetings will be held at 10:00 am before each meeting upstairs at Dressler Art Center.

Seeking Trash to Treasure Artists

At this year's GCFP convention in Erie, April 19-21, the Trash to Treasure Contest theme is "Lake Effect." Think Loch Ness Monsters, mermaids, fishing, deep snow ... let your imagination go crazy. Please have your entries to Arlene no later than March 1, 2015.

1. Each entry must be no more than 30" wide and 30" deep.
2. Each entry must weigh less than 15 pounds.
3. Each entry must use materials that are repurposed, reused, recycled or can be recycled.
4. Each entry may be the work of more than one person.
5. Each district must select one entry to represent it; selection method is left to the district.
6. Each entry must include a 3 x 5 card with the title of your creation and a list of the materials on the front of the card. On the back of the card, list your district, your garden club name and your own name/s and mailing address.

Please address questions to Arlene Blissell or Diane Buchart at 717-852-0922 or email at buchart1@gmail.com

Fall Luncheon Features Amanda Dowie Dried Arrangement Competition and Gourd Art

The Somerset Garden Club held their annual Fall Luncheon on October 8 at Crazy Alice's Restaurant on the Diamond. The festive dining room was seasonally decorated, including centerpieces created by the luncheon committee, chaired by Eleanor Schrock. Miniature succulents were "planted" atop unusual varicolored pumpkins, two adorning each table, thanks to the talented efforts of Arlene Blissell, Sheila Croushore, Linda DeLia and Daryl Jones.

The Amanda Dowie Dried Arrangement Competition has been a feature of the fall luncheon for the past 20 years. Winner of the first prize of \$50 was Sandy Upor. Daryl Jones placed second and Linda Musser placed third. Honorable mention designs were submitted by Arlene Blissell, Joyce Brant, Linda DeLia and Jean Ogburn.

Amanda Dowie was a vigorous and faithful member of the Garden Club for over 30 years after she and husband Bob retired to Somerset from Pittsburgh in the late 1950s. Both died in 1994 at the age of 100. Mrs. Dowie maintained a large workshop in her basement where she taught friends how to design arrangements created from natural dried materials she had found in nature.



Daryl Jones, Sandy Upor and Linda Musser show their winning designs for the Amanda Dowie Dried Arrangement Competition

After lunch Barbara Trent gave an educational presentation on gourds, emphasizing their long history. She described various practical and decorative usages, from birdhouses to musical instruments. She also illustrated her talk with artistic examples of gourds she has created.

Barbara has exhibited at Mountain Crafts Days, Ligonier Days and the Springs Folk Festival.



Barbara Trent lecturing on gourds

CONSERVATION: Recycle Your Christmas Tree

Your holiday tree doesn't have to end up at the local landfill at the end of the season—make the most of your tree by recycling it.



Give it to the birds. Stand your tree about 10 feet from the bird feeder or in a corner of your garden as a shelter for the birds. Decorate branches with fruit slices, pine cones smeared with peanut butter, seed cakes and suet bags. To prevent the tree from blowing away in the winter winds, attach it to a stable support with wire or twine.

Create winter mulch. Cut the boughs off and use them as protective mulch around perennials and small shrubs. Remove branches in the spring.

Compost or chip it. Many communities pick up discarded holiday trees, then compost or grind trees into wood chips for mulch. Contact the Somerset Borough office to check.

Make potpourri. Dry the branches, then remove and crumble the needles. Mix needles with cinnamon sticks or whole cloves, place in a bowl and enjoy.



Create a winter display. Arrange branches in a large container near your door, porch or other focal point. Add other decorations, such as dried grasses, bright dogwood and berries, to enjoy until spring.

JANUARY

The days are short,
The sun a spark,
Hung thin between
The dark and dark.

Fat snowy footsteps
Track the floor.
Milk bottles burst
Outside the door.

The river is
A frozen place
Held still beneath
The trees of lace.

The sky is low.
The wind is gray.
The radiator
Purrs all day.

— John Updike

Christmas Finery Adorns Longwood Gardens

Linda DeLia and her family visited Longwood Gardens again over Christmas. This year's theme was "Birds."



NATURE: Winter Birds

As we bid farewell to Christmas for another year and settle in for a western Pennsylvania winter, let us consider for a moment the European robin, the little red-breasted bird so closely associated with Christmas in England that it's traditionally called

the Christmas robin. This colorful creature is often depicted on their festive greetings cards and Christmas gift wrapping. It's hardly surprising that the English cherish this pretty, cheerful bird as part of their Christmas festivities because he is so colorful, and most other birds have migrated to warmer climates. For us, the larger American robins are the first birds of early spring, returning in late February or March.



In the meantime we can enjoy our many winter feathered friends. The Dark-eyed Junco, commonly called the Snowbird because of its sudden appearance around winter bird feeding stations, is a member of the sparrow family.



The Dark-eyed Junco is a common winter visitor to many of our backyards. In some regions, this bird is resident year round, but in other regions of the US, including ours, their arrival signals the beginning of the winter season. These charming northern birds migrate further south, arriving in their winter quarters between mid-September and November and departing to breed from mid-March onwards. Almost all are gone by the end of April or so.

In winter, juncos are familiar in and around towns, and in many places they are the most common birds at feeders. Juncos prefer to feed on the ground, eating seeds of grasses and weeds.



The male Northern Cardinal is perhaps responsible for getting more people to open up a field guide than any other bird. They're a perfect combination of familiarity, conspicuousness and style, a shade of red you can't take your eyes off. Even the brown females sport a sharp crest and warm red accents. Cardinals don't migrate, and they don't molt into a dull plumage, so they're still breathtaking in winter's snowy backyards. In summer, their sweet whistles are one of the first sounds of the morning.



The active little Downy Woodpecker is a familiar sight at backyard feeders and in parks and woodlots. An often acrobatic forager, this black-and-white woodpecker is at home on tiny branches or balancing on slender plant galls, sycamore seed balls and suet feeders. Male and female Downy Woodpeckers divide up where they look for food in winter. Males feed more on small branches and weed stems, and females feed on larger branches and trunks. Downies and their larger lookalike, the Hairy Woodpecker, are one of the first identification challenges that beginning bird watchers master.

Keep your eyes open this winter for our charming feathered friends, and keep your feeders filled.

Over-Wintering Succulents

We created succulent planters at our August picnic and many of you bought "succulent pumpkins" at our October luncheon. Let's review how to keep them alive over the winter.

Succulents are considered low-maintenance plants, even when grown indoors. The leaves and stems hold water as an adaptation to growing in arid areas. Plants grown on frames or in pots outdoors can be brought indoors during the winter to protect the cold-temperature sensitive succulent varieties. They make good houseplants for year-round growing inside.

Suspend feeding when the plants stop growing for the year and go dormant, which occurs when the temperatures drop and the light level falls. Too much fertilizer causes succulents to develop soft leaves, which are prone to rot. Let's hope we haven't been giving them too much food throughout the fall.

Place the dormant succulent in an area with at least three to four hours of bright light. Succulents need less light during the winter than when they are actively growing during the summer. Succulents will survive with indirect light during the winter.



The ideal temperature of the room the succulents are in should be 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit

during the winter. A basement can work as long as there is some light. Although many succulents do not tolerate colder temperatures, some will do fine at room temperature as long as it isn't too hot.

Pour water into the top of the succulent container until it drains out the bottom. Water the succulents deeply but less often in the winter. The dormant plants do not use as much water as when they are actively growing. Water the plants only about once every one to two months.

Check the leaves monthly for aphids or mealy bugs, which look like tiny cotton balls. Look under the leaves as well. Move an infested succulent away from other plants. Fill a spray bottle with 3 parts rubbing alcohol mixed with 1 part water and mist it onto the plant to kill the pests. Keep the succulent away from the rest of the plants for a couple of weeks just in case a few of the bugs survive the first spray. Repeat the rubbing alcohol application until all the pests are gone.

In the spring you can move your succulent planter outdoors again. Plant the other succulents in your garden.

Upcoming Events

February 28 to March 8 – Philadelphia Flower Show: Lights, Camera, BLOOM! Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA

March 18 – District VI Meeting, Perkins Restaurant, Johnstown, PA

April 19-21 – GCFP Annual Convention, Baymont Inn, Erie, PA

Christmas Luncheon at the Inn at Georgian Place

Breaking with our tradition of a covered dish luncheon for our Christmas meeting, members and guests celebrated the holidays with a noon tea at Georgian Place. The Inn was festive with colorful Christmas decorations, and Millie Will played Christmas piano music as the group gathered for lunch.

Afterwards, members used masses of greens and flowers to create their own Christmas centerpieces to take home.

Enjoy these pictorial memories of a lovely day.







"I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, "Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again."

— Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*



"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home."

— Edith Sitwell

"If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ode to the West Wind*



Newsletter Deadlines

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

Email articles to Linda DeLia, editor, at signoradelia@comcast.net