



# Garden Club News

February 2017

PO Box 3253 Teaneck, NJ 07666

www.gardenclubofteaneck.org

## GARDEN CLUB OF TEANECK CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2017

**Saturday, February 4th, 2017, 10 AM:** Meeting of the Garden Club of Teaneck at the Greenhouse. The **Seed Exchange** follows the meeting.

**Thursday, February 9th, 2017,** Garden Club of Teaneck, 7PM: Refreshments, 7:30PM: Pat Libutti, "The A-Z of Culinary Herbs." Rodda Center, Multi-purpose Room 2B, 250 Colonial Court, Teaneck, NJ. Accessible parking in the senior parking lot. The public is welcome.

**Thursday, March 9, 2017.** Speaker: Cathy Miller "Let's Welcome Spring." Rodda Center, 7:30 PM. [gardenclubofteaneck.org/graphics/cathyMiller9iii.jpg](http://gardenclubofteaneck.org/graphics/cathyMiller9iii.jpg)



### "The A to Z of Culinary Herbs" Thursday, February 9th, 2017

Come hear Pat Libutti, AKA "The Urban Herban," present a light-hearted ramble on culinary herbs. It will wend its way through issues on the composition and use of culinary herbs, with a dash of anecdote.

Who was the first to explore a "culinary herb"? Maybe he/she was a recovering patient who discovered that the medicine also made a stew delicious. What are the essentials of cooking with herbs? Learn their properties as they apply to your stockpot. How can you be an "herb intelligent consumer"? Learn about herb-light interaction, and then use an herb shopper's criteria list.

Pat Libutti is a member of GCT and a Master Gardener who focuses on culinary and medicinal herbs. She has spoken at New Jersey and Pennsylvania garden clubs and has served as an "Herb Keeper" with Master Gardener garden sites. Pat has held workshops for children and adults. Blog: *The Urban Herban* ([urbanherban.blogspot.com](http://urbanherban.blogspot.com)). (See the calendar above for location and parking.)



### A Letter from Robin Jackson, GCT President

Hello, Garden Club Members,

*"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."*  
---Audrey Hepburn

Keep believing in tomorrow and planting with love and care! If you have some time available, please volunteer to work with one or more of our children educational programs. The Hawthorne School Program is in need of assistants for the 3rd grade for the *Propagation* classes on Mar 23 and Apr 5. Olga also needs a teacher for the *Oak & Acorn* sessions, 3/30 and 4/6. To assist with the Junior Garden Club, please speak with Nancy Cochrane. Our next business meeting is Saturday, February 4, 2017. I hope to see you there.



### From the Desk of the Horticultural Director Doug Raska

*Getting ready for spring!* Cuttings and seeds, seeds and cuttings. Every group has begun to propagate plants for either our student outreach group or our spring plant sale. Some herb seeds have arrived to bolster the work of our Herb Group. Tomato seeds are here for Bob and the Monday Herb and Vegetable group. I started some geranium seeds a few days ago for the plant sale and they're already sprouting. Plugs will begin to arrive the first week of February! So get ready for the race to spring.





**Report from  
Len Schwartz,  
Greenhouse Director**

The Greenhouse is operating OK. I'm pleased to report that there are at times up to seven full or part time people in the maintenance group meeting on Wednesday mornings, and that makes a big difference. The lighting for the seeding/cuttings trays has been improved and should be completely ready within a week. There will be five banks, each with either 2, 3 or 4 trays for a total of fifteen trays, some with heaters. Each bank can be independently programed for any on/off requirement within a 24-hour cycle. All lights have at least four bulbs; some have six. The Horticultural Director will be in charge of allocating space.

The Town has made a decision about how to reinforce the 10 or 12 significantly rusted and weakened columns supporting the Greenhouse roof. These columns will be jacked up, have their entire bottom three to four feet cut away and then get completely new steel bases welded into place. This work will be done in June after our plants are removed for the summer. Meanwhile, the maintenance group will continue preserving those columns which are still OK from further deterioration.

Very likely after the Feb. 4 meeting, all five probationary Greenhouse members will be given the last five unallocated benches in the members' area. Unless more space is found, there will be no more empty benches available for any new Greenhouse members who enter from now on. At the close of that meeting, two aisle benches , # 11 and #12 ,will be initially raffled and then the remaining benches will be raffled to the new members just completing probation.

We will need boxes for the Plant Sale; please start bringing them in now.



Join the Garden Club of Englewood on the Tuesday, March 14 bus trip to Philadelphia to see the 2017 Philadelphia Flower Show, "HollandD: Flowering the World." To sign up for the trip, email Susan Eastham at: [susanmeastham1@gmail.com](mailto:susanmeastham1@gmail.com). The bus departs promptly at 8:15AM from The Field Club, Englewood. The return to Englewood will be at approximately 6 PM. The cost for the bus trip per person will be based on the total number who sign up. You do need to buy a Flower Show ticket, which costs \$28.00 for an adult. Tickets can be purchased at the door or online, which is recommended, as the line at the door can be long. Ticket link: <https://secure.interactiveticketing.com/1.13/97bb35/#/select>. More information about the Philadelphia Flower Show: <http://theflowershow.com/>

Photo: Pat Fromm

**GCT COMMUNICATIONS**

**Garden Club Newsletter February 2017**

Editor: Patricia O'Brien Libutti. Proofs: Anne Ediger, Bruce Libutti, Masthead logo: Marty Steeil.

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**Garden Club of Teaneck website.** Webmaster: Anna Kurz. <http://www.gardenclubofteaneck.org>.

**GCT on Facebook.** Page maintainer: Denise George. <http://www.facebook.com/gardenclubofteaneck/>

*This is the "Year of the Seed "*  
**COME TO THE SEED EXCHANGE AT THE GREENHOUSE FEB 4th\***

-will



Joe Papa and Doug Raska short talks on propagation after the business meeting. The exchange will then take place. You may find heirloom tomatoes...marigolds, coneflowers...kale, collard greens...herbs, flowers, and even pumpkin seeds. (Free!)

\* The exact middle of winter.

## HAWTHORNE PROGRAM FROM MARCH 27 to APRIL 7, 2017

The 37th season (maybe, approximately) of school programming opens on March 27 and ends on April 7. The program was started by Ken and Ethel McCuen district-wide in the 1980s; Lou Schwartz began it at Hawthorne in the early 80s, according to Helen Humphreys. She herself led the teaching with three grades for many years. Now Olga Newey musters people and plants for this season with five grade levels. All members, please welcome the children and help ensure life-long gardeners!



The fourth grade class on *The Oak and the Acorn* will be shown in this picture of Chief Oritam and Sara Kierstad meeting on the Hackensack River.

Acorns were a part of Native Americans' use of the land, being used for porridge, flour, tanning solvent, and much more. The picture, done by Howard McCormack (1936) is a WPA project, owned by the Leonia Board of Education.

The schedule of classes will be in the next issue of this newsletter.

## MINIMALIST GARDENING

Danielle Brooks

Minimalism has become very popular over the past few years. From the Tiny House movement to Marie Kondo's *Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, a lot of people are looking at how they can do more with less. Minimalism can be particularly beneficial in the garden. Over the past year, I've spent a lot of time listening to a podcast called *The Minimalists*.

Having the newest gadget can become more of a financial drain than an escape. Gardening tools today range from basic items like a shovel to the extravagant, such as the Farmbot (a robot that plants and waters seeds for you.) While expensive tools can be useful, there's no drawback to repurposing items you already have. For example, a friend of mine with a garden the size of two 4' x 8' raised beds has three shovels! He's got a digging shovel, a transfer shovel, and a D-grip (also used for transplanting). If you're just starting out, there's no need for more than one of these shovels.

So, you ask, how does one garden as a Minimalist?

1. **First, buy only what you need**. I started with a shovel, a pair of gloves, and my backyard. Tilling the ground with just a shovel is more time-consuming, but it can be done. I felt a great sense of accomplishment at the end of the day.

2. **Use what you've got**. Repurpose items around the house. I have never purchased pruning shears (and I don't think I will). I just use scissors. I've read the arguments that pruning shears make cutting easier, leaving cleaner cuts on plant stems. But plants are very resilient; life always finds a way.

3. **Don't make impulse purchases**. Once you've started gardening, if you find a tool that will make a specific task faster and easier (a task you perform often), purchase it.

4. **Get your friends to help you in the garden**. A friend of mine, his three sons and I once spent an hour turning his soil, adding compost, getting rid of rocks, and planting the first seeds. When you get help, be sure to share the bounty! Minimalism does require some creativity, some resourcefulness, and patience.

As the Minimalists always say, "Love people and use things, because the opposite never works."

# HOW TO PLANT A SEED

A handout for The Seed Exchange, February 4, 2017

(can be found at [gardenclubofteaneck.org/graphics/seed\\_exchange\\_info.pdf](http://gardenclubofteaneck.org/graphics/seed_exchange_info.pdf))

Robyn Lowenthal

Growing plants from seed is one of the most magical part of gardening. It continues to amaze me that inside the tiniest of seeds exists the potential for an entire plant—flowers, fruit and all.

Growing from seed allows us to produce a huge variety of cultivars, often not available at garden centers. It is cost effective, since a large number of plants can be produced efficiently and inexpensively. Seeds are easy to store and can remain viable for a long time. But it is necessary to consider the basic needs of the seeds. Be sure to read, and believe, the information provided on reliable seed company packets.

**Growing medium.** Firm, fine-textured growing medium will allow for improved germination, due to its ability to maintain uniform moisture. The medium should be sterile, to help avoid fungal diseases. Oxygen is also necessary for the start of cellular respiration. Compacted or waterlogged soils reduce the availability of oxygen and can slow or stop germination.

**Light.** Seeds require either light or dark conditions to germinate. Very small seeds generally require light to germinate. Other seeds will not germinate if exposed to light. It is important to check your seed packet to see if light is a requirement. I have noticed that seeds from Swallowtail Gardens and Harris Seeds have detailed instructions about both temperature and light requirements.

**Soil temperature.** Germination can be inhibited by too high or too low temperatures. In general, most flower and vegetable seeds like soil temperatures in the 70-80° F range. Since soil temperature tends to run approximately 5°F lower than air temperature, in many cases one must provide additional controlled bottom heat, using heat mats, cables or keeping your seed trays on top of the refrigerator. Soil temperature is equally important for direct seeding outdoors. Some seeds, such as lettuce and

pansies, will not germinate when temperatures are above 86 °F. Some warm season vegetables, like cucumbers and corn, will not germinate when soil is below 59 °F.

**Moisture.** Although it may seem elementary, providing adequate and uniform moisture is vital to successful seed germination. Water is necessary to rehydrate the seed, soften the seed coat, and allow the enlarging embryo to burst out. Humidity is also important. Either cover your flats with clear plastic covers, or provide them with a light mist to ensure they do not dry out.

While most seeds and seedlings should be kept consistently moist, overwatering can be a problem. Too much water can cause seeds to rot or promote disease issues like damping off. It is important to remove flat covers periodically to allow enough air flow. If flats are in a greenhouse, covers should also be removed on warm days to make sure your seedlings do not get over heated.

Growing plants from seed is usually simple and straightforward. Most annual and even perennial seeds need no special treatment to germinate. Some seeds, called recalcitrant, have evolved over the centuries to need certain specific conditions to start their growth cycle. These may include scarification, soaking and stratification.

When we purchase seed, these procedures have often already been done. When we collect seed, we must do it ourselves. There is no general rule. In addition to the information on the seed packet, my go-to resource for seed germination information is Park's *Success with Seeds* by Ann Reilly.

## CORRECTIONS: January 2017 issue

**Dania Cheddie** was reported on p.2 as “Master Gardener (MGBC) Coordinator for the Holiday Open House.” Instead, she is the volunteer coordinator at Skylands, no connection to MGBC. She coordinated the Holiday Open House volunteers from all the organizations. **The short video on Skylands** ( p.3) had one erroneous link. Try [urbanherban.blogspot.com/2016/12/the-room-with-view-horticultural-art-at.html](http://urbanherban.blogspot.com/2016/12/the-room-with-view-horticultural-art-at.html).

## The Geranium Group in the Greenhouse Dr. Ronald W. McKay

The Geranium Group has been thoroughly immersed in a project that is rewarding for growers and admirers. The group consists of the group leader, Dr. Ronald W. McKay, and members Caryl Gottlieb, Dr. Frederick Thau, Dr. Annette Thau, Christine Brannan, Melinda Bonner and Alex Kinloch. Our group objective will be to produce quality plants for our plant sale.

An essential responsibility of the group is soil and plant container preparation. Adequate containers must be utilized for proper drainage; we utilize 4 ½ pots, with holes in the bottom for proper drainage. This encourages a good rooting system for the geraniums. Next is soil preparation. The type of soil we use is commercially prepared sterilized soil with equal parts sphagnum peat moss and perlite, which will promote adequate drainage. This soil mixture is nutrient-rich. The consensus among our group is that soil-based potting mix maintains moisture and permits the excess moisture to drain adequately. The physical and chemical properties of the soil are most essential when growing geraniums.

The differentiation between these properties is based on the viability of the geranium roots; they begin to procure water and nutrients from the soil, oxygen is given off and carbon dioxide is absorbed.

The next responsibility of the group is fertilization. We use a water-soluble, 10-10-10 fertilizer to ensure a correct pH for the geraniums, one that is slightly acidic. The fertilizer is sparingly mixed into the soil. This process is initiated every two weeks.

Another responsibility is the watering and monitoring of the geraniums. It is essential to water geraniums on a consistent basis, so that the soil dries out between waterings.

It is important to keep the leaves dry when watering. Over-watering and placing water on the leaves creates disease, insects intrusions, yellow growing and root rotting. Insects that we encounter include aphids, mites and whiteflies, eradicated with an organic insecticide.

The last responsibility is monitoring and regulating the temperature. The Horticultural Director, Doug Raska, assists with this task. The viability of geranium plants is predicated on the temperature in the Greenhouse, which has an impact on photosynthesis. Temperatures can also influence the amount of respiration and thus, the ongoing development of the plant.



**Geranium Admirer Sarah Jones**

Photos: Marty Steel, Pat Fromm

### Geraniums in the Greenhouse



**Group member Caryl Gottlieb**