

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

APRIL 2017

Tuesday, April 11th, 7:00 PM
Lenox Academy Building

Program: *Bird Songs in the Garden*

Presenter: Edward Neumuth

Refreshment Hostesses:

Ginny Akabane, Patricia Neri, Dianne Romeo

Dear Members,

It seems like it's been a long time since we last had a formal meeting! The one we have coming up will be great! Very interesting to now hear what the birds will sound like based on what we learned last year. I love to feed the birds, so anything I can find out about them, I am eager to learn! Ed was a wonderful speaker last year and I expect more of the same from him this year!

It was a few years ago that we had a meeting which discussed taking a painting and trying to recreate it using flowers...do you remember? Well, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, will have just this exhibit! It will be held from Saturday, April 29th, to Monday, May 1st. Yes, this is a very long drive - but what fun! If anybody is interested, please let me know. There are also a few classes available if you are interested in them.

Those of you living in Lenox, I hope you are gearing up for the 250th Anniversary Celebration!!! There is a Flower Show component as part of the agenda, and Pat will be sending out the applications to all of us!!! This is for fun and to support the town, no worries on excellence! I hope all of us will have a little something to enter!

The Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Association will have a program "Thinking Spring", April 8, 2017, at the Lenox High School. Time: 7:45am to 2:15 pm. Go to their website

www.wmmga.org to download information and a registration flyer. That's all folks!!

Warmly,
Anne

Anne Gannon
President

Horticulture Column by Harriet Wetstone

Finally, the calendar says SPRING, but it is usually far too long before it feels like spring! So I have been daydreaming about being in the garden, conjuring up warmth and the feel of dirt on my hands, and the wonderful soft green of new plants - and before I realized it I was remembering aching hands and shoulders and backs and knees! So I did a search on gardening and arthritis.

Some suggestions such as "get help", or "use electric tools", or "only work waist high" seemed impractical. But I am absolutely going to remember to drink more water. I am going to explore the idea that tools with bigger handles are more comfortable for arthritic hands, and that if I don't want to give up my favorite tools, wrapping their handles with some rubbery material like pipe insulation (already cylindrical, brilliant!) will make them more comfortable to use.

Taking the time to make sure those tools are really sharp can also be a good save, as is using ratcheting tools that require less hand pressure. It is strongly suggested that you use kneepads! And there are lots of little contraptions that let you scoot along the ground on wheels without having to get up and down a zillion times, but probably not practical in my rocky, hilly garden.

It was also suggested that, rather than get out there in the glorious early morning and work until you drop, or ache, which inevitably comes first, that working in short burst might save you some discomfort. It was said that arthritic flare ups usually occur after 45 minutes or an hour of

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Horticultural Column *by Harriet Wetstone-cont'd.*

repetitive work, so stopping for a while and drinking some water every so often might be a good idea.

Thinking about the aches and pains of gardening brought me into the other not-so-nice bits - slugs and aphids and mites. So I did some research into companion gardening claims. The idea of planting certain groups of plants together because they help each other on the way is very romantic - but is it true?



Yes and no, and depending on who you ask. It is pretty clear that French marigolds (*Tagetes patula*) are a deterrent for nematodes, but, it turns out,

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only when planted in large quantities and if you have the right match between which marigolds and which nematodes. Marigolds' musky pungent odor is a deterrent for some pests, and they do provide rich pollen for pollinators which are a definite plus. And they are beautiful - but some of the more striking cultivars, such as the gorgeous French Vanilla Hybrid, are bred to be scentless.

Nasturtiums are said to be good companion plants because they attract whiteflies and aphids and other such, thereby protecting tomatoes and radishes and cabbage; however other gardeners think that rather than protecting from pests they just bring in more pests to the garden.

And still other gardeners contend that the high sulfur content in nasturtium leaves repel these very same pests! Regardless, nasturtiums are a major winner for me because of their wonderful color and delicious sweet spicy taste.

So, romantic as companion gardening may be, it is far more complicated than one might think. (Thanks to the michigangardener.com, gardenmyths.com, naturallivingideas.com, countryfarm-lifestyles.com and wikipedia.com.)
