

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

APRIL 2018

Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 7:00 PM
Lenox Academy Building

Program: *About Begonias*

Speaker: Elizabeth Carey

Refreshments Hostesses:
Nancy Crosson and Anne Mack



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Dear Members,

What a pleasant month we have ahead. Spring has arrived, the clocks have moved forward an hour, and I hope winter will recede into our memory!

Even with the off-chance snowflake, we know that warmer months are upon us.

This month we have the privilege of listening to Elizabeth Carey talk about begonias. Such a versatile plant! The problem with begonias is their reputation as a bit of an “old lady’s” flower, and the familiarity we have with some of these varieties.

That is what is going to be so much fun about this talk! There are just so many varieties of the begonia plant. It can be hard to keep up! From wonderful leaves, to never ending flowering, to shade-loving house plants.....does it end?

This is what we will find out at our upcoming meeting. Aren’t we the lucky ones?

Warmly,

Anne

President
Academy Garden Club of Lenox

HORTICULTURAL COLUMN

By Harriet Wetstone

In the fall, when I was rhapsodic about fall color, I talked about anthocyanin which is a plant compound or phytonutrient responsible for the purples in fall foliage. And now, despite the fact, or maybe because of it, that there are still 14 inches of sparkly white snow on my garden, I am about to wax rhapsodic about planting purple vegetables. This summer I want there to be purples all over my garden, but particularly in my little vegetable patch.



I love this quote: “If I could eat only one color per day, it would be purple.” (Neuroscientist James Joseph at Tufts University’s USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging) Anthocyanin not only gives plant material that rich purple color, it is also said to mop up free radicals, sooth inflammation, fortify the immune system, and improve memory and over-all brain function. Wow!

I started out wanting to know why so many hybridizers are coming out with purple varieties of vegetables, figuring that it was to cater to our ever-hunger for new and different. Who knew purple was better for all of you, not just your eyes! Here is a brief list of veggies available in purple: cauliflower, potatoes, beets, carrots, eggplant, kohlrabi, lettuce, rhubarb, string beans, pea pods, turnips, tomatoes, Belgian endives, kale, and asparagus.

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So what can we know about those purple carrots? According to www.superfoodly.com, carrots were purple before they were orange! There is historical evidence from as early as 900 A.D. that cultivated carrots were purple and yellow in color. The earliest ones date to the areas of present day Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria. Orange didn't show up until the 1500s in northern Europe where it was the result of a genetic mutation.



Purple vegetables vary widely in shades of color, from bright red as in red raspberries, to dark blue, as in the skins of blueberries, and even black, as in the black soybean's seed coating - it all depends on the pH of the plant. Anthocyanins are an indicator of acidity, just like litmus, but they range, not just from pink to blue as does litmus, but from red to purple to blue to green to yellow, depending on how acidic or alkaline the environment. The more acidic the environment, the richer the purple color. It is disappointing that when you cook purple asparagus, or pea pods, or string beans, they turn green, but that doesn't mean that the anthocyanin is gone, only that the acid around the anthocyanin is diluted.

Here are some suggestions for purple planting from the stack of new seed catalogues on my desk: From Baker Creed Heirloom Seeds comes Purple Beauty Pepper, ready in 75 days, producing loads of beautiful bells on compact, bush plants; from Johnny's comes Red Fire sprouting broccoli, sweet and tender, 6-8 inches, bright-purple florets, the most cold-hardy variety for overwintering; and, from Territorial Seed Company comes Romano Purist Bean, ready in 60 days. Everything about this purple Romano bean is purple, including deep violet stems and lilac blossoms.

Also thanks to: www.growtest.org, and <https://cookingstackexchange.org>

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SPRING

TOURS

Lilacland

Pelham, MA

May date to be announced

Facebook.com/LILACLAND/

Private Collection of rare lilacs

Elizabeth Park Conservancy

Hartford, CT

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

<http://elizabethparkct.org/>

Tour the gardens. Lunch at the Café.