

# Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

## **Greetings!**

I doubt that any of us are glad to see the end of summer approaching, although it is nice to have it quieter in town! But I am looking forward to seeing you all at the first meeting of our 32nd season, our Harvest Dinner, September 10, 7:00 pm, at the Academy Building.

Everyone (except the Dessert Committee) is asked to bring a hot or cold covered dish with serving utensils. It will be very helpful if you can indicate whether your dish is vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, etc. Please remember to bring a place setting for yourself.

We have had so much fun with our Paper Bag Raffle that we will do it again. So feel free to bring the odd pot, gadget or trinket which might no longer be welcome at your house but may find a very happy home elsewhere! I am still treasuring my little cantaloupe tea kettle and my bunny planter!

Many thanks to Pat Neri for sending out our emails and for producing the "Academy Garden Club Thymes." She is also hard at work on this year's handbook, getting it ready for distribution at the Harvest Dinner. I am very grateful to Ginny Akabane and Terry Michney who are founts of Academy Garden Club wisdom and are ready and able to proof read and fine tune the handbook copy.

Many thanks as well to Dianne Romeo who is leading us on a trip to the Vanderbilt Mansion on Thursday, September 12th. If you haven't signed up with her yet and want to attend, leave a message on her answering machine at 637-2684.

Before we know it, Apple Squeeze (September 21-22) will be upon us. Here is a "head's up" from our Fund Raising Committee. The focus for our Apple Squeeze Booth will be dried bouquets. Hydrangeas have always been very much in demand. We ask that if you have

hydrangeas to spare that you bring some to our September 10th meeting. We will also welcome Curly Willow, and other flowers that dry well such as Yarrow, Astilbe, Sage, Silver Dollars, Artemisia, Poppy Pods, Statice, etc.

Bringing flowers for dried bouquets is not the only way you can help. We need bouquet sellers as well!! Please sign up at the meeting or email Theresa Fasano ([tfasano1@nycp.rr.com](mailto:tfasano1@nycp.rr.com)).

See you September 10th at 7:00pm, and do enjoy the intensely blue sky, the liquid golden light and the cooler nights which are the hallmarks of this time of year!

Sincerely,  
Harriet Wetstone  
AGC President

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## **HORTICULTURAL COLUMN**

**By Harriet Wetstone**



The other day I spotted a beautiful Mountain Ash, absolutely alive with bright orange berries, and it made me start thinking about my bird feeder. It is much, much, too early for that, but here is more about what birds are eating way before it is time to put out bird seed.

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Horticultural Column – continued

The Mountain Ash is a member of the Sorbus genus, and those orange berries are safe for humans as well as birds. We might well leave those berries to the birds; however, their flavor is very bland. In the category of “who knew”, the Mountain Ash was called the Rowan or Witchwood tree in Celtic and Norse folklore because it was believed to have magical properties. It was prized for making wands, but not for wicked witches. According to Mr Ollivander (of Harry Potter fame), wands from Mountain Ash do no evil. But I digress!

Birds enjoy the fruit of the American cranberry bush (*Viburnum trilobum*), a wonderful native shrub that has bright red berries, as well as the Arrowwood *Viburnum* (*Viburnum dentatum*), also native, which has navy blue berries!



Birds also feed on the Wild Raisin (*Viburnum nudum*), and the Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides* or *alnifolium*) which has wonderfully lacy white flowers in the spring. Its fruit starts out green, and then becomes red and then almost black, color changes signaling the ripeness of the fruit. Interesting note - *Viburnums* are now placed in the *Adoxaceae* family though they had been placed in the *Caprifoliaceae* (Honeysuckle) family which includes the *Sambucus*, another fruit bearing shrub genus.



Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) is a nice but rather unremarkable small ornamental - until its leaves drop and its berries ripen to bright red. Then it is a showstopper that attracts a myriad of bird species. Winterberry, elderberry, blackberry, serviceberry - there are so many different berries for birds to eat!

But this is fascinating. It is our resident birds' feast on these berries that are characterized by high sugar/low fat content. The migratory birds are getting ready to travel - they are training for a marathon, so they need especially high quality fruits that ripen just in time for fall migration.

Flowering Dogwood, Spicebush, Arrowwood *Viburnum*, and Crab apple are among the shrubs and trees that have fruit that is high in the lipids that provide energy for migration - as the oily black seeds that provide energy for birds in the winter. And even better, these shrubs signal their fruits' ripeness with their changing leaf color that birds can spot even before they see the fruit!

Let us support our incredible environment with whatever strength and means we have to plant and nourish and protect our gardens, and to replenish, recycle, and reuse whenever possible!

Thanks to [backyardsfornature.org](http://backyardsfornature.org); [yardmap.org](http://yardmap.org); Participatory Ecology; Wikapoedea; [bhg.com](http://bhg.com)!!