

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

MAY 2023

Dear Academy Garden Club of Lenox Members,

I hope to see all of you at the final AGC meeting of the 2022-2023 Club Year on Tuesday, June 13. Weather permitting, we will be in Lilac Park again this year (in the event of rain we will be at the Academy Building). We will have a short business meeting and use most of our time to visit with each other and to enjoy our traditional potluck. The AGC will provide beverages and glasses. You need to bring:

- A plate, napkins, and utensils.
- If your last name begins with A through L – an appetizer or salad.
- If your last name begins with M through Z – a dessert.
- A fold-up chair or, if you prefer to sit on the grass, a blanket.

We will provide the sign-up sheets for our civic projects at the June meeting. The projects are weeding/deadheading at one of three locations -- the Monument, the planters at the Academy Building, the plants at the Fireman's Memorial at the New Lenox Fire Station - or creating a display for the post office window. It is vital for the success of our Club that all but Associate Members help with at least one project. It is also more fun to work with a group. If you didn't sign up in May and will miss the June meeting, please call me or the project leaders listed in the Yearbook to sign up.

Thanks to those who have paid their dues for the 2023-2024 Club Year. If you have not yet done so, it will help our Treasurer Jill Dore and Yearbook Editor Pat Neri, if you provide your check at the meeting.

If you cannot attend, please mail your check to the Club's PO Box 2081, Lenox, MA 01240 by June 13 if possible (if you can't get us your check but intend to continue your membership, please notify Jill Dore and Pat Neri so that you won't be left out of the 2023-2024 Yearbook). Dues are \$30 for members; \$40 for associate members,

Best,

Susan

Agenda

1. Approve minutes of May 9 meeting.
2. Accept Treasurer's Report.
3. Discuss garden visits and results of survey led by Dianne Romeo.
4. Discuss Anne Gannon's suggestion that the Club meet during summers rather than winters. (Note: any change would not be effective until the 2024-2025 Club Year because programs and meeting space for 2023-2024 are already committed).
5. Election of President (Susan Wolf is nominated and up for election), **Election of Vice President – No one has indicated an interest in the position. We will welcome members with interest in serving as Vice President. Please contact Theresa Terry Michney if you are interested in serving.** Note that our Treasurer Jill Dore and our Secretary Sarah Hatch were elected for two-year terms last year and have agreed to continue serving their second year. No election of Treasurer or Secretary is on the agenda.
6. Old or New Business, if any

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Horticultural Column – Geraniums Harriet Wetstone

I have always been in love with geraniums. I think it stems from a long ago visit to my grandparents who, much to my dismay, had moved from Connecticut to Los Angeles, California. I was five and taken out of kindergarten for the whole month of January, transported from harsh New England winter to heavenly California sunshine. What do I remember the most? Horrifyingly, the open air live chicken stand down the street, crates of live hens stacked up behind a counter, and my grandmother's choice beheaded on the spot to be brought home and plucked. But also, oranges, would you believe, growing on trees. And bright red geraniums, it seemed to me, all over my grandparents' house.

Geraniums as house plants, as ground cover, as bedding plants, and of course the heavenly fragrant geraniums. It's all good. But also, confusing.

First things first. The geranium is a genus of 422 species of annual, biennial, and perennial plants that are commonly known as geraniums or cranesbills and are found throughout the temperate regions of the world and the mountains of the tropics. The name geranium comes from the Greek word *geranos*, meaning crane, and the English name cranesbill derives from the fact that the fruit capsule of some species resembles the bill of a crane. As the seed head matures, the beak pops open and ejects the seed. Cranesbill is also referred to as 'hardy geraniums' because they are truly cold hardy. Think of the lovely ground cover cranesbills spread beautifully, They are deer resistant and faithful year after year. They are not fussy about soil requirements and prefer part shade to full sun.

But my bright red geraniums which bring back in an instant that magical visit to California? They are called geraniums, but they are Pelargoniums.

Pelargoniums are a genus of flowering plants that include as many as 280 species. Pelargoniums are native to South Africa and survive winter only in warm climates. They are extremely drought tolerant but appreciate a high potash (potassium) feed. The name Pelargonium comes from the Greek word *pelargos*, meaning stork. The pelargonium fruit capsule features a long and slender beak, and so they were referred to as storksbill. Hmm, there's a source of confusion! Unlike geraniums, however, the pelargonium seeds have a corkscrew shape, and are dispersed by the wind.



Geranium flowers have five similar petals with distinct veining and are symmetrical; Pelargonium flowers have two upper petals which are different from the three lower petals. Geranium flowers can be blue, purple, pink, white, but never red. Pelargoniums can be red, pink, yellow, white, purple, but never blue. Fragrant Geraniums, whose fragrance emanates from their leaves and not from the flowers which are often quite small, are pelargoniums. Those fragrant leaves have glands at the base of their leaf hairs where the scented oil is formed. But Fragrant Geranium is only one of many types of Pelargoniums.

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My red geranium is a Zonal geranium, the most familiar of all Pelargoniums, the one you see acres of at garden centers. Zonal pelargoniums have rounded leaves and clusters of flowers on long stalks, perfect for window boxes and patio containers. And they come in lots of colors but the only one that matters is red!



Ivy-leaved geraniums (pelargoniums) have ivy-like leaves that are often smooth and shiny. Their flowers are also long stemmed and floppy enough to need to be in hanging baskets. The color ranges from white to pink to orange, often with distinctive veining.

The Fragrant geraniums are fragrant because of their leaves as we said, but there are other types of outstanding leaf types among the Pelargoniums, also with fairly insignificant flowers. Here the variety is quite amazing, with tri colors in interesting patterns. Pelargoniums are incredibly fun to collect!!

Thanks to:

<https://balconygardenweb.com/fanciest-types-of-geraniums-variegated-varieties/>;

<https://dengarden.com/gardening/Whats-the-Difference-Between-Geraniums-and-Pelargoniums>;

<https://www.britannica.com/plant/geranium-plant-genus-Geranium>

Minutes – May 9, 2023 Lenox Community Center

Names tags were set up alphabetically on table facing entrance along with Civic Projects sign-up sheets.

Susan Wolf opened the meeting at 6:05 pm with 21 members and 2 guests (potential members) present.

Speaker Chris Ferrero, Master Gardener, presented *Paradise for Pollinators*. The talk had been scheduled for March 2023 but was cancelled/postponed because of a snowstorm. Handouts were provided via email in March.

Her overlying message is that pollination is at the heart of conservation and gardeners need to pay attention to nature. Avoid using insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides. Plant native plants and natives that will store carbon, manage water, and support diverse pollinator populations.

President Susan Wolf asked members to approve the minutes from the April meeting. Ann Gannon made the motion to accept the minutes and seconded by Collett Lemanski. The motion was unanimously accepted.

In Treasurer Jill Dore's absence, Pat Neri read the treasurer's report. The report included a donation of \$50.00 in memory of Jean Drees' husband.

Harriet Wetstone made a motion to accept the treasurer's report and approve the donation. It was seconded by Ann Gannon, and unanimously accepted.

Sign-up sheets for Civic Projects were available at the meeting and will be again at the June meeting. A member also may contact project leaders listed in the yearbook with the project descriptions or Susan Wolf to sign up.

New Business – see next page

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New Business

It was suggested to join the Lenox Historical Society to create a memorial to Jen Picard. Further discussion will take place at the June meeting.

Our treasurer requested dues be paid before or at the June meeting. Active members pay \$30.00; associate members pay \$40.00. Early payment ensures the inclusion of your name in the Yearbook.

Carpooling was suggested. Let Sara, Jill, or Pat know who would be available to drive and who would need a ride. They will be matched accordingly.

Ann Gannon suggested a change in meeting dates. Change the current meetings schedule of September to June – to meeting in April to December and have no meetings in January, February, and March. The reasons were that the weather is better and daylight longer. More members will attend. Comments: We need some socials in winter; we could meet off site; look forward to winter programs/projects. Full discussion at next meeting.

Susan Wolf will accept your comments via email.

Dianne Romeo suggested Wethersfield Estate and Garden for a summer trip. It is in Armenia, New York, about an hour away. Members will be advised of the date and time. Please let Dianne, Sarah Hatch or Susan Wolf know if you are interested.

Terry Michney announced the need of a vice president. We are to think about it and make some suggestions.

Bobbie Ann Salinetti talked about Pollinator Pathways. 200 towns have already started them. *(Public and private pesticide-free corridors of native plants that provide nutrition and habitat for pollinating insects and birds. Even the smallest green spaces, like flower boxes and curb strips, can be part of a pathway. from <https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/>).* Suggested areas to set it/them up: Lenox could partner with Lee; Lilac Park; the library, or here at the Community Center.

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:30 pm.

Submitted by:

Theresa Terry Michney
Patricia Neri