

Academy Garden Club Thymes

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY GARDEN CLUB OF LENOX

FEBRUARY 2018

**Tuesday, February 13, 2018
Lenox Academy Building – 7:00 pm**

Program: ROSE PRESENTATION

Speakers: Liz Leonard and Geri Jones

Refreshments Hostesses: Nancy Cowhig and Joan Hajduk



Dear Members,

We have heard of *Christmas in July* - how about *Roses in February*?

That's the treat our wonderful Program Committee has planned for our next meeting. It will be nice to hear from some experts on the care of these beautiful plants. They give us all much joy especially receiving a bouquet on Valentine's Day. However, I have found these fragrant plants to be very needy, and so have many others.

When I first think of roses, I think of their beauty, then I think of their scent, and finally I think of their pests. It will be very refreshing to listen to our speakers share their tips on the feeding and care of these beautiful plants.

Annual Food Drive

In the spirit of Valentine's Day, let us honor our annual food drive.

Our Christmas meeting was a bit unsettled this year due to the weather, and I feel that this is a better time of year to reach out and help our neighbors in need. The food pantries receive many gifts during the Holidays, but winter drags on and so does their need.

With this in mind, please bring something to donate to our February meeting. Dianne Romeo has suggested the following items that are in short supply at the food pantries: mustard, ketchup,

mayo, sugar, salt, Crisco, dish soap, hand soap, deodorant, and personal hygiene products for women.

These might not be the first things that you think of, but they are very necessary items for a home kitchen and to keep household members clean.

Thank you all for your very generous response to our food drive!

Warmly,

Anne

Anne Gannon
President

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Academy Garden Club of Lenox

January 9, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Anne Gannon, president, began the meeting at 7:05 pm with 17 members present. Anne reminded members that we had not done a food drive yet this year and suggested that we bring items to our February meeting. In a message to Anne prior to the meeting, Dianne Romeo said that people using the local food bank need personal hygiene and care products, paper towels, condiments, and laundry soap in addition to food items.

Reports from some of the scholarship recipients are positive and indicate a thriving successful college experience. We look forward to continuing our support of continuing education in the field of horticulture, the environment, and science.

Tjasa Sprague was thanked for arranging a lovely holiday party at Ventfort Hall. 22 members enjoyed a festive evening of delicious and varied appetizers and desserts as well as lively conversations.

Ginny Akabane, treasurer, reported on our expenses, donations, and membership dues. She provided a written report of the following income:

\$60-membership dues, donations at the holiday party \$80, sachets-\$25, and the boxwood workshop-\$250. The following are expenses: \$150- donation to Ventfort Hall, \$250-scholarship, and the boxwood workshop supplies-\$230. The club has a current balance of \$4,807.86.

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Following the business meeting, Anne Dunham presented her workshop on Houseplants in Winter. Anne is a Master Gardener, a member of the Springside Garden Club, and the person responsible for the Pittsfield gardens. The overriding message was that there are millions of ways to garden. Watering is not the only critical action. The soil condition, temperature, location within your home, and humidity are areas that influence houseplants ability to thrive. She recommends using the Massachusetts Home Extension, Wards Nursery, and the Berkshire Botanical Garden as resources. Anne also provided handouts.

Refreshments provided by Janice Brindisi and Theresa Terry were enjoyed as well as conversation with the presenter. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

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HORTICULTURAL COLUMN

By Harriet Wetstone

The end of January into February is a special time for me. It's the time when I realize that it is now still light at five in the afternoon, and that means that soon I can see my houseplants begin to respond to stronger longer lasting light. The mint I always bring in from outside, which has been sulking ever since, begins to take on new growth. My citrus plants, particularly my lime tree, begin to put out fragrant buds. There is light at the end of the dark winter tunnel! And, of course, the new seed catalogues are beginning to pile up! Planting! But, of course, not yet. So instead I begin to daydream about seeds, big seeds, weird seeds, beautiful seeds.

There are 223,300 (estimated, of course) seed-plant species which make up nearly 90 percent of all known plants. About 980 species produce 'naked' seeds (such as the seeds in pine cones); the rest are in ovaries that ripen into some kind of fruit.

Did you know that the largest seed on record (thank you, Wikipedia) is the seed of the Coco de Mer tree (*Lodoicea maldivica*) in the Palm Family?

This seed is about 12 inches long, and can weigh an astonishing 40 pounds! The seed is double-lobed and black and shiny in appearance. The Coco de Mer palm tree is native to the Seychelles Archipelago found in the Indian Ocean. The Coco de Mer tree can grow up to 100 feet with leaves measuring 20 feet long and 12 feet wide. Wow! There is also the Andaman Giant Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) of the Andaman Islands which has a volume of up to 427 cubic inches and weighs about 8 pounds.

Getting down to the more familiar in the category of largest seeds, we have the avocado (*Persea Americana*) which is in the Laurel Family (Lauraceae); the mango (*Mangifera India*) which is in the Sumac Family (Anacardaceae), and the peach (*Prunus persica*) which is in the Rose Family (Rosaceae). I am focusing on seeds here, but the discovery that the avocado is in the Laurel Family, that the mango is in the Sumac Family, and that the peach is in the Rose Family--that was intriguing (hmm, future explorations!).



Traveller's Palm

I can't talk about the largest seed without citing the smallest seeds: certain epiphytic orchids of the tropical rain forest produce the world's smallest seeds, up to 35 million per ounce. One seed weighs about one 35 millionths of an ounce (1/35,000,000) or 0.81 micrograms.

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Some seeds are only about 1/300th of an inch long (85 micrometers). [The resolving power for an unaided human eye with 20-20 vision is just under 0.1 mm.] These seeds have no endosperm and contain underdeveloped embryos. Orchid seeds are dispersed into the air like minute dust particles or single-celled spores, eventually coming to rest in the upper canopy of rain forest trees where they eventually germinate.



Castor Beans

But size is not all, by far! I went in search of beautiful seeds, and found that Castor beans are frequently photographed. The castor bean is a member of the family Euphorbiaceae, as is cassava fruit (*Manifot esculenta*), the rubber tree (*Hevea brasillensis*) and, of all things, ornamental poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*). Like snowflakes, markings on castor bean seeds are unique, no two are alike.



Chinese Lantern

Other beautiful seeds (thank you, www.ecorazzi.com): How about the seeds of *Pysalis Alkekengi*, also known as the Chinese Lantern, or the seeds of the Traveller's Palm (*Ravenala Madagascariensis*) which isn't actually a palm, it is a member of the birds of paradise!



Our Handbook listed "Dinner at Frankie's Restaurant" in March. Molly, the owner, and I settled on Wednesday, March 7th at 6 pm. I need to give her a final headcount by February 23rd. The dinner special is still going on then, but the price has risen to \$25 without tax and tip. I am organizing this event and will send out a blanket note to all members so that I can keep the headcount.

Thanks,
Dianne Romeo