

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

OCTOBER 2022

A Message from the President

Thank-you to all our members who attended our Potluck dinner in September. While I was remiss in not following Roberts Rules of Order in the September meeting, you will be happy to know I will be having a more formalized meeting next we meet, with an agenda, minutes, and a treasurer report. I had just started a new job, a new semester at BCC where I teach, and have my flower farm. I was overwhelmed by life. Thank you for your patience!

The Apple Squeeze, led by Theresa Terry Michney and the fundraising committee, was a rousing success! I couldn't believe how many people were out and about! It was so nice after the past few years. It was perfect weather, and everyone loved our offerings. In the words of Terry:

"What a dynamic, energetic, enthusiastic team of garden club members who made our booth look lovely and our sales successful! We brought in \$273. That is not bad at all since we had no expenses because the flowers, plants and items were donated and supported by volunteers."

Thank-you to the following members who assisted in bringing, and making hydrangeas and terrariums on Friday, or running the booth on Saturday: Jill Dore, Harriet Whetstone, Anne Gannon, Caroline Kessman, Jane Whalen, Bobbie Ann Salinetti, Janice Brindisi, Ginny Akabane, Cindy Packard, Jen Picard, Sharon Walker, Dianne Romeo, Pat Neri, Colette Lemanski, Susan Wolf, and Debbie Sweeney. If I missed anyone, thank-you too! A special shout-out goes to Mich Michney and Tom Romeo for being great husbands, and friends of our garden club!

The October meeting will be an amaryllis planting workshop. It's hard to believe, but it is almost time to get those bulbs going for the upcoming holidays! Members are to bring a 5" deep pot for their bulb. Potting soil will be distributed to each table. Thank you to Bobbie Ann Salinetti for being the presenter for this program.

Refreshment hostesses will be Lynn Schmitter and Carol Way. Thank you in advance for your contribution.

Our meeting will be on Tuesday, October 11th at 6:00 pm at the Lenox Academy Building.

Agenda for October Meeting:

- Opening remarks
- Minutes from last meeting
- Treasurer Report
- Discussion of an Academy Garden Web Page
- Presentation
- Refreshments

See you then!

Kathleen Lynch

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Meeting Minutes September 13, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Kathleen Lynch

She greeted all and pointed out this was a fresh beginning as she is new as president, and we are meeting again post COVID.

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She pointed out there is a sign-in sheet and asked people to sign in. Dues (\$30) are being collected for the year and when paid you will receive a new handbook for the year. In continuing a tradition, Kathleen brought a raffle item, and, for this raffle, you enter by signing up for an activity.

The minutes of the June meeting were delayed.

The Treasurer, Jill Dore, reported the monthly report. Income was \$845 (\$125 from raffle and \$720 dues) with expenses of \$105 (\$50 for retiring President's gift and \$55 for flowers for Academy building) leaving a balance of \$3,826.63.

A g-mail account has been set up for members to use and after some discussion it was suggested and agreed that members use either "AGS" or "Academy Garden Club" in the subject title of any e-mails.

There was some discussion regarding rotation of terms of office as this year all officers changed at the same time. No decision was taken, so we will continue as is for the present. Starting of the year in July vs September was also considered, but no action taken.

Sharon Walker, a talented gardener, and former owner of the Apple Tree Inn, was introduced as a new member and warmly welcomed.

Need for volunteers for the Apple Squeeze in Lenox on September 24 was discussed and people were asked to sign up for two-hour slots to cover the booth. It was pointed out that this is AGC's fundraiser and that hydrangeas are needed and should be brought to the Academy building on Friday the 23rd. At 3PM on that Friday volunteers are also needed to prepare bouquets for the sale.

The meeting ended at 6:35 following shout outs for Amy Zaffanella, Dianne Romeo, Terry Michney, Caroline Kessman, Barb Czelusniak, and Kathy DeVlyder for work on the flower show and for the judges - Maryjane Fromm and Carol Rumph. Also, mentioned was how nice the monument looked all summer and the new post office window.

Following the meeting a potluck dinner was enjoyed by all.

Respectfully submitted:

Sarah Hatch, Secretary.

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Horticultural Column – Native Plants

Harriet Wetstone

The topic for this season's hort talks is native plants. When I first set out to do some research, I assumed that there was a clear definition of "Native Plant." In September I shared with you some of the complexities which make this topic more complicated than one might think. One of the reasons is that plants and habitat are somewhat symbiotic: habitats give rise to plants that serve a purpose in that habitat, and in turn habitat provides what allows that plant to thrive. And what allows any plant to survive has nothing whatsoever to do with political or even geographical boundaries.

So, while we think of "native" planting as a good thing (and of course it is), I think what we really mean is plantings that thrive in the habitat we can provide, that give back in terms of positive interaction with flora and fauna, and that don't crowd out, or worse, take over their neighboring plants.

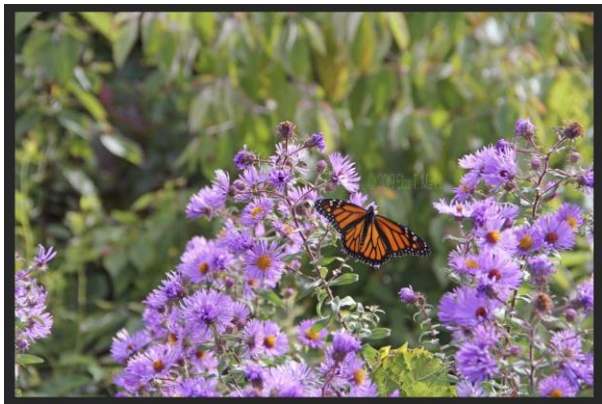
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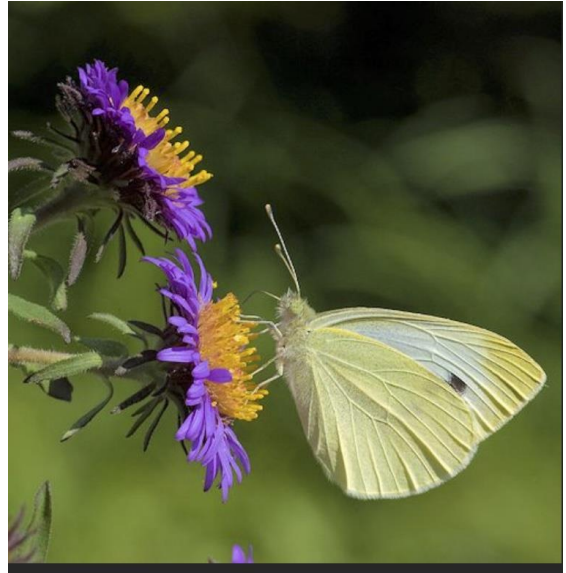
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That makes the Aster an interesting plant. For my mind, it is one of the compensations for the end of summer. Asters are also called starworts, or frost flowers, or Michaelmas Daisies. The genus Aster (Asteraceae) includes about 600 species. I adore the New England Asters (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*) which range from the White Wood aster to Purple Dome, Purple Cloud and September Ruby). While there are those that consider asters to be noxious weeds, however, this refers mostly to the heath aster, which spread vigorously via rhizomes underground and is considered to be invasive. While the New England aster self-sows prolifically via its air born seeds, it is considered a keystone native that support the forest food web in a big way: 100 moth and butterfly caterpillars and 33 specialist bees thrive on asters!



One of the surprises about asters is that they are an edible flower - both the flowers and the leaves are recommended for salads, either fresh or as dried sprinkles. Or use them as a garnish. Asters also make a pleasant tea. Native Americans used the roots in soups, and the young leaves lightly cooked and used as greens. The Ojibwa used an infusion of aster root topically to aid with headaches. The Iroquois combined aster with bloodroot and other medicinal plants to make a laxative. Aster root has been used for centuries in Chinese medicine (they grow there too!)



New England asters thrive in full sun or partial shade. They appreciate good air circulation which helps them avoid mildew. They grow naturally in a variety of sites, including prairies, marshes, and forest edges. Under ideal conditions, they are highly floriferous, and they will easily spread in a garden bed and make excellent mass plantings. Pinching them back mid-season helps to produce an even greater number of flowers and keeps the height of the plant down which helps avoid flopping. If you select a growing site that receives full sun and has rich, slightly acidic soil, caring for them will be minimal. Your main task might simply be watering when there isn't enough rainfall, and the soil dries out.

Thank you to:

<https://www.gardenia.net/plant/aster-novae-angliae-purple-cloud-new-england-asters>;
<https://costarica.inaturalist.org/posts/61699-are-aster-family-weeds-invasive-or-no>;
<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/asters/edibility-of-aster-flowers.htm>;
<https://gardenseyview.com/2014/11/26/simply-the-best-natives-aster/>;
<https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-grow-new-england-asters-4109086>