

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

NOVEMBER 2019

Hello again, AGC,

It's November (gasp, sigh). I can't believe we are looking at turkey and approaching winter and holiday season. I haven't even dug in my bulbs yet! But I am writing this a bit early as I will be away for our November 12th meeting. This meeting is on the winter schedule - November 12, at four o'clock, at the Academy Building. Yes! Not 7:00 pm, but 4:00 pm because we have entered the (shudder) dark time of year. This meeting has become a tradition - our Boxwood Tree Workshop with member and Master Gardener Liz Celli. There will be a \$10.00 fee, but all you have to bring are your snips for cutting the boxwood, and, if you have them, containers from last time.

I send out a thank you to Chris Ferrero who presented in October and gave us much to think about. Chris talked about the need to lighten the gardening load as we get older. She encouraged us to look carefully at our gardens and decide which beds, and which shrubs and perennials are really worth the efforts they demand, and which struggling shrubs we keep on for sentimental value. And then she encouraged us to actually discard plants which don't deserve space and energy. I have actually heard people talking about getting rid of those day lilies or that shrub that hardly flowers anymore - bravo!

Well, it is dark way too early, but there is still work to do in the garden, raking of course, but also continuing to clean up beds. This is actually a good time to work in extra nutrients. The freezing and thawing coming up will help work them in. And usually there is still time early November to put in those bulbs! I always forget to mark where I have put them as it seems obvious when I've just done it, but it is helpful to know in the spring, especially if you want to put in some new perennials.

Remember, the Boxwood Tree Workshop is November 12 at 4:00 pm. Let Liz Celli (bizalahani@yahoo.com) know that you are coming so she can bring the right amount of boxwood materials.

Sincerely,

Harriet Wetstone

AGC President

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HORTICULTURAL COLUMN

By Harriet Wetstone

Because our next meeting is our Boxwood Tree Workshop, I thought it would be interesting to look into the history of boxwood. I have been particularly fascinated with boxwood since I got to visit the Marqueyssac Garden in France. This garden is located over the Dordogne River, in the Perigord. It is situated on a hillside with 180 degree views. Marqueyssac is a garden of rounded and geometrically shaped boxwood that go on and on with incredible variety of shapes and patterns and intersecting planes.



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Horticultural Column – continued

Boxwoods have been a mainstay of formal gardens for thousands of years and are considered one of the oldest ornamentals. They are thought to have been in the gardens of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. Small branches of Buxus have been found in Ancient Roman tombs! There is an entry on Boxwood in the *Historie of Plantes*, in the 1578 edition, by physician and botanist Rembert Dodoens. Boxwood was not thought to be of any medicinal value - although it was mentioned as suitable for dyeing hair blonde as early as the eleventh century, and mixed with cabbage, no less. Shall we try that one, ladies?



Boxwood is perfectly suited to carving. It is used for chess pieces and musical instruments such as flutes, recorders and clarinets and, of course, exquisite carvings. Boxwood spice boxes and writing tablets have been referred to since the mid-fourteenth century. An old English text dated between 1509 and 1529 talks about boxwood prayer beads that were being carved in Kent, and imitated by artisans in Flanders, thus undermining an important English industry! And, from Scripture, the prophet Isaiah says, "The glory of Lebanon shall come to thee, the fir tree, the box tree, and the pine tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary."

It is thought that Boxwoods were first brought to the United States from the Netherlands around 1635. These early plants were either what is known now as the American boxwood, *Buxus sempervirens* or *Buxus sempervirens* "Suffruticosa." Nowadays there are at least 160 different varieties on the market.

While boxwoods are evergreens that are typically grown as shrubs or topiaries outdoors, the fact that they are slow growers makes them ideal for use in pots indoors. Although outdoors they grow in shade, inside they need full to partial sunlight exposure. It is said that they need regular watering and in the spring a once-a-year high nitrogen, slow-release, fertilizer. Boxwood is also well suited to bonsai, but that is a whole new topic



It is not possible to write about boxwood without talking about the Boxwood Blight which was discovered in the U.K. in the mid-1990s and has devastated the roadside boxwood in France. It was first detected in the U.S. in a nursery in North Carolina and has since spread as far north as Massachusetts. Blight is a fungal disease caused by the organism *Cylindrocladium buxicola* and it attacks pachysandras as well as boxwood. The first sign is round brown spots on the leaves, the shrub then drops most or all of its leaves and the twigs begin to die back. While the roots are not affected, the plant becomes so weak it has no defense to other diseases, and secondary infections result in death. There is no cure, but it is very important to not touch plants that are wet, to clean off boots and garden tools that have been in contact, and to be very careful in discarding diseased plants.

Enough of that. This is the season of boxwood wreaths and trees. Enjoy the workshop!!

Thanks to: www.gardeningknowhow.com, www.woodd-database.com, tenradomfacts.com, www.thepottedboxwood.com, marqueyssac.com, gardenloversclub.com, www.newgenoxwood.com