

# Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

**FEBRUARY 2020**

Hello Ladies,

I am excited that it is February, the month in which we can start to feel the days growing longer and watch our house plants responding to having a little more light, and maybe even a little more sun. My jasmine is just now beginning to send out new tendrils.

I am looking forward to our February meeting. -we haven't met since our Holiday Party! We will meet on Tuesday, February 11th, at 6:00 pm. Kathy DeVlyder, member and Master Gardener, will talk to us about Plant Propagation.

Anne Gannon reminds us about the series of workshops offered by the U Mass Extension. Most of them are pretty far away for us, but on April 18th there is a workshop on Native Pollinator Conservation and Biology which is given at UMass in Amherst. Check out [UMassGarden.com](http://UMassGarden.com) for details.

Jan Chague has suggested that we designate February's meeting as the time to bring in a donation for the Lenox Ecumenical Food Pantry. The Pantry is housed at the United Methodist Church of Lenox at 6 Holmes Road and serves Lenox and Lenoxdale. It is open every other Saturday morning, 10 to 11 a.m. Diane Romeo tells us that they prefer monetary donations as they have someone who shops for weekly specials on fresh food. This helps them give out fresh eggs and fruits and vegetables. Checks can be made out to Lenox Food Pantry, or we can pool cash donations and write an Academy Garden Club check. If you wish to bring nonperishable items, I will take care of delivering them to the Food Pantry.

A road trip to the Bulb Show at Smith College in North Hampton has been suggested. The Bulb Show will run from March 2nd to the 22nd, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm. Diane Romeo will be canvassing us for interest in this trip at our February meeting.

So think about if and what day you might be interested in going. It is always a beautiful show, and there are interesting places for lunch as well.

I hope to see you all on February 11th, 6:00 pm!

Harriet Wetstone  
President

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## HORTICULTURAL COLUMN

**By Harriet Wetstone**

I must say, I don't know what I would do without house plants in January and February. I have far too many, and they are all my children! Supposedly one is not supposed to have favorites amongst your children, but I am afraid, hands down, begonias, particularly rhizomatous begonias, are my favorites.



Begonia are terrestrial, occurring in subtropical and tropical moist climates in South and Central America, Africa, and southern Asia. Charles Plumier, a French patron of botany, named the species in honor of Michel Begon, who was a governor of the French colony now known as Haiti. The name was adopted by Linnaeus in 1753. Charles Plumier (1646-1704) was considered one of the most important of the botanical explorers of his time.

There are three types of begonias. The fibrous begonias are the wax wing begonias that can be used as house plants but are often planted outside in the summer, they have shiny leaves, sometimes textured or spotted, and showy sprays of flowers. The tuberous begonias are also grown outside in summer, they are the ones with the fabulous flowers that seem to me to be a cross between roses and gardenias.



But the ones that I really love are the rhizomatous begonias with their literally endless variety of leaf texture and color. The rhizomes are like thick fleshy stems that creep along the ground, so these begonias can be very wide across but tend to not be very tall. Begonias are monoecious, that is, unisexual male and female flowers occurring separately on the same plant. The seeds are said to be among the smallest seeds occurring in nature - it is extremely hard to grow a begonia from seed! But, it is very easy to propagate them from leaf cuttings.

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The variety of leaf color, texture, shape and size is astonishing. Some leaves have intricate patterns in almost any earth tone color, but also red and purple and orange, and multiple tones are also possible. Some are hairy leaved, some are round and shiny, some are star shaped. Leaves range in size from tiny to huge. They are fascinating!

Begonias are actually rather forgiving house plants. They need to be shielded from sun, east or west windows are best. Temperatures need to be above 60 degrees. Begonias need to be moist, but not wet. They need to be watered thoroughly and then not again until dry. Shallow pots are best, and repot only when necessary and then into a just slightly larger pot. And if you prune them in order to keep them in the same pot, just lay the prunings on moist soil and cultivate some new plants!



Thanks to [begonias.org](http://begonias.org), the American Begonia Society, [gardenguides.com](http://gardenguides.com); [logees.com](http://logees.com); the Melbourne Begonia Society, [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) and several more!

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