

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

FEBRUARY 2023

Dear Members,

I hope to see you at Chris Ferraro's presentation on Pollinator's Paradise March 14 at the Community Center. As I take a break from shoveling snow, thinking about pollinators and flowers is delightful. Supporting pollinators is an important key to helping our environment. And we can all enjoy pollinators, even if we do not have gardens – when I lived in a townhouse in DC with no garden space, I had an 8" pot of herbs on an outside window ledge. In addition to providing fresh herbs for meals, the herbs attracted beautiful butterflies and moths.

Thanks to those of you who provided feedback asking that we change the location of the March meeting from the Academy building to the Community Center. With help from Dianne Romeo and Darlene McCauley, Director of the Community Center, **we have changed the location of our March meeting to the Community Center.** As you will see one agenda item for our meeting is to vote on whether make this location change for our other 2023-2024 regular meetings. If you are at the Community Center and see Darlene, please take a moment to thank her for allowing us to meet at the Community Center without charge.

Also, please continue to keep the feedback coming, your perspectives help us keep our Club activities interesting and accessible.

Join me in welcoming our newest member, Linda Goff, and thanking Jan Chague for recruiting Linda. We are an open club, with membership available to anyone interested in horticulture, plants, flower arranging and our environment.

If you have a friend or neighbor who might be interested, please bring them to a meeting so they can learn if they might be interested in joining us (just let us know if you are bringing a guest so there will be a name tag for them and we can welcome them during the meeting). Having a large group with different interests supports our Club's vitality and makes it easy to staff community projects.

In recent conversations, I was pleased to hear that our community service is appreciated. When I spoke with Darlene McCauley, Director of the Lenox Community Center, and with Matt Tannenbaum, owner of The Bookstore in Lenox, both appreciate our flowers at the Monument and pots at the Academy Building. Thanks to all who designed and maintained those flowers!

Best,

Susan

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Agenda

1. Program: Pollinator's Paradise by Chris Ferraro
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

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Horticultural Column

Harriet Wetstone

March is the cruelest month. Although really, in the Berkshires, I think April is. I am resigned to how much snow we get in March! Regardless, what is on my mind today, post ice storm and waiting for more snow in a couple of days, is SUNFLOWERS! They are my ultimate sunshine fantasy. And this year, I am determined to grow some, despite, maybe inexplicable failures in the past.



Did you know that there is a National Sunflower Association (<https://www.sunflowernsa.com/all-about/>)? I didn't. But maybe not so surprising if you consider that the sunflower is not just a flower to prize for its beauty and variety but also an important agricultural crop from the Dakotas to the panhandle of Texas, where it is grown for seed, and of course for its oil. Sunflower seeds have been a bread ingredient for hundreds of years. Sunflower seeds are considered to be a superfood with high nutritional content, and a source of mono-unsaturated and poly-unsaturated fatty acids and an excellent source of vitamin E, one of the most powerful antioxidants.



The wild sunflower is native of North America; it was a common crop for American Indian tribes, maybe as far back as 3000 BC in what is now Arizona and New Mexico. - it might have been domesticated before corn! Seeds were cracked for eating as is, ground into flour for making bread, and pressed for oil.

Sunflowers were taken to Europe by Spanish explorers sometime around 1500. Used mostly decoratively, sunflowers spread through Western Europe, but by 1716 an English patent was granted for squeezing oil from the sunflower seed.

Meanwhile in Russia, Peter the Great is credited for the popularity of the sunflower as an ornamental in Russia, but there too, commercial use of oil began somewhere in the 1700s. The popularity of sunflower oil got a major boost by the Russian Orthodox Church which banned most oil foods during Lent, but allowed sun flower oil! As fascinating as all this may be, I really want to talk about the flowers!

There are more than 150 species of sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*). The sunflower is a true annual which means that it sprouts, matures, flowers, and dies in a single growing season. It self-seeds very easily, even to the point of being invasive in places like the Midwest.

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Hybrid plants, which cultivars usually are, are either sterile (no seeds at all) or produce seeds that have a different genetic structure than the parent plant.

The website gardenerspath.com provides a great way to organize sunflower cultivars by their characteristics: branching vs single stem, height, from dwarf to fifteen feet, and colors and textures galore. There are fluffy little heads you would never identify as sunflowers, and gorgeous colors including chocolates, burgundy reds and pinky yellows.



Sunflowers need at least six hours of sun a day, and because they have a long tap root, they need loose, well drained soils that will let those roots go deep. Sunflowers do not like to be transplanted, so it's best to sow them right into their beds. Just wait until the threat of frost is past and the soil has begun to warm. However, if you wrap the seeds in moist paper towels kept in a plastic bag they will start to sprout in about 48 hours as opposed to the eleven days it would take when planted right from the packet. Once up, and in fact before they are up, they need to be protected from all the critters that love them as we do - from squirrels who will dig them up before they sprout, to critters from slugs to deer who will want to munch on them. And they may need to be staked. So not totally carefree, sunflowers, but worth it!

Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2022

The December meeting opened at Berkshire Botanical Gardens in the Center House at 6:10 pm

Opening Remarks:

Susan Wolf opened the meeting and announced that our President Kathleen Lynch has resigned due to other commitments. As Vice-President, Susan Wolf will in the interim stand in as President and lead our meetings.

We thanked Kathleen for all she has done for the Club and wished her well in the future. Susan thanked Treasurer Jill Dore for significant support in the transition of leadership and also for filling in as Secretary in the absence of Sarah Hatch.

Questions or Concerns:

Theresa (Terry) Michney thanked Susan for stepping up to run our meetings – everyone agreed. Terry announced that after the meeting there will be a raffle with tickets for \$1 a ticket or 6 tickets for \$5.

Minutes:

A motion to accept the minutes of the 11/08/2022 meeting as printed in the "Thymes" with no corrections was proposed by Terry and seconded by Bobbie-Ann Salinetti and unanimously approved.

Recognition of Members:

We have been looking at past records to determine and recognize how many years members have belonged to the Academy Garden Club of Lenox.

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- **30 Years:** Pat Archey, Liz Celli, Kathy DeVylder, Jean Drees, Maryjane Fromm, Karen Fulco, Jane Leahy, Carol Rumph, Bobbie Anne Salinetti, Debby Sweeny
- **25 Years:** Tjasa Sprague
- **15 Years:** Sandy Merlino, Emily Watson
- **10 years:** Sue Hoffman

Treasurers Report:

The opening balance on 1st Nov was \$4,234.94 with expenditures for Massachusetts Charity Registration fee of \$100.00. Income was \$395.00 from dues, donations and contributions to the Box Wood supplies leaving a net of \$4,529.94 on 30th Nov.

Any Other Business:

Susan Wolf was thanked for providing the wine to accompany the potluck refreshments. Guests Carol Gramm and Linda Goff were welcomed – they intend to become members.

A motion to close the meeting was proposed by Karen Fulco, seconded by Collette Lemanski and unanimously approved.

The meeting closed at 6:25 pm and was followed by a holiday party.

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Meeting Minutes February 7, 2023

Susan Wolf, president, opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m. She welcomed all and asked that the program be first. Elizabeth (Liz) Joppru from Gateway Physical Therapy in Lee presented “Getting Fit to Garden”. She was recruited by Bobby Salinetti to speak on tips to avoid injury while gardening.

Liz brought with her models of the joints most damaged while working in the garden and illustrated how they are damaged over time and things to do to avoid stressing these joints. Joints included were lumbar spine, shoulders, wrist and knees. Activities illustrated for proper positioning included bending, squatting, pulling weeds, shoveling for planting and balance. She also said that heat and gentle stretch was best for stiff joints and recommended wax emersion for hands. Susan thanked Liz for an excellent program and presented her with a gift card.

The business meeting opened with the treasurer’s report. In Jill’s absence Sarah gave the report for December and January.

Treasurers report for December:

The opening balance was \$4,529.94 with expenditures for Boxwood Supplies for November meeting \$14.00. Income was \$64.00 from raffle leaving a net of \$4,579.94

Treasurers report for January:

The opening balance was \$4,579.94 with expenditures for Boxwood Supplies (Nov. meeting) of \$158.00. Income was \$0.00 leaving a net of \$4,421.94. Acceptance of both reports were moved and unanimously accepted.

The Secretary’s report for December will be shared in the next issue of the newsletter.

Susan announced that a suggestion was made to increase the size of the first name on the name tags. Tjasa Sprague volunteered to do this in the meanwhile for tonight’s meeting written tags were made and ready upon check-in.

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Another suggestion had been made re meeting location as the stairs and steps at the Academy are difficult for some members. Dianne Romeo has been looking into possibility for returning to the Lenox Community Center. We will be welcomed there and without fee as we do so much for the town. They did ask that each year in lieu of payment that we include the youth in some project. Dianne also suggested that we keep our use of the Academy building space for storage as there is no storage at the community center. We will vote on this issue at our March meeting to give those not present a chance to consider the proposed change in location.

Dianne has been looking into a number of field trips for the club. Proposed were Capitol Region Flower and Garden Show, Smith College Tulip Festival, Hartford Flower Show (this is in February and is free. Please see information on-line.) and Hudson Valley Agricultural Show. This later show several members attended last year and were disappointed in that there was no landscaping, fewer plants and more on commercial agriculture such as beer, wine and marijuana. Susan reported she met with Terry Michney and Harriet Wetstone and they suggested programs at places like Balderdash Cellars, Hilltop Orchards or the Arnold Arboretum. It was decided to survey members as to interests before the next meeting.

Under new business Sarah expressed appreciation for the excellent Post Office display. It was decided to leave the display up until the end of March. Peggy Amendola, Anne Gannon, and Kathy DeVylder agreed to use decorative bird houses for the next display in April.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm for Valentine themed refreshments provided by Bobbi Salinetti and Cindy Packard.

**December 2022 and February 2023 Minutes
Respectfully Submitted by:**

**Sarah Hatch
Secretary**

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