

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

MARCH 2023

Dear Members,

Happy Spring! I wish all of you and your loved ones a joyful Easter, Passover, or other spring holiday.

I hope to see all of you at our April 11 program. The program listed in our booklet on lavender had to be replaced as our speaker was not available. **We are fortunate to have the expert Bridgette Stone, Director of Education at the Berkshire Botanical Garden, as our speaker on planning your spring planting for on April 11, 6pm, at the Lenox Community Center.** Even if your spring planting will only be a pot of annuals, I think you will find Bridgette's program delightful.

Jill Dore, Sarah Hatch, and I had a lovely time at the Capital Region Flower Show. We saw oodles of beautiful flowers, viewed great ideas for our own gardens and met many interesting vendors. We were sorry not more members joined us for the event. At our meeting, we will welcome feedback on whether members are just not interested in events beyond our regular meetings, we need more input selecting date/time, or other reasons attendance at the bulb show and the flower show were both low. See **April Agenda** below.

All the best, Susan

1. Program: Planning Your Spring Planting by Bridgette Stone
2. Approve Minutes from December and February Meetings
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Discuss and Vote Upon Possible Change of Regular Meeting Location to Community Center
5. Update on Field Trips
6. Potential Service Projects for Community Center
7. Other Business, If Any

Horticultural Column

Harriet Wetstone

It seems I open every column with a sense of struggling with weather, but I must say, I have enjoyed these sunny fifty-degree days! The magic of seeing the tips of the bulbs pushing through the wet soil, (sometimes the soft snow), never ceases to be magical.



The garden fantasies are becoming rampant, for me, egged on by the surprise appearance of a nasturtium seedling. The seedling is in a pot of coleus that I rescued from the garden last fall. Given how many nasturtiums I grow, it always surprises me that they don't self-sow more readily. Now that I have given some proper study to topics such as stratification, vernalization and scarification, I understand why.

Stratification is the artificial provision of conditions that are necessary for seeds to break dormancy and to germinate in nature. Stratification can involve warm and moist conditions as well as cold conditions.

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Some seeds require cold conditions, others warm and moist conditions, and some seeds require both. Interestingly, seeds, such as tomato seeds that originate in hot climates with no seasonal changes and could grow throughout the year given their native conditions, do not require stratification. In the end, stratification is about survival; plants that are from seasonal climates need to germinate on time in order to have a long enough growing season to go from germination to seed production.

For example, you could sow seeds such as perennial sweet peas, evening primrose, lavender, verbena, catmint in the fall, expecting them to germinate in the spring. Or, alternatively, early in spring, you can take the seeds of these plants, soak them for 12 to 24 hours, put them in a sealable container with equal amounts of sand and peat, and store in the refrigerator for ten days. After ten days you can check to see if they are sprouting; some seeds require more than ten days, and some seeds even require time in the freezer in order to break dormancy. Some seed packets will let you know whether or not the seeds have been chilled before being packaged, but it will not hurt to repeat the process.

Vernalization is about plants, rather than seeds, and is the process of going dormant in cold temperatures. Plants that have vernalization requirements must be exposed to a certain number of days of cold below a certain threshold; how cold and how many days depends on the plant.

Many fruit trees (apples and pears, for example) are in this category. Bulbs such as tulips, hyacinths, crocus and daffodils need to be exposed to cold to flower. While I have known this, I never came across the term *Vernalization*.

Biennial plants such as hollyhocks, foxgloves, carrots and kale produce only vegetative growth, stems, leaves and roots, during their first year. They only flower and go to seed the second year and only after vernalization. And since we eat the leaves and stems and/or roots, we never see them in their second year, or think about their flowering! And now I get why you plant garlic cloves in the fall. Garlic requires vernalization, else it will not form bulbs!

This brings us to **Scarification**, which is the weakening of the seedcoat of the seed in order to allow moisture to reach the seed embryo and start the process of germination. Did you know that seeds have belly buttons? I certainly never thought about it that way! A seed's belly button is obvious. It is where the seed was connected to the plant's ovary, and it is often the best place to open the seedcoat, by clipping or using sandpaper, e.g., so that moisture can get in. You can also scarify by soaking in water or a slightly acidic liquid such as weak tea or coffee. And you can do both for the greatest boost toward sprouting. And why do seeds have such hard and watertight seedcoats? To ensure that they don't sprout at the wrong time, like the dead of winter. Natural scarifying takes place through freezing and thawing, or by going through the acidic digestive track of an animal, or by grinding against dirt and sand.

Check your seed packets for information!!
Happy planting!

Thanks to:
<https://biologyreader.com/vernalization.html>;
<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/info/why-plants-need-vernalization.htm>;
<https://morningchores.com/seed-scarification/>