

Garden Club of Teaneck Newsletter - February 2024

The **GREENHOUSE** Beet

Welcome to our latest newsletter! With February here, it's time to soak in all the love—both for our gorgeous gardens and the amazing folks who help make them thrive. We're so grateful for the good vibes and teamwork that fill our greenhouse.

As we gear up for the 2025 plant sale and the growing season ahead, let's take a moment to celebrate the friendships we've built along the way. This month is all about love and connection, so let's keep fostering those bonds while we create beautiful gardens together! Happy February, everyone!



Garden Plot Points

February and Member Meeting Summary

- Welcome to our new members: Judy Painter, Patricia Weiss, Pamela Fenwick, Faruq Ahmed, and Alaa Elmarsafy! 🌱
- Thank you to our January cleanup crew for revitalizing the greenhouse!
- Treat your plants weekly with greenhouse pesticide. If pests appear, rinse the affected plant first, then apply the solution in the front room.
- We're addressing the mouse situation! See Page 3 for details.
- Greenhouse committee alert: All groups should prepare supply lists! Geranium plugs are ready (Page 4). February will focus on begonias, and March will feature dragon-wing begonias, coleus, and vinca!
- The 2025 budgets are out! Please submit reimbursement forms to Sandra by the end of March.
- Workweek participation is crucial! Aim for at least 80% attendance and notify your group leader of any missed days.
- We are investigating the disappearance of 22 coleus plants, including some of Robyn's "Mother" plants. A police report has been filed, and security is being enhanced.
- A new combination lock has been installed for greenhouse security! The code will be shared with bench-holders and group leaders and will change seasonally. Unique codes for each group and security cameras are being considered.
- Gardening 101 with Myriam was a success, with 15 participants learning budget-friendly gardening tips!
- Field trip alert: Pat Pacheco is suggesting organizing a tour of the Montclair Art Museum!
- We received a request for a member list; however, we prioritize privacy. We will provide a list with names only and add a privacy checkbox to next year's membership form.
- The greenhouse needs a deep clean before the sale, and Peter is ready to paint! If interested in joining the painting party, please contact him!

Greenhouse Theft is just not Rude, Its Illegal

GCT is taking steps to prevent crime in our Greenhouse

New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice, Section 2C:20-3 addresses theft, including unauthorized removal of property from greenhouses. Stealing items worth less than \$200 is a misdemeanor, with penalties of up to \$1,000 in fines and/or six months in jail. To enhance security, the GCT will use technology like Wi-Fi, smart locks, and security cameras to monitor the area and deter theft.

Group Leaders' Update:



It's the off-season for the **Saturday** team, meaning most members are taking a break. Those who are meeting have been tending to the spider plants, boosting the lavender crop yield, and preparing aloes for the upcoming Hawthorne sale.

On **Sunday**, the focus will be on transplanting geraniums from seeds, along with perennials and hydrangeas.

The **Monday** group has welcomed three new members and is currently working on herbs and tomatoes.

The **Tuesday** team is eager for more assistance (new members are always welcome!) and is busy transplanting licorice, geraniums, and Swedish ivy.

Meanwhile, the **wednesday** group is engaged in ongoing maintenance tasks, working hard to fix leaks, address heating issues in the greenhouse, and manage rodent control. They are also considering painting and acquiring new spray bottles for pesticides. Mid-week is bustling with activity!

The **Thursday** crew is cultivating coleus for both school children and the annual sale, while also transplanting and collecting decorative pots (including low and wide options for dish gardens and arrangements).

The **Friday** team is focused on transplanting geraniums and spider plants, with Joe dedicating his efforts to succulents.

The **Hawthorne School Program** is scheduled for March, and volunteers are needed for teaching and support.

The **Sunday Herb Garden** Group is currently working on begonias and plants intended for the school children.



There are so many plant related books out there, fiction and non-fiction! Want to share your love of reading with other members? Are you interested in having our very own GCT book club? Contact Marilyn at marilynfr@aol.com

Mouse in the (Green)House!

The mouse problem in our greenhouse is affecting plant health and growth. The Greenhouse Committee is implementing innovative solutions like sonic mouse repellents (shown to the right), which emits high-frequency sound waves to deter mice humanely. If you see these, please do not remove them.

Additionally, the Wednesday Group is enhancing pest management by maintaining cleanliness, sealing entry points, and using natural deterrents like peppermint oil. This comprehensive strategy—combining sonic repellents, cleanliness, physical barriers, and eco-friendly methods—aims to effectively control mouse populations while promoting a healthy greenhouse ecosystem. Keep your benches and floors clean to monitor effectiveness!



Surprise!

After more than 45 years of nurturing his Burro's Tail plant (*sedum morganianum*), Joe Begley was pleasantly surprised when his plant blossomed with these lovely and delicate flowers! Congratulations on this wonderful new development, Joe!



LIBRARY

We are thrilled to extend our deepest gratitude to AnneMarie for her incredible efforts in cleaning out and organizing our beloved Gardening Library. Her dedication and meticulous attention to detail have brought a new sense of order and accessibility to our collection, making it easier than ever for gardening enthusiasts to find the resources they need. Thanks to AnneMarie's hard work, our library is not only more inviting but also more functional for everyone who visits. As part of this revitalization, we are pleased to offer a selection of extra gardening books available for anyone interested in taking a few home. Feel free to explore these treasures and take advantage of this opportunity to expand your gardening knowledge. Thank you once again, AnneMarie, for your invaluable contribution to our community!



A note from Christina Mackensen - Horticultural Director



Hello everyone,

Spring is around the corner!

Although right now the soil is frozen and covered with snow, within a few weeks the warm sun will have melted all the snow and loosened up the soil for planting again. Luckily, there is a warm (most of the time) greenhouse where we members can be busy seeding, propagating, and dividing plants. Top priority is getting enough plants ready for the school children.

In addition, groups are busy growing plants for the plant sale. There are already beautiful coleus, numerous fig saplings, lots of unusual succulents, polka dot seedlings poking up, blooming kalanchoe, and lavender plants, as well as numerous well-established heuchera.

For the first time in three years, we are growing geraniums again. They are always in high demand, but because of the Botrytis Blight in past years, we had very few for sale. We took a chance this year by ordering plugs that we transplanted and by giving them extraordinary care—so far, they are thriving. Hopefully, they'll grow into beautiful, blooming plants ready for the plant sale. They do contribute a very decent amount of revenue to the total sales makeup.

Lots of thanks to all the members and group leaders who every week contribute their special talents to make this operation very successful.



Roses:

Timeless Emblem of Love and Romance



Roses are a beloved symbol of love and beauty, especially on Valentine's Day, February 14th. With a 5,000 year history dating back to ancient China, these delightful flowers are cherished for their fragrance and medicinal uses.

Connected to Greek and Roman goddesses of love like Aphrodite and Venus, roses also symbolize the Virgin Mary, representing both purity and passion. In the Victorian era, different colors took on special meanings—red for love, pink for admiration, and white for purity.

The tradition of giving roses on Valentine's Day, known as "floriography," began in the 18th century, with about 250 million roses produced in the U.S. each year for the occasion!

For gardening lovers, growing roses adds beauty to any garden and honors this romantic tradition. Whether it's classic red roses or fun hybrid varieties, nurturing these enchanting flowers is a joy. As Valentine's Day approaches, roses remind us of the timeless power of love!

For More Reading:

[How to Grow Roses: The Complete Rose Flower Guide](#)

[The Different Types of Roses: An Ultimate Guide](#)

[A Brief History of the Rose](#)

Welcome Geraniums back to the Greenhouse! But... why were they gone?

In early 2022, a tough decision was made to remove several sick geranium plants just before our seasonal plant sale, significantly impacting our gardeners, the community looking for geraniums, and our bottom line.

To prevent future losses, it was decided to ban geraniums from the greenhouse due to a highly contagious fungal infection called Botrytis, or grey mold, which thrives in cool, moist conditions. Early signs include grey fuzzy mold, water-soaked tissues, and discolored spots. If undetected, it can lead to severe decay.

To manage Botrytis, ensure proper air circulation, space plants adequately, remove decaying material, and water at the base. During humid conditions, fungicidal sprays may provide additional protection. Always wash hands and tools before and after handling geraniums.

New geranium plugs have been inspected by our Horticultural Director and will be closely monitored for infection. Please report any unusual signs to Christina and avoid touching the plants.



[Learn to Identify Early Signs of Botrytis](#)



LOVE CHOCOLATE FOR VALENTINE'S DAY?

Gardeners do too!

Chocolate Gardening, that is...

Chocolate gardening is a whimsical and enchanting idea for those who appreciate both gardening and the irresistible charm of chocolate—without needing actual cocoa plants. This gardening trend revolves around selecting plants that embody the chocolate theme through their fragrance, color, or name. For example, the chocolate cosmos (*Cosmos atrosanguineus*) boasts a rich, velvety brown hue accompanied by a delicate chocolate scent. Other popular choices include the chocolate mint plant, which releases an enticing minty-chocolate aroma, and the chocolate vine (*Akebia quinata*), renowned for its chocolate-scented blooms. By incorporating these plants, gardeners can create a sensory experience that captures the essence of chocolate, transforming their gardens into a delightful haven of aroma and visual pleasure. Whether you're pursuing a unique garden theme or are simply a chocolate enthusiast, chocolate gardening offers a creative way to embrace the allure of chocolate in a natural environment.

Examples of Chocolate-Colored Flowers:

- Dahlia 'Chocolate Sundae'
- Viola 'Velour Frosted Chocolate'
- Delphinium *elatum* 'Kissed by Chocolate'



Hot Cocoa Rose

Examples of Chocolate-Colored Foliage Plants:

- Coleus 'Chocolate Mint'
- Ajuga 'Chocolate Chip'
- Heuchera 'Chocolate Ruffles'

These plants present a range of textures and shades, enabling gardeners to design intricate landscapes that capture attention and engage the senses. Each plant contributes its own distinctive charm, adding depth and elegance to the garden.

For those looking to enhance their chocolate-themed garden beyond just flowers and foliage, consider incorporating fragrant herbs and vines. Chocolate-scented geraniums, for example, can infuse your garden with a delightful fragrance, while the chocolate vine can introduce a lush, climbing feature that elevates your vertical space.

To complete your chocolate garden, think about adding complementary elements such as cocoa-colored mulch or decorative touches like chocolate-colored pots and planters. These enhancements can help unify the theme, creating a truly immersive experience.

As you embark on this gardening journey, keep in mind that the joy of chocolate gardening lies in creativity and personal expression. Whether you decide to focus on scent, color, or a blend of both, your chocolate garden is certain to be a delightful oasis, providing a sweet escape from the ordinary.

[Starting a Chocolate Garden](#)

[Chocolate Gardening](#)

[Research Chocolate Plants available for Purchase](#)



The Peach Pit

By Masha Shapiro, GCT Volunteer

If you're anything like me, you love a good peach. To me, a peach means sunshine, happy times, and messy grins, and I wait all year long for the summer when I can eat one.

As I indulged in a long-awaited peach this past summer, I thought it would be fun to plant the peach pit and see if it would grow.

I spent time online researching this, and found out that a peach tree grown from seed could result in slightly different fruit from the original peach. This only added to the thrill of the experiment. Perhaps I could end up with a disgusting peach, a fantastic peach, or maybe even a nectarine!



In nature, peaches fall off the trees at the end of the summer and spend all winter in the ground before sprouting in the spring. After looking at various methods for starting peach seeds, I decided to cold-stratify the seeds in the fridge to mimic nature as best I could.

I started my experiment by collecting pits from my family throughout the week, scrubbing off any peach flesh with a toothbrush. Then, I attempted to break the seed out of the outer part of the pit using a hammer, as I had seen done online. Unfortunately, I ended up damaging the seeds. I was very disappointed, but decided to continue, just to see what would happen. I dampened a paper towel, sprinkled it with cinnamon (to prevent mold), folded the towel around the seeds, placed it in a Ziploc bag, and put it in the fridge.



About three months later, I checked my peach seeds. There was no growth on any of them. According to my research, it would take anywhere from one to three months for the seeds to germinate. Disappointed, I put them back in the fridge — just in case anything would happen.

One month later, I checked again. One of the seeds had some root growing out of it, and a few others looked like they were about to! I potted the seed and put it under a grow light, hopeful, but not expecting much. Exactly a week later, I came home from school and felt a thrill when I saw a small, green $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch sprout popping out of the soil. The next day, the sprout had doubled in height.



Now, five days later, the plant is several inches tall, has many small leaves, and gets bigger every day. I don't know what I am going to do with the plant when it gets much bigger. Hopefully it gets planted somewhere, gives lots of fruit and makes people happy.

For now, this has been a gratifying and awe-inspiring experience. It feels much different than buying seeds from a plant shop — this is simply the pit of the fruit I ate, which I normally throw away... but contains so much potential life in it, if only given the opportunity.

Masha Shapiro is a senior in high school. She volunteered with the GCT this past summer, weeding, trimming, planting, and helping maintain the outside gardens.

She loves gardening and growing all kinds of plants, especially peach trees!

Seed Resources:

As winter settles in it's the perfect time to plan your garden. You've gathered your tools and outlined your ideas, but have you picked out your seeds yet? If you're excited about growing a vibrant garden, The Garden Beet has compiled essential resources to kickstart your next harvest! Discover these useful websites and insights to nurture your gardening dreams and help them flourish!



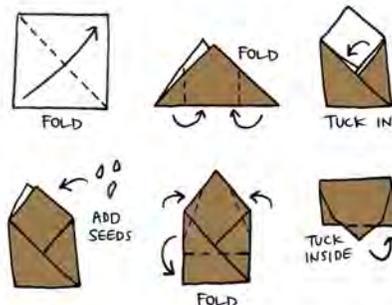
1. **Johnny's Selected Seeds** – Known for high-quality seeds and gardening tools, Johnny's offers a wide variety of organic and heirloom seeds for the home gardener.
2. **Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds** – Specializes in rare and heirloom seeds from around the world, perfect for gardeners looking to grow something unique.
3. **Seed Savers Exchange** – Focuses on preserving heirloom varieties and offers an extensive collection of seeds shared by gardeners across the country.
4. **Burpee** – A well-established name in gardening, Burpee provides a comprehensive selection of vegetable, flower, and herb seeds.
5. **Free Heirloom Seeds** – ****Editor's Favorite**** a grassroots initiative that provides free heirloom and open-pollinated seeds, rotating stock, ordering is via Email and donation preferred but not required
6. **True Love Seed** - a farm-based seed company offering culturally important and open pollinated vegetable, herb, and flower seeds
7. **Hudson Valley Seed Company** – a source for heirloom and open-pollinated garden seeds and beautiful garden-themed contemporary art. A values-driven seed company that practices and celebrates responsible seed production and stewardship
8. **Alliance of Native Seedkeepers** – New Company that focuses on heirloom and open-pollinated varieties and supports seed-saving traditions; only seed company registered as a “for-benefit” company that gives back.
9. **Annie's Heirloom Seeds** – Offers a wide array of heirloom seeds, emphasizing traditional gardening practices and heritage crops.
10. **Rohrer's Seeds**– Provides a diverse selection of seeds, plants, and gardening supplies, even gifts, catering to both novice and seasoned gardeners.

FEELING CRAFTY?

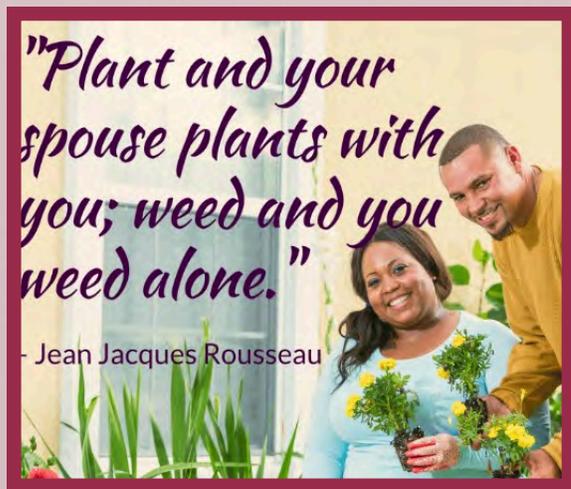
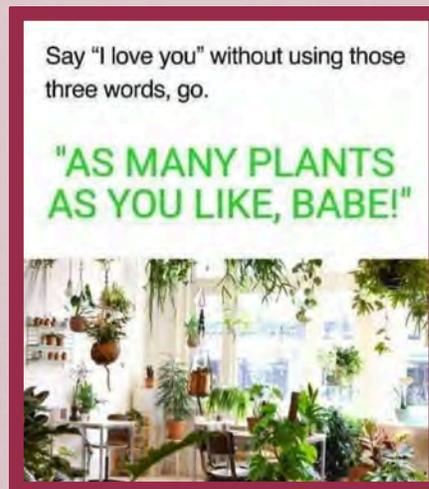
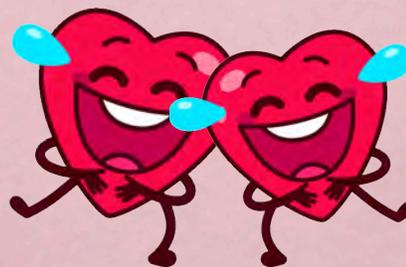
Make your own seed packets!

Looking for a fantastic way to engage in eco-friendly crafting while cleverly minimizing waste? Want to save some money for more seeds? Create your own seed packets using paper bags! It's like establishing your own personal seed library! Who would have thought that a love for gardening could also be so environmentally conscious? Gardening has never been this fun or sustainable!

SEED ENVELOPES



Garden Giggles



[Got more garden jokes for us? Lettuce know!](#)

What's Growing on Around Us?

local gardening events

NYC Parks Department:

Facing Climate Change As Urban Gardeners

Virtual, FREE Wednesday, February 26, 2025
6:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

Building a Wood Raised Bed for Food Gardening

Red Gate Garden 604 Marcy Avenue, Brooklyn
FREE, Saturday March 1, 2025
11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

Wildly Floral Co.

9 Scotland Rd South Orange, NJ.

Paid Floral arrangement classes including:

3/5/25 Pressed Flower Stationery Workshop

3/20/25 Astrological New Year Flower Workshop

3/22 and 3/23 Spring Wreath Workshop

**Find More Gardening Events in NJ
(too many to list here)
at Dig-It Magazine's event list
worth checking out!**

Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden

Staten Island, New York

Compost Processing Workshop: FREE

Learn how to produce compost at home, how to mix your greens and browns into your compost pile, and the importance of mitigating food waste through composting practices.

February 23 | 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

March 16 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Tree Mulching Workshop FREE

Learn how to give them some TLC by mulching them appropriately at the Tree Mulching Workshop.

12:30 PM - 1:00 PM: February 22, 23 | March 8, 22, 23



Upcoming Garden Club Events:

Garden Club of Teaneck General Meetings

Rodda Center, Teaneck, all meetings at 10am
March 1, April 5, May 3

Thursday Lecture Series,

February 20, 2025 Rodda Center 7pm
Vegetable Gardening 101

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Plant sale dates are Set:

May 1 (members only),
May 2-4, and May 9-11 (open to the public).

Can't see these links? Make sure you're in our
Garden Club of Teaneck Facebook Group!

Reach out to sow your stories, feature your favorite plant,
or sprinkle some wisdom and insight to all members!

Let's grow together!



Website: [the Garden Club of Teaneck](#)
Facebook: facebook.com/GardenClubofTeaneck
Email: gardenclubofteaneck@gmail.com
Location: [Directions and Map](#)

Thank you for taking the time to read this issue. We're excited about the upcoming content and hope the next edition will provide even more valuable insights, tips, successes, and inspiring member stories. With spring just around the corner, let's continue to grow and thrive together!