

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

JANUARY 2024

Happy 2024 to Everyone.

I hope you all had joyous holidays with family and friends. As we unwind from the holiday events and settle in for winter, your Academy Garden Club of Lenox leadership is busy planning 2024 activities.

Feedback for 2024 Activities. In January, we are holding both an officers' meeting and a joint meeting of the Garden Tour and Program Committees. If you have thoughts about what you would enjoy in 2024, please let me, Jill Dore, Sarah Hatch, Theresa Fasano, Dianne Romeo, or Harriet Wetstone know so we can include your preferences as we endeavor to plan activities that will keep everyone engaged.

Capital Region Flower & Garden Expo Save the Date. For those interested in the Capital Region Flower & Garden Expo, Dianne Romeo, Chair of the Club's Garden Tour Committee, has confirmed the group trip will be Friday, March 22. For those planning to attend, Dianne recommends speeding entry at the door by purchasing a ticket in advance per the attachment. Contact Dianne at tjromeo@verizon.net

2024 Tickets – Buy Now

<https://2mg32.r.ag.d.sendibm3.com/mk/mr/sh/6rqJ8GoudeITQdqfg110n28mDzt/1UfitLh8zFr>

UMass Extension Fruit Programs and Information.

Thanks to Dianne Romeo for bringing to our attention emails and programs offered by the UMass Amherst Extension Fruit Team. For those members interested in fruit gardening, check out the offerings, including their first 2024 program on February 10 on fruit plant disease, and sign up for future email notifications at [Fruit: Mass Aggie Seminars 2024 | Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment at UMass Amherst](#)

Help Needed at New Lenox Fire Station Garden.

When the time comes in the Spring to sign up for civic activities, we hope to attract several more members to help Theresa Terry Michney, Amy Zaffanella and me with the garden honoring fallen firefighters at the New Lenox Fire Station monument.



As many of you know, Theresa's late son, Fire Captain James E. Terry, III, is among the Lenox firefighters honored by the monument. I would like to make 2024 the year our Club makes that garden shine to honor not only the fallen firefighters but also Theresa's many contributions to our Club.

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We are lucky that the Town is going to repair the retaining wall around the garden and monument. Theresa, Amy, and I made good progress in 2023 clearing weeds, adding donated perennials and bulbs. Some of the firefighters' wives also contributed annuals in the summer of 2023. But as you can see from the photos, we have plenty of room for more plants.



When planting season begins, we will be looking for several more volunteers to help with:

- Design,
- Donating seeds and perennials,
- Planting seeds and perennials, and
- Weeding and deadheading.

Perennial Donation and Exchange. As we planted donated perennials at the New Lenox Fire Station, I realized that we had found the perennials by word of mouth rather than a more organized outreach. In my own gardens, I often give away or discard perennials when resizing overgrown plants or editing out plants that no longer meet my objectives.

It may be that, in addition to the New Lenox Fire Station Garden, some perennials from Members' gardens may be useful at the Town Monument or the new pollinator's garden we will create in 2024 at the Lenox Community Garden. It also may be that some perennials that would be otherwise discarded - but are not needed in the gardens the Club creates and maintains - would be a welcome addition to another Member's Garden.

I thought it would be helpful to create an email group where people offer up perennials and others can indicate interest. I will coordinate this as a trial run during March-October 2024.

To avoid Club email overload, please let me know if you are interested in participating in the trial perennial exchange in 2024 and I will include you on an email list for that trial.

Participation can include donating, receiving, or helping to dig/divide/plant perennials. Activities will be scheduled at the convenience of those participating. If the trial proves useful, the 2025 officers can make it an ongoing program.

Watch for another edition of Thymes in early February. Until then, stay warm.

Best,

Susan Wolf

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Thanks to Tjasa Sprague for photos of our December 12, 2023, Holiday Party at the beautifully decorated Ventfort Hall. A delightful evening of fun, food, drinks, and prizes. Also, Tjasa was instrumental in securing our booking of Ventfort Hall and getting us a very good rate.



Congratulations to Liz Celli and Jill Dore for the beautifully decorated Post Office window. So much to appreciate. Be sure to stop by. It will be there January and February.

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Horticultural Column

Fabulous House Plants

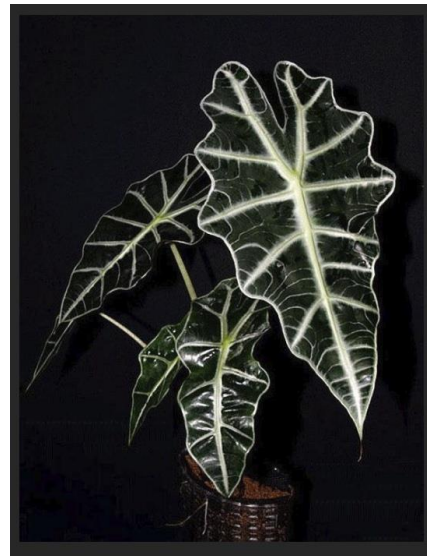
By Harriet Wetstone

As I write this, I am waiting for the first significant snow of the winter and looking forward to a white, snowed-in morning pattering with my house plants. Last month I talked about some traditional seasonal plants, cyclamen, amaryllis, and poinsettia. What I am thinking of tonight are more exotic plants with leaves with incredible markings. I am thinking of alocasia, calathea, and stromanthe, three geni of house plants that I never get over being amazed by.

Alocasia is a genus of rhizomatous or tuberous broad-leaved plants from the family Araceae. There are about ninety species native to tropical and subtropical Asia and eastern Australia where they are known as herbaceous perennials, but they are also the source of a wide range of hybrids and cultivars which are available in our part of the world of houseplants.

The common name for these plants is elephant's ears, but I think they are far from common! Alocasia thrive in bright, indirect light such as an eastern or western window. They like loose, well drained, slightly acidic potting soil, and they don't like wet feet, so water them thoroughly but allow the top few inches to become nearly dry before you water them again. They do not like to be below 60 degrees. Because they like humidity, they do well placed on a tray of pebbles, with the water level just below the surface of the pebbles. And they benefit from a general purpose of 20 20 20 fertilizer (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) once or twice a month.

My favorite is the cultivar *Alocasia x amazonica* which is known as the African Mask Plant. The leaves are triangular, very dark green with white veins and a waxy cuticle that gives the leaves a shiny appearance. The point of this plant are the leaves rather than the flowers which are somewhat insignificant in appearance.



Alocasia x amazonica – aka African Mask Plant

Calathea is a genus of rhizomatic flowering plants belonging to the family Marantaceae (the arrowroot family). There are about sixty species which are native to the tropical Americas, and many are popular as houseplants due to their decorative leaves. The leaves are often large and colorfully patterned.

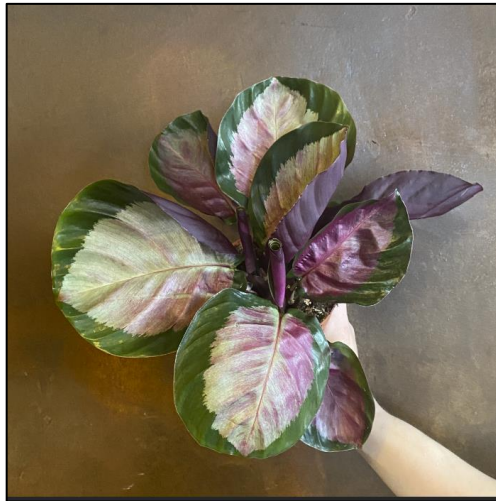
As with the Alocasias, calathea prefer warm temperatures, certainly above 60 degrees, indirect light, and lots of humidity. Most of us are familiar with the prayer plant, which is a calathea, but there are even more dramatic examples of foliage. While calathea's are flowering plants, they are unlikely to flower when growing as a pot plant.

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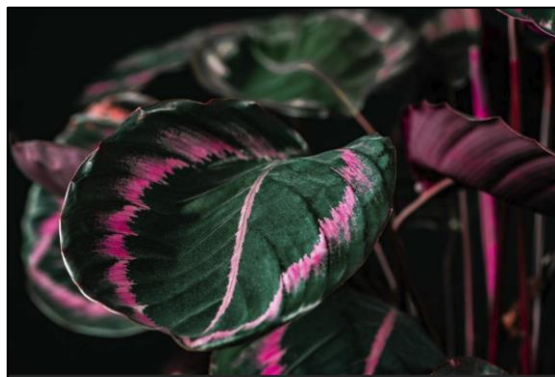
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Calathea Rosy

I am very fond of the Calathea Rosy with its large hot pink leaves with dark green borders and undersides of purple. It has won awards from the Royal Horticultural Society, the British Houseplant Association, and the American Nursery and Landscape Association.



Calathea Roseopicta

Stromanthe is a genus of rhizomatic flowering plants, also in the family Marantaceae, and again, native to the tropical Americas. One of the most popular is the Stromanthe Triostar which is native to the tropical rainforests of Brazil.



Stromantha Triostar

While the naturally occurring species has long narrow leaves that are shiny dark green with maroon undersides, the cultivar Triostar's have irregular splashes of white, cream, and pale pink with a light green variegation. It has a fountain-like growth with leaves that are up to twenty inches long, while the whole plant can grow as tall as three feet. The flower is a flashy cluster of small red blooms, but, again, flowering is less likely for a pot plant.

For care, they need six hours of bright indirect light, well-draining soil kept moist but not saturated with rainwater, or occasionally with distilled water if you are using tap. Fertilize with regular 20 20 20 once a month.

Thanks to: Wikipedia, The Spruce, Planet House Plant, bloomscape.com